Theory and practice in Henry James

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Introduction

The purpose of this essay, as its title suggests, is to set forth the theory of Henry James as to prose fiction, and to show wherein he may, or may not, have followed his theory in his own fiction. The obvious method of procedure is to divide the subject into parts one and two, part one dealing with the theory of James and part two with his practice. As for subdivisions, I have seen fit to give these such designations as seem to suit best the various phases of fiction with which James deals. Of course, the theory of his which is enunciated here is obtained from a study of his book reviews, his magazine articles, his letters, his essays, and the prefaces to the New York edition of his novels and short stories.

One feels like asking, at the outset, some allowance for a more or less inevitable overlapping and repetition which occur in any discussion of literary and art matters. Not that I have any intention of allowing such overlapping and merely wish to ask indulgence for it, but rather because in the various utterances of James on many phases of a difficult art there are many passages that do, of themselves, infringe upon each other; this being unavoidable where the passages are taken from widely scattered reviews

and articles. It happens too that art and literature are capable of much definition and discussion, so that it is not always easy, even after the fullest sort of outline has been prepared, to fit all the phases of the theory into this without a certain amount of duplication. Besides, there are squinting passages that look this way and that, and sometimes both ways at the same time, so that it would be indeed very unusual if one should cut his lines always clear and distinct, however desirable that might be.

No apology is needed, I suppose, for quoting freely from James, since it would seem to be the scholarly procedure to furnish material and support at all times for conclusions reached. I have massed these quotations at the opening of each chapter in order not to interrupt the continuity of the discussion.

And now, as James himself would have said, it is "damnably difficult" to know just where to take hold, and when the investigator has once taken hold, he finds occasionally, to his dismay, that he is back-tracking himself most amazingly. Art and literature are pretty elusive in the handling, anyhow, it seems to me, and thus I beg, at least, a charitable attitude as I proceed.

P A R T O N E

THEORY

I

ART AND THE ARTIST

As a sort of general basis for the setting forth of the Henry James theory of fiction, it is well to examine ~~some of~~ his theories on the vexed question of what is art. I say vexed because there seem to be abroad many shades of opinion as to just what, exactly, is art, or at least just what are exactly its methods and limits. From Aristotle to the Vers Librists and the Imagists there have been theories; all, of course, in some degree different. There have been those who have said that art is imitation or a copying of nature, others who have said that it is a heightening of nature, and still others who have said other things and held other theories.

As for Henry James, we have the following:

"Art is essentially selection, but it is a selection whose main care is to be typical, to be inclusive."

---Partial Portraits, Page 398.

". . . .an artist always has a certain method and order."

---Partial Portraits, Page 212.

"To be completely great a work of art must lift up the reader's heart; and it is the artist's secret to reconcile this condition with images of the barest and sternest reality."

---Notes and Reviews, Page 225.

"A true artist should be as sternly just as a Roman father."

---Notes and Reviews, Page 29.

"One can often return to it (The Scarlet Letter); it supports familiarity, and has the inexhaustible charm and mystery of great works of art."

---Hawthorne, Page 116.

". . . art is most in character when it shows itself amiable."

---Essays in London and Elsewhere, Page 193.

"A work of art that one has to <u>explain</u> fails in so far, I suppose, of its mission."

---Letters--Vol. I, Page 333.

". . . that fault in the artist, in the novelist, that amounts most completely to a failure of dignity, the absence of saturation with his idea."

---The Question of Our Speech, Page 95.

"A twentieth part of the erudition would have sufficed . . . if there had been a greater saturation of the senses (of the novelist)."

---Partial Portraits, Page 56.

"Nothing contributes more to the prompt fortune of an artist than . . . the courage of his convictions . . the power to neglect something thoroughly, to abound aggressively in his own sense and express without reserve his own saturation."

---Notes on Novelists, Page 370. ---

". . . the artist . . . has to borrow his motive . . . But after that he only lends and gives . . . lays together the blocks quarried in the deeps of his imagination and on his personal premises."

---Preface Vol. X, Page 8.

" . . . and the artist's material is of necessity in a large measure his experience."

---French Poets and Novelists, Page 183.

"Nine tenths of the artist's interest in them (facts) is that of what he shall add to them and how he shall turn them."

---Preface Vol. XII, Page 9.

"And I find our art, all the while, more difficult of practice, and want with that to do it in a more and more difficult way; it being really, at bottom, only difficulty that interests me."

---Letters--Vol. II, Page 119.

"Art derives a considerable part of its beneficial exercise from flying in the face of presumptions, and some of the most interesting of experiments of which it is capable are hidden in the bosom of common things."

---Partial Portraits, Page 395.

"It is art that <u>makes</u> life, makes interest, makes im-

portance, for our consideration and application of those things, and I know of no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of its process."

---Letters, Vol. I, Page 490.

" . . . the chemical process of art, the crucible or retort from which things emerge for a new function."

---Notes on Novelists, Page 275.

"Art deals with what we see, it must first contribute full-handed that ingredient; it plucks its material, otherwise expressed, in the garden of life . . . But it has no sooner done this than it has to take account of a process—from which only when it's the basest of the servants of man, incurring ignominious dismissal with no "character", does it, and whether under some muddled pretext of morality or on any other, pusillanimously edge away."

---Preface - Vol. XXI, Page 9.

"Tell me what the artist is and I will tell you of what he has been conscious. Thereby I will express to you at once his boundless freedom and his 'moral' reference."

---Preface - Vol. III, Page 11.

"What matters for one's appreciation of a work of art . . . is that the prime intention shall have been justified . . . ."

---Preface - Vol. X, Page 19.

"The young aspirant in the line of fiction . . . will

do nothing without taste . . . of course he will have ingenuity. But it is only a secondary aid; the first is a capacity for receiving straight impressions."

---Partial Portraits, Page 399.

" . . . appreciation is, in regard to a work of art, the only gate of enjoyment."

---The Question of Our Speech, Page 56.

"The question for the artist can only be of doing the artistic utmost and thereby of seeing the general task."

---Notes on Novelists, Page 102.

These excerpts set forth pretty clearly for themselves Henry James' views on art in general. We note that he believed it boundlessly free, by which he meant that there could be no merely conditional limitations upon it, such as subject matter, method of procedure, and so on, the only requisite being that it express the artist's own "straight impression" of life. Thus, art for Henry James was a personal view, "life seen through a temperament", but no matter how far it might go in the effort to round out a philosophy, or a system, it was after all the artist's own individual notation and reading of life.

Art must have selection and order. To every man, as James saw his status, life is more or less headless, faceless, confused and chaotic, with no indication, on the surface at least, of whence it comes, where it is, or whither it goes.

Everywhere are waste and plenty, everywhere are poverty and privation, everywhere are complexity and confusion. Here hoards the miser, yonder squanders the glorious prodigal. Here goes slashing youth, there tottering age. On this side is the broil of war, on the other the sluggishness of peace and plenty. Conscience stings and lashes the Puritan, and honor inspires and inspirits the cavalier. Peace builds pleasure-houses, war ravages and destroys them. Love and hatred sway the hearts of men, and death stalks lean and gaunt about the festivals of life. Friend and enemy at war pray alike to the same god for the same thing—victory. Philosophies cross philosophies.

Thus we may describe the riddle and the mystery; what does it all mean? What is life anyhow? What is its destiny? There is beauty, but closely adjacent to ugliness and deformity. Nowhere does life offer completeness and perfection, and since life does not, art inevitably must. But how? Exactly by this process of selection. Life does not select, it offers no key to the riddle; art then must do so. The artist is therefore called upon to untangle the mystery, laboriously discover and bring out a meaning and by a process of selection and rejection make it clear to others.

He thus seeks the hidden law, the submerged principle, and by this selective process he reorders life into new combinations of the materials; even as the chemist isolates gold from its ore, or the scientist a germ from its fellows. Nature presents the elements, not alone, but scattered in a grand chaos, and science spends its ages in efforts directed

almost solely at the business of separating these elements from their environment. Once isolated, they may be seen in their purity, or synthesized into new and unheard-of combinations for the use and delight of man.

If all this is true in the material realm, thought James, it is even more true of the esthetic and spiritual realm. If motives are mixed in actual, practical life, it is the business of art to unmix them. If events seem to point nowhere, ~~he~~ the artist must find their hidden law and show that appearances are not realities. If life seems a headless and heartless shuffle, it is the high privilege and imperative duty of the artist to find for it a head and set it on it.

Art, then, for Henry James, turns out in its selective processes to be a sort of philosophy. He would patiently examine the facts of life individually and collectively, determine the great laws of human character, and having accomplished this, demonstrate them by new combinations, or pictures, that make these laws clear.

Art, according to James, must also be typical, and this readily follows as a sort of corollary from the principle of selection, which would obviously demand that, since the existence of a universal law in human life is to be proved, the chosen material for illustration must be typical and inclusive. Exceptions, oddities, or rarities, might be highly interesting as specimens per se, yet would, of necessity, be invalid for illustration. Hence, such material as the artist uses in his new combinations must be representative and typical;

and at the same time, while including no freaks or prodigies, be fully and widely inclusive.

Coming naturally out of such definitions about art would be James' demand that it have method and order. Method and order are just the things that James complains so often of life's not having; hence the need, the supreme need, for the artist. All is bewilderment, and what is the mere mortal to do? Whither shall he turn? How shall he proceed? Nowhere, James would say, except by the assistance of art, which imposes order on life, or, at least, makes it visible. To do this the artist must, of course, use his own method and order—his own fundamental philosophy.

Art must be clear, for if its business is to interpret for those who may not be able to see for themselves, where is the virtue of further muddlement at the hands of the artist in addition to life's dismal chaos? Method aids this clearness, and all proceeds for the lifting of the fog that obscures the destinies of men.

Henry James saw no lifting of fogs except as art lifted the human heart, and here again his theories fit logically into each other. He would not have, in fact, did not have, patience with those mere photographers masking as artists, for he saw no place for the picture that left the reader depressed. He said in so many words that art should be amiable, because the very nature of its mission was to find a way out, and therefore encourage. Here were the clear grounds upon

which he quarreled with vulgar realism; it offered no hope, no solution, it gave only man's depressed condition, but took no account of his high-flung ambitions. It made plenty of ado over his present status, but no provision for his future.

James' demand that art have charm and mystery indicates plainly that he was no mere scientist in literature, despite what some have said. He wanted interpretation of life, but no blasting out of the mysteries. Simplification was enough for James, not annihilation. James, in spite of all his talk about the human predicament and the need of making things plainer, hardly expected himself or any other artist to bring all out into the pitiless and prosaic daylight. Rather it was his great desire to eliminate some of life's ugliness and a good deal of its irritating befuddlement, but in so doing to heighten its alluring mystery. The artist for James was a sort of Romanticist in that he would produce a renascence of wonder in the beholder, and while getting him definitely into a road, the road, James' road, he would all the while ~~thicken up~~ multiply and enhance the fine wonders that should inhabit the road of any mortal—he would leave him by every means with this beautiful incentive to life.

Thus, how could he fail to entertain and charm the reader, the beholder of the picture?

The artist must receive straight impressions, thought James, and be saturated with his subject, which is again but the unescapable logic of the matter. Art is interpretation,

a way out of muddlement, therefore it must come sincerely from one who has the matter straight himself. And not only that, the artist must be so saturated with his topic as to present it with the driving power of fine knowledge and detachment. James speaks of the process in the figure of the crucible. The artist sees life, it is his data, it is the thing under discussion, a thing both writer and reader see and know exists, but the artist receives it into his imagination and transmutes it through his knowledge and experience into something new and brave for the reader.

But the process is difficult, says Henry James, and art leads him to fly in the face of presumption; it even makes life. But difficulty inspired, he said, and so the artist should regard the matter. What does he mean by flying in the face of presumption? About what O. Henry said about it in "A Municipal Report". Here is a certain Southern city, which according to certain map-makers is anything but a place for romance or art, but by the time the artist, O. Henry in this case, has worked it through his imagination he brings forth, out of a drab, rain-soaked city, a bit of tender beauty. An excellent illustration of how art uses the commonplace for its material. And it is often the case. Of course, there are certain subjects that seem ready-made to the artist's hand, nature having done the work: Swiss scenery, the Rhine, Arcadian valleys, the world's Waterloos, its Gettysburgs, its Marnes, its Antonys and Cleopatras, and so on. But these offered no special charm for Henry James, nor did they

illustrate so well what he was discussing. They required perhaps little of the chemistry of art which he saw the artist using in his depiction of the commonplace. James is a sort of Wordsworthian in his belief that art can make the common uncommon, and he had seen enough, and too much, it appears, of pageantry in art. The booming subjects had been celebrated ad nauseam, so that in his view the artist had a right to ~~and~~ chose the subjects that almost everybody expected nothing from.

The artist must have taste, he says, and art must have unity, for he saw no place for confusion in something ~~the~~ avowed purpose of which was to abolish confusion. This is but another application of his logic and was to be expected, but more of this later in more direct connection with the novel itself.

II

THEMES AND SUBJECT MATTER

What sort of subjects did Henry James like? Did he limit them in any way? What did he think about the whole matter? are interesting points in his theory of fiction.

"The subject thus pressed upon the artist is the necessity of his case and the fruit of his consciousness; which makes and has ever made of any quarrel with his subject, any stupid attempt to go behind that, the true stultification of criticism."

---Preface Vol. XIV, page 8.

"We must grant the artist his subject, his idea, his donnee; our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it."

---Partial Portraits, page 394.

"But we of course never play the fair critical game with an author . . . unless we grant him his postulates. His subject is what is given him--given him by influences, by a process with which we have nothing to do."

---Notes on Novelists, page 259.

"The advantage, the luxury, as well as the torment and responsibility of the novelist, is that there is no limit to what he may attempt--no limit to his possible experiments, efforts, discoveries, successes."

---Partial Portraits, page 385.

" . . . what the sincere critic says is 'make me something fine in the form that shall suit you best according to

your temperament'. This seems to me to put into a nutshell the whole question of the different classes of fiction concerning which there has recently been so much discourse. There simply are as many different kinds as there are persons practicing the art . ."

---Partial Portraits, page 245.

"It all comes back, in fine, to that respect for the liberty of the subject which I should be willing to name as the great sign of the painter of the first order.

---The Question of Our Speech, page 100.

"I am quite at a loss to imagine anything (at any rate in this matter of fiction) that people ought to like or dislike. Selection will be sure to take care of itself, for it has a constant motive behind it. That motive is simply experience."

---Partial Portraits, page 397.

"For I think, verily, that there are degrees of merit in subjects--in spite of the fact that to treat even one of the most ambiguous with due decency we must for the time--at least, figure its merit and its dignity as possibly absolute."

---Preface Vol. XXI, page 7.

" . . . where there is life there is truth."

---Letters - Vol. I, page 297.

" . . . one's subject is the merest grain, the speck of truth, of beauty, of reality, scarce visible to the common eye . . . Life being all inclusion and confusion, and art being all discrimination and selection . . . the artist finds in his tiny nugget . . . the very stuff for a clear affirmation. . . . The reason is of course that life hasno direct sense for the subject and is capable, luckily for us, of nothing but splendid waste. Hence the opportunity for the sublime economy of art . . . the fondest of artists need ask no wider range than the logic of the particular case."

---Preface - Vol. X, page 5.

"I delight in a palpable imaginable visitable past."

---Preface - Vol. XII, page 10.

"Nothing appeals to me more, I confess, as a "critic of life" in any sense worthy of the name, than the finer . . . group of the conquests of civilization, the multiplied symptoms among educated people, from wherever drawn, of a common intelligence and a social fusion tending to abridge old rigors of separation. . . . Behind all the small comedies and tragedies of the international, in a word, has exquisitely lurked for me the idea of some eventual sublime consensus of the educated; the exquisite conceivabilities of which . . . constitute stuff for such situations as may easily make many of those of a more familiar type turn pale. There, if one will,

—in the dauntless fusions to come—is the personal drama of the future."

---Preface - Vol. XIV, page 9.

"I sympathize even less with your protest against the idea that it takes an old civilization to set a novelist in motion—a proposition that seems to me to be so true as to be a truism. It is on manners, customs, usages, habits, forms, upon all these things matured and established, that a novelist lives—they are the very stuff his work is made of."

---Letters, Vol. I, page 72.

"No themes are so human as those that reflect for us, out of the confusion of life, the close connection of bliss and bale, of the things that help with the things that hurt, so dangling before us that bright and hard medal, of so strange an alloy, one face of which is somebody's right and ease and the other somebody's pain and wrong."

---Preface - Vol. XI, page 8.

" . . . we hold to the good old belief that the presumption, in life, is in favor of the brighter side, and we deem it, in art, an indispensable condition of our interest in a depressed observer that he should have at least tried his best to be cheerful."

---French Poets and Novelists, Page 249.

"Life is dispiriting, art is inspiring; and a story-teller who aims at anything more than a fleeting success has no right to tell an ugly story unless he knows its beautiful counterpart."

---Notes and Reviews, page 226.

"Miss MacKenzie is an utterly commonplace person, and her lover is almost a fool. . . . Why should we follow the fortunes of such people? They vulgarize experience and all the other heavenly gifts . . . why should we batten upon over-cooked prose while the air is redolent with undistilled poetry?"

---Notes and Reviews, page 75.

" . . . we (the readers) have a right in such matters to our preference, a right to choose the kind of adventure of the imagination we like best."

---Notes on Novelists, page 265.

"Recognizing so promptly the one measure of the worth of a given subject, the question about it that rightly answered disposes of all others—is it valid, in a word, is it genuine, is it sincere, the result of some direct impression or perception of life?"

---Preface - Vol. I, page 9.

"There is only one propriety the painter of life can ask

of his morsel of material; is it or is it not of the stuff of life?"

---Notes on Novelists, page 295.

" . . . somehow we all equally feel that there is clean linen and soiled, and that life would be intolerable without some acknowledgment even by the pushing of such a thing as forbidden ground."

---Notes on Novelists, page 166.

" . . . a woman is potentially a heroine as long as she lives."

---Notes and Reviews, page 69.

These passages indicate that James, for one thing, allowed every possible liberty in the choice of subject, for it grows out of the artist, and hence is as various as the various temperaments of the artist. He saw no such thing, then, as a subject inherently usable or not so, for to James the chemistry of art, of the man, the personality of him, after all, did the work of making the topic presentable and valuable, or not so. Indeed, he goes on to say that there is only one propriety the painter of life can ask of his morsel of material,—is it or is it not of the stuff of life? This is a broad, clear statement which sets no limit to the field, and it disposes of a matter which has always been pretty widely debated. Not always have critics and artists—and certainly readers—been agreed that art

may look where it will, choose where it pleases, and present what it finds. The feeling almost everywhere has been that some subjects are by nature suited to the purposes of art, others not suited. Some are regarded as inherently and delightfully beautiful, others inherently and hopelessly ugly. The poets, especially those of more or less second rate ability, have always been inclined to the belief—certainly to the practice—whereby some subjects may be handled in poetry, but others may not be. Everyone knows with what fussing and adoing the English Romantic poets were received at the hands of both readers and critics toward the latter half of the 18th century. Everyone remembers Jeffrey's "This will never do", and his Lordhavemercys, and the rest of it, about the new poetic art. Everyone likewise knows how Whitman was howled at and spewed at by readers, critics, and poets, especially of the more or less second-rate New England school. And Whittier, so the report goes, actually threw "Children of Adam" into the fire.

Whitman was new, he spoke in a new language, he spoke, above all, about new topics, he admitted all as legitimate for poetic handling, and as a result it took some time for things to get adjusted and to quiet down somewhat.

Something similar was the case of Browning. Browning came not only with a multiform message, and a polyglot man-

ner, but he treated new topics, previously unheard-of topics, in verse. The same story might be told about the novel (the storm about 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles'), or any other literary form.

But after all there is no doubt some truth in the popular notion that some subjects are by nature fit for poetry and art, and others not, though James contended rightly that all subjects are grist for the novelist's, the artist's, mill. James expected the magic, not necessarily from the subject, but rather from the artist whose selection and re-combination would produce the effects of art. No matter, then, what the material, so long as the artist possessed the skill.

But James was not arbitrary, and readily saw, as any candid observer must see, that some subjects are "better" than others, and thus that the subject is bound to, in some measure, color the effect given forth.

James demands not only the truth of life for the novelist's theme, but the full sincerity of the novelist himself. He had no sort of place for any manner of trickery, or sham, or insincerity, in the artist. There must be no truckling to popular taste, or passing fad, or convention. The artist must have his direct impression of life, and out of that must come his art. Thus, one takes it, no matter what the impression, fair or foul, its virtue is in large measure its sincerity. But what of "clean" or "soiled linen?" That will

depend upon the taste of the artist, as he says in another connection. In the present context he is thinking more of validity and sincerity, and letting the other matter take care of itself.

By all means, then, since he insists upon sincerity in the author, the author must be let alone, and neither critic nor reader has the right to go back of the theme. To like it, or not to like it, is a matter of choice, but it is not ~~your~~ choice to quarrel with the writer who in all sincerity presented it.

But in spite of all this hospitality to any motley array of themes that might present themselves at his door, James had his preferences—every artist does. Turning through his novels one would judge that he liked the "international situation", as he calls it; and he does. One would be certain that he was fond of dealing with the life of the refined, the super-refined, the highly cultivated and cultured—and he does. His practice, and his own words about it, make it doubly certain. It will be readily seen that it is that "finer group", that "finer grain" which he so much loved to study and depict. James was immensely, almost painfully, civilized. He was a product of deliberate plan and policy on the part of a most benign destiny and fate;—shall we say?—on the part ~~also~~ of a most wise and far-seeing father. He, nor his brother William, nor any of the other of the distinguished family, was of the "happen-so", "just-grew-up" sort of American children. He was born in New York and educated everywhere—France, England, London, Paris, New York, Boston, Rome, ~~etc.~~. In other

words, he was a cosmopolitan, almost by birth, and certainly by training. His father was a man of means who passed at least a competency on to his children, so that Henry James was once for all placed beyond the necessity of earning his own bread.

He was kept away from whatever was regarded as not select and desirable for him, either in education or in association. His tutors were more often than not private tutors, and his mental food was of the choicest and the finest. In an eminent degree, then, James was of the "finer grain", and belonged to the "conquests of civilization." He was of the "sublime consensus of the educated", of the cosmopolitan, the "social fusion". And, hence, from his own view point, and, one might add also from ours, Henry James was of the very elect; he was of the flower of civilization, if it has ever produced any flowers.

What topic, therefore, was he better qualified to treat, and, after all, what finer topic was there, is there, to be treated? What topic, he thought, could yield more? what topic could be more significant? what theme could get further? The history of mankind, and certainly that of literature, reveal the fact that man's fight has moved gradually from struggle against external foes—hostile climate, wild beasts, —to struggle against more or less internal enemies—man

against man, or man against his own inner self. According to James, then, the least significant and up-to-date story, so to speak, was that which dealt with adventure, war, and [illegible]; and this no matter how interesting or profitable to the vulgar. For James this kind of story was merely elementary and to a degree puerile—stuff that had its appeal for superficial and shallow minds. The supreme topic for him was that which dealt with the most alert minds, the greatest thinkers, the most aware and conscious persons; for as he saw it, such were the crowning products of civilization. These persons who, relieved from the burden of getting a living, freed from the provinciality of mere nations and sections, were brought forth in a yet rarer atmosphere of international refinement and culture. Therefore, just as these were the crowning glory of civilization, the best fiction must of necessity deal with them. To be sure, they might not be interesting people to the general reader—most likely not—but neither is any topic of great significance, James would reply. Too subtly psychological, and thus too busy with their feelings and motives, too self-conscious, say the objectors. Certainly they are not for the blind and the halt, would come the James rejoinder. People too much aware of themselves, their surroundings, and destiny are tiresome and tedious and hopeless, complains the average reader. But so are hundreds of important matters, James would return. The binomial theorem, logarithms, violet rays, the nature of the atom, relativity—these, too,

no doubt, would likewise be uninteresting to the average reader, but no less important to the progress and ultimate happiness of the race. And so the discussion would go on, but "grant" James "his postulates" and he is right—right, anyhow, one inclines to say.

All of which is logical and unassailable, and yet the average reader, and everyone else, would like to see the great "unbend," and find some justification for not liking "The Awkward Age" or "The Sacred Fount." Can't you create us "more human" characters and stories that even we can like, admitting for the moment that we ought to like what you say we ought? To such demands as these James is not deaf, nor is he unaware of the claims of, say, the average reader; at least he is not so in theory. And with just some such principle of fiction in mind, he says, "Verily even, I think, no story is possible without its fools . . . at the same time I confess I never see the leading interest of any human hazard but in a consciousness . . . subject to fine intensification and wide enlargement."

The fools, then, would satisfy the average reader who must have some fool in fiction lest he be lonesome with too many strangers. But this need not be discussed further at this point, since it recurs under another head later on.

Closely related, as it seems to me, to James' preference for fiction dealing with the "finer grain" is his interest in

topics that deal with the almost fatal necessity, as it would often appear, of suffering and wrong. This sort of topic, we find, recurs to the theory of art that it is a selection, a rearrangement of material, to solve, if possible, the riddle and the "confusion" of life. Here is James' love, not only for the "international situation", for the "consensus of the educated", and the rest, but also his love for dealing with the strange predicament which life so often— almost always— presents. Here lay, for James, the mystery, and therein he found material ready to his artist's hand.

Isn't this, them, one of James' secrets about his art, the "figure in the carpet?" Isn't this the reason for his quizzical manner, and more or less all the rest of his unintelligiblity to the general? Certainly he loved the problems of life, the mysteries, the generally hard to explain. It was not the obvious that James cared for, nor the superficial. People that had no hidden motives were not his kind of people. Conclusions that could too readily and easily be deduced called out no excitement in James. Life bristled with mysteries, and since for him art was a simplification, he set to work to unravel some of the complexities. No matter if his friend Robert L. Stevenson did say that nobody could begin to write down in a book a hundredth part of the —

thoughts one person might have in, say, a half day, James did not hesitate to think that the thoughts and feelings of some highly sensitive individual upon a given situation, or turn of a circumstance, could be given. Time and again he stated that it was the problem of art, the difficulties of it, that he enjoyed; the ferreting out of the hidden reasons that operate in human character.

If these are what he liked as topics for fiction, what sort of civilization will be richest, most likely, in these? An old one, of course, and one would expect this view from any man of letters, since it is more often than not that they are fond of the "storied urn" or castles old in story. But unlike James, these love antiquity for purposes of romance and refuge. With these the past is a shelter from which they find easy escape from the ever urgent present and future. For James the matter was all different; the past interested him because out of it came the queer doings, the occult and the hidden, and yet, at the same time, in it lay the solution for all such insoluble complications and mysteries. Here in old civilizations lived these richly complex and highly civilized creatures who inhabited his super-civilized, ultra-modern world. Here were the "better sort", the sheltered, and the highly specialized and trained; here was humanity de luxe.

There was no limit upon the subject matter of fiction,

though James preferred the bright side, the "clean linen". "Soiled linen" was too apt to leave the reader with no goal for life and render him sordid, and, as we shall see later, James was an idealist in fiction. Of course, there was no fundamental necessity for the low subject not to yield no higher truth, but it was likely not to, and, besides, it was so far from the top as to need no delineation. What needed explanation, in James' view, was the incomprehensibly occult, the spiritual, the imponderable. Everyone knows enough about filth and what he can put his hands upon, but it takes a great deal of defense for the unseen and the ethereal. It's the way out, again, and by logic, by inclination, by every impulse of art, James thought art should aim high.

III

DEFINITION, PURPOSE AND SCOPE

After laying the basis, as it were, for the novelist's work, surveying the field, and examining the nature of his material, it is in order before proceeding further to examine, or at least to present, James' views as to what the novel is, its purpose and scope.

" . . . insist on the fact that . . . the novel is history."

---Partial Portraits, page 379.

"To represent and illustrate the past, the actions of men, is the task of either writer (historian and novelist)."

---Partial Portraits, page 380.

"A novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life; that, to begin with, constitutes its value, which is greater or less according to the intensity of impression."

---Partial Portraits, page 384.

"I should say that the main object of the novel is to represent life."

---Partial Portraits, page 227.

"It is impossible to imagine what a novelist takes himself to be unless he regards himself as an historian and his narrative as history. It is only as a historian that he has the smallest locus standi."

---Partial Portraits, page 116.

"Therefore, when Trollope suddenly winks at us and reminds us that he is telling us an arbitrary thing, we are startled and shocked in quite the same way as if Macaulay or Motley were to drop the historic mask and intimate that William of Orange was a myth . . . ."

---Partial Portraits, page 117.

"The most fundamental and general sign of the novel . . . . is its being everywhere an effort at representation—this is the beginning and the end of it. . . ."

---The Question of Our Speech, page 93.

"The effort really to see and really to represent is no idle business in the face of the constant force that makes for muddlement."

---Preface - Vol. XI, page 13.

" . . . an author's paramount charge is the cure of souls."

---Notes and Reviews, page 19.

"We trust to novels to maintain us in the practice of great indignations and great generosities."

---Notes and Reviews, page 86.

"The great thing to say for them (the novelists) is surely that at any given moment they offer us another world, another consciousness, an experience that . . . muffles the ache of the actual."

---Notes on Novelists, page 436.

"The spell of attraction is cast upon young men by young women in all sorts of ways, and the novel has no more constant office than to remind us of that."

---Preface, Vol. I, page 18.

" . . . the measure of its merit (i. e. prose fiction) is its truth—its truth to something, however questionable that thing may be in point of morals or of taste."

---Notes and Reviews, page 22.

"The only obligation to which in advance we may hold the novel, without incurring the accusation of being arbitrary, is that it be interesting. . . The ways in which it is at liberty to accomplish that result . . . strike me as innumerable. . . They are as various as the temperament of man."

---Partial Portraits, page 384.

" . . . the novel remains still under the right persuasion, the most independent, most elastic, most prodigious of literary forms."

---Preface, Vol. XXI, page 23.

"That a novel should have a certain charm seems to us the most rudimentary of principles. . . ."

---French Poets and Novelists, page 210.

"The novel is of its very nature an "ado"—an ado about something. . . ."

---Preface, Vol. III, page 13.

"Nothing, of course, will ever take the place of the good old fashion of "liking" a work of art or not liking it; the most improved criticism will not abolish that primitive, that ultimate test."

---Partial Portraits, page 395.

"Every good story is of course both a picture and an idea. . . ."

---Partial Portraits, page 269.

" . . . the only classification of the novel that I can understand is into that which has life and that which has it not."

---Partial Portraits, page 393.

"A short story, to my sense and as the term is used in the magazines, has to choose between being an anecdote or a picture. . . . "

---Preface - Vol. I, page 24.

"The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life. When it relinquishes this attempt, the same attempt that we see on the canvass of a painter, it will have arrived at a very strange pass."

---Partial Portraits, page 378.

"What does your contention of non-existent conscious exposures, in the midst of all the stupidity and vulgarity and hypocrisy, imply but that we have been, nationally, so to speak, graced with no instance of recorded sensibility fine

enough to react against these things?—an admission too distressing. What one would accordingly fain do is to baffle any such calamity, to create the record, in default of any other enjoyment of it; to imagine, in a word, the honorable, the producible case. What better example than this of the high and helpful public and, as it were, civic use of the imagination?—a faculty for the possible five employments of which in the interest of morality my esteem grows every hour I live. How can one consent to make a picture of the preponderant futilities and vulgarities and miseries of life without the impulse to exhibit as well from time to time, in its place, some fine example of the reaction, the opposition or the escape."

---Preface, Vol. XV, page 10.

"The only lasting fictions are those which have spoken to the reader's heart, and not to his eye. . . ."

---Notes and Reviews, page 22.

"But the only condition I can think of attaching to the composition of the novel is, as I have already said, that it be sincere."

---Partial Portraits, page 407.

First of all, then, James insists that the novel is a history of life, and that it "competes with life", to use his own phrase. As we see it today, this is not an entirely new doctrine, by any means, but such a view of fiction has not always been held. One recalls at once that though the

novel began with the excuse that it was a history. Fielding gave as a full title "The History of Tom Jones a Foundling," and throughout the story spoke of it as a history. And so did they all. The dramatists, too, were inclined to do the same thing, for fiction seemed to the English mind an insidious form of lying, and was not tolerated except under these various guises. So for those who in earlier times did not write or read fiction frankly as history, it was easiest to take it as a form of pastime with no other excuse for being.

From some such situation as this the idea easily got abroad that the novel was not serious and could lay no claim, therefore, to serious consideration. Critics might define poetry and lay down its laws and regulations, but no one seemed to feel disposed to do the same for fiction. In this way the novel grew and developed until it remained for a later day, practically our own, to bring forward any serious claims for it. The late Marion Crawford in his essay "The Novel; What It Is," frankly said that the novel was a form of amusement and that it was futile to expect anything more of it. The only principles worth anything in it, according to his view, were such as had to do with giving the public what it wanted. Other examples likewise might be cited to show that the novel has rather seldom, one might say, been taken very seriously, and as much might be said about almost any of the forms of literature.

Now James saw the matter in an altogether different light, apparently. For him the novel was history, real history, better history than the conventional sort. The ordinary history of men and nations, thought James, was of necessity partial and incomplete, broken and patched up, vivid in places and vague and sterile in others, but at all events incomplete and inaccurate. So vivid as some of Macaulay proved to be, he was even at that inaccurate. And why? Simply because no mere record of facts, however complete, could give one any very satisfactory account of the doings of men; and that largely because human motive could not be laid bare. But no one might have all the facts. The distant past is so remote, that many of the facts get lost to view. The near and recent past is too close, and, in the nature of the case, much cannot be told. Thus, an incomplete and partial record, thus an inaccurate rendering.

Above all, the set-backs, as James would have thought, was the inaccessibility in conventional history of the motives of men and of governments, and motive was always to him inseparable from the deed itself, He could see no clear dividing line between them. But what about the novel? It has a clear field. It could present all—even the inmost yearnings and desires, the evil and the good. It could not only analyze, but psycho-analyze,- and, by whatever hook or crook, bring up to light the genus homo, the homo boobus or the homo superbus, or whatever your artist, or Mr. Mencken, finds him to be.

The novel, according to James, is a representation of life. By this James meant selection; that is, selection for his picture, or effect, such matters as would give in the shortest possible compass the illusion of life itself. Representation to James was no mere photographing, as we have already seen, no mere"art of the slate pencil." Copying the look of things was not the game at all for him—but rather the choice of such portions of life as by the representative, typical character, would call up the rest of the picture. It was a matter of a line here, a bit of color there, such that on a flat canvass the painter might evoke mountains and gorgeous sunsets, and mysterious twilight, and whatever life itself presents. The whole matter, for James, was a matter of economy, for art to him, as we have already noted, was a thing of compression, which was almost its chief virtue. If the artist were a mere copyist and photographer he would be as tedious and meaningless as life itself is. In such procedure why not send the reader to life? But that is just why the reader looks away from life to the novelist; life presents no meaning, the artist may, and should, re-order it and let men see it all over, but with the meaning brought out. Each element of the picture, then, was to be unmistakably life; life with all the vibrant flavor of life, but life rather in essence than in extenso.

The novel is not only a representation of life, but a personal impression of it according to James; and hence is like a famous definition of literature; life seen through a temperament. Of course, all art, according to James, is an interpretation of life, but it logically follows that however much care may be taken to ascertain the opinions and conclusions of others about it, the novelist's own notions, opinions, judgments are bound to color his findings. And, after all, life isn't an exact science; it is rather a thing of emotion, feelings, imaginings, and thus cannot be measured,—certainly at the present status of knowledge—by scientific instruments and mere intellectual apparatus. Hence the best authority on the meaning of life, as James saw it, was he who lived it most fully—the novelist himself. Or, at least, whether judging well or ill, the personal judgment and impression were the valid judgment and impression.

James thought of science as the central maneuvering ground of humanity, its spot-light, the place where nothing was approved except by the white light of reason. Science was the consensus of reason, to him,—the grand community of the intellect; hence there was no permission for any exhibition that could not endure this fierce daylight of the reason, or all reasons in concord after all illuminations had been made. This, to James, was science. But what about life? Life is

all of it, the white light, the dim light, the shadows, the duskiness, the darkness. Back in the recesses of personality lay the instincts, the subconscious, the subliminal. Here the imagination brooded; here the past lingered in queer and curious remnants; here was chaos. But whatever, it is life, and with life the novelist must deal. The scientist's field could only exist in the spot-light of reason, the novelist's must lie over it all—the spot-light and the no-light, but over it all, it must be said again, over it all. And it must also be said that James would perhaps find the novelist's province more strictly confined to the personal rather than the impersonal and scientific—hence his definitions.

The novel must also be true to life; it must have truth, truth to something, however bad it might seem to be, appears to be James' doctrine here. Accuracy of report, fidelity to the facts, an honest presentation of the record are the desiderata, it would seem. But it must not be thought that James means that the picture is a copy, and only that. Art must play its part here, as elsewhere, and would in the way bring out of all a meaning and not leave matters to a bald, bare, meaningless record. Distortion is what he is talking about in this connection; the tendency some have to report, not what exists, but what ought to exist. And this representation of life must be complete. No one-sided picture will do, for that sort would most certainly distort and wreck

the accuracy of the report.

So much for the rather brief definition of the novel. In the same connection we find indication of what purpose James thought the novel served. And the caution ought to be made again, that since many of these matters and terms merge into each other, James may be expected to traverse slightly the same ground at times.

First, the novel is an escape. Is it a form of amusement, as many have said, ~~but~~ is James contradicting his previous statement that the novel is history? I think not, for there is no necessary reason why the novel may not be both history and amusement; both work and pleasure; both a serious business and yet a refuge, or escape, from life as it is. In fact, I think James believed this to be one of its great virtues, that it did offer this escape from the actual. Time and again he makes the point that the actual is what produces the tedium and the confusion. Eternally guessing or dumbly wondering at the way out of the human predicament and muddlement is what so distressingly tires most mortals. The artist comes with his solution already worked out and set forth in his story. This is at once our solution, our simplification, hence our escape. The novel is a nostrum,- shall I say?- for this particular human trouble, and as all other remedies are not only cures, but refuges, so the novel is, at least, escape, and in some sense a more or less permanent remedy. It answers,

or should answer, one's questions. That is its escape, its pleasure, for the reader; its value, if you please.

James was much impressed in his reading of life with the fact that the actual always produced an ache, and hence he offered the novel as the "muffler," the anodyne, for the pains of actual existence; the novel which he regarded as "the most independent, most elastic, most prodigious of literary forms."

In this view of fiction there was no understanding on James' part that escape meant to smother the reader into a comatose state, but it was an "eyeopener" which let the reader do the thinking and the seeing. There is no place here for predigested food or any other ready-made concoction. Of course, fiction is an escape from the actual, but not an escape lying prone and inert in the novelist's arms, but rather an escape wherein the reader helps do his own climbing out of life's muddle into the serene atmosphere of the novelist's world.

James repels again any imputation that he believes the novel may be a detached record of life, or that it must copy the glaring ugliness of life. Of course, his constitution provided for absolute liberty of subject and treatment, but at the same time he expected the alchemy of the artist to point out the meaning in any story. There was to be no crude pointing of the moral, but the picture, if accurately

presented, at least to the mind of Henry James, would furnish ground for indignation and generosity, and by introducing the reader to these grounds the novelist got the desired results.

The novel becomes, in this view, something of the sort of thing that Aristotle said tragedy was. It exercised the emotions and thereby purged them and stimulated their proper growth, at the same time either killing or giving life to such emotions as needed the one treatment or the other.

Henry James offered as one of the tests, perhaps the test, of the success of the novel that it be interesting, and this is, again, the logic of the belief that fiction is a personal record, rather than a bit of science. It can't be said too often in explanation of this point that the exclusive field of fiction is the out of the way corners of heart and life. Science and philosophy may name the general laws, but art can ever get your or my feeling toward any fact of existence. Just here is where no law can go, since individual feelings come from the parts of us that are rather original and different, not so different as to be unintelligible, but enough so to require individual expression of them through art.

If this is true, and I am certain it is, then the test of art, as James says, is interest. Interest in the reader

is but another indication of soul-hunger, which art, by its very definition, must assuage.

But one hardly need say so much about interest being the test in fiction, except that many have the erroneous impression that Henry James cared nothing about it.

That the novel must be idealistic is but the same thing said already about art in general, and this point may be taken up at greater length under some other phase of the discussion. It may be remarked here, however, that love was the perennial topic for the novelist; of course, every artist finds that his best card. Henry James made it an important part of his literary creed, for the way women handled their side of love was the curious thing to him. Such curiosity was no doubt increased by his having been a celibate, but it was even more on account of the fact that women have always been, and still are, in large degree, puzzling, certainly to a man. And Henry James could see, as he said, no more exciting subject than a study of them. They furnished for him the shades of life which he liked so well to ponder and handle in his fiction. If he was interested in a super-civilization, woman made it, as George Meredith has pointed out; of that there is no question. It proves to be but a necessary conclusion, therefore, that James with his particular bias had to deal most in his fiction with women.

The novel is both picture and idea, said Henry James,

and we know what he meant both by picture and by idea when taken separately, though there may be a shade of the new in the combination. Or rather this, that since he insisted so much upon there being a picture, he meant to indicate that the picture must embody the idea and both become one. The idea would be the thing that moved the artist to produce the picture which turned out to be a sort of Galatea for him—if I may thus use the figure. It is not necessary to develop this further, as it will come up best under another head.

~~and overlapping must be kept to the minimum.~~

IV

MORALITY AND MEANING

We come now to a phase of the subject which in James is very interesting, and which, at the same time, in English literature, has always been one of warm debate. The battle has been fought by all sorts of critical warriors, who have left the field most of the time with no lasting peace having been made. And it is still a live topic in many quarters. "Movie" censorships, societies for the suppression of vice, publishers, parsons, college professors, and all the rest have handled the much-mixed and much-messed matter. Does Henry James clear it up and settle it irrevocably? Perhaps not, but he at least delivers himself clearly as to where he stands, and certainly leaves no doubt as to how he sees it.

" . . . his (Turgenieff's) object is constantly the same—that of finding an incident, a person, a situation, morally interesting. This is his great merit."

---French Poets and Novelists, page 217.

"He had no natural sense of morality, and this we cannot help thinking a serious fault in a novelist."

---French Poets and Novelists, page 89.

" . . . the reason why this clever man (Charles de Bernard) remains so persistently second-rate, is, to our sense, because he had no morality."

---French Poets and Novelists, page 196.

" . . . the author (George Sand) had morally no taste."

---French Poets and Novelists, page 179.

" . . . writers innocent of reflection (follow) a practice of course essentially indelicate, inasmuch as it speedily brings us face to face with scandal and even with evil."

---Notes on Novelists, page 372.

"Every out and out realist who provokes serious meditation may claim that he is a moralist . . . Excellence in this matter consists in the tale and the moral hanging well together, and this they are certainly more likely to do when there has been a definite intention—that intention of which artists who cultivate "art for art" are usually so extremely mistrustful; exhibiting thereby surely a most injurious disbelief in the illimitable alchemy of art."

---French Poets and Novelists, page 201.

"I want to leave a multitude of pictures of my time, projecting my small circular frame upon as many different spots as possible and going in for number as well as quality, so that the number may constitute a total having a certain

value as observation and testimony."

---Letters, Vol. I, page 138.

"What the participants (in a story) do with their agitation, in short, or what it does with them, that is the stuff of poetry, and it is never really interesting save when something finely contributive in themselves makes it so."

---Notes on Novelists, page 292.

"If the picture of life does not cover the ground, what in the world can cover it? The fault can only be the painter's. Woe, in the esthetic line, to any example that requires the escort of precept. . . . Our authors' prefaces and treatises show a mistrust of disinterested art."

----Notes on Novelists, page 376.

"The carnal side of man appears the most characteristic if you look at it a great deal, and you look at it a great deal if you do not look at the other. . . . Is not this the most useful reflection to make in regard to the famous question of the morality, the decency, of the novel? It is the only one, it seems to me, that will meet the case today. Hard and fast rules a priori restrictions mere interdictions (you shall not speak of this, you shall not look at that) . . . . will never in the nature of the case strike an energetic talent or anything but arbitrary. . . . Let us then leave this magnificent art of the novelist to itself and to

its perfect freedom inthe faith that one example is as good as another, and that our fiction will always be decent enough if it is sufficiently general."

---Partial Portraits, page 286.

"There is, I think, no more nutritive or suggestive truth in this connection than that of the perfect dependence of the "moral" sense of a work of art on the amount of felt life concerned in producing it. The question comes back thus, obviously, to the kind and the degree of the artist's prime sensibility, which is the soil out of which the subject springs. The quality and capacity of that soil, its ability to "grow" with due freshness and straightness any vision of life, represents . . . the projected morality."

---Preface to Vol. III, page 9.

"To what degree a purpose in a work of art is a source of corruption I shall not attempt to inquire; the one that seems to me least dangerous is the purpose of making a perfect work."

---Partial Portraits, page 406.

"The philosophic door is always open on her (George Eliot) stage and we are aware that the somewhat cooling draft of ethical purpose draws across it. This constitutes half the beauty of her work; the constant reference to ideas may be an excellent source of one kind of reality—for, after all,

the secret of seeing a thing well is not necessarily that you see nothing else."

---Partial Portraits, page 51.

"There is no impression of life, no manner of seeing it and feeling it, to which the plan of the novelist may not offer a place. . . . Do not think too much about optimism and pessimism; try and catch the color of life itself. . . . Remember that your first duty is to be complete as possible--to make as perfect a piece of work. Be generous and delicate and pursue the prize."

---Partial Portraits, page 408.

"There is one point at which the moral sense and the artistic sense lie very near together; that is in the light of the very obvious truth that the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer. In proportion as the intelligence is fine will the novel, the picture, the statue partake of the substance of beauty and truth. To be constituted of such elements is to my vision to have purpose enough."

---Partial Portraits, page 406.

"Baudelaire of course is a capital text for a discussion of this question as to the importance of the morality—or of the subject matter in general—of a work of art. . . . But even if we had space to enter upon such a discussion, we should spare our words; for argument upon this point wears to our sense a really ridiculous aspect. To deny the relevancy of

subject-matter and the importance of the moral quality of a work of art strikes us as, in two words, very childish. . . . There is very little doubt what the great artists would say. People of that temper feel that the whole thinking man is one, and that to count out the moral element in one's appreciation of an artistic total is exactly as sane as it would be (if the total were a poem) to eliminate all the words in three syllables, or to consider only such portions of it as had been written by candle-light. . . They talk of morality . . . they allude to its being put into and kept out of a work of art... . . It is in reality simply a part of the essential richness of inspiration—it has nothing to do with the artistic process and it has everything to do with the artistic effect. The more a work of art feels it at its source the righer it is; the less it feels it, the poorer it is."

---French Poets and Novelists, page 64.

"'The Belton Estate' . . . is without a single idea. It is utterly incompetent to the primary functions of a book of whatever nature, namely— to suggest thought."

---Notes and Reviews, page 130.

"But I <u>have</u> no view of life and literature, I maintain, other than that our form of the latter in especial is admirable exactly by its range and variety, its plasticity and

liberality, its fairly living on the sincere and shifting experience of the individual practitioner."

---Letters, Vol. II, page 489.

"We accordingly appreciate it in proportion as it accounts for itself, the quantity of the intensity of its references are the measure of our knowledge of it. This is exactly why illustration breaks down when reference, otherwise application, runs short; and why before any assemblage of figures or aspects, otherwise of samples and specimens, the question of what these are, extensively, samples and specimens of declines not to beset us—why, otherwise again, we look ever for the supreme reference that shall avert the bankruptcy of the sense."

---Notes on Novelists, page 343.

"The great general defect of his (Balzac's) manner . . . . is the absence of fresh air, of the trace of disinterested observation. . . In every great artist who possesses taste there is a little—a very little—of the amateur. . . . ."

---French Poets and Novelists, page 70.

"What stands Trollope always in good stead (in addition to the ripe habit of writing) is his various knowledge of the English world—to say nothing of his occasionally laying under contribution the American."

---Partial Portraits, page 120.

"The effect of a novel—the effect of any work of art—is to entertain. . . . the success of a work of art, to my mind, may be measured by the degree to which it produces a certain illusion; that illusion makes it appear to us for the time that we have lived another life—that we have had a miraculous enlargement of experience."

---Partial Portraits, page 227.

"The great question as to a poet or novelist is, How does he feel about life? What, in the last analysis, is his philosophy? When vigorous writers have reached maturity we are at liberty to look in their works for some expression of a total view of the world they have been so actively observing. This is the most interesting thing their works offer us. Details are interesting in proportion as they contribute to make it clear."

---French Poets and Novelists, page 243.

"But I so hunger and thirst in this deluge of cheap romanticism and chromolithographic archaics (babyish, puppyish, as evocation, all it seems to me) for a note, a gleam of the reflection of the life we live, of artistic or plastic intelligence of it, something one can say yes or no to, as discrimination, perception, observation, rendering . . . . I am out of patience with it."

---Letters, Vol. I, page 345.

"Let him forget (always in the interest of art) the eternal responsibility of the rich to the poor. . . ."

---Notes and Reviews, page 67.

"Literature is an objective, a projected result; it is life that is the unconscious, the agitated, the struggling, floundering cause."

---The Question of Our Speech, page 64.

"It (The Memoirs of a Sportsman) offers a capital example of moral meaning giving a sense to form and form giving relief to moral meaning."

---French Poets and Novelists, page 221.

"In a story written in the interest of a theory two excellent things are almost certain to be spoiled . . . . when once an author has his dogma at heart, unless he is very much of an artist, it is sure to become obtrusive at the capital moment, and to remind the reader that he is after all learning a moral lesson."

---Notes and Reviews, page 92.

Henry James believed that the novel should have a moral meaning; this is not to be denied, and the only question left is, what does James understand by a moral meaning? for though the matter of morality in its relation to art may be understood in many quarters, it is not understood in all, or James would not have taken occasion to ex-

plain himself as often as he did. To come at once to an answer, he did not believe in so crude a method as having his story point a moral. He was violently opposed, if one can imagine James in violence, to the sort of story that gathered up the odds and ends in the last chapter, and awarded prizes and inflicted penalties in the "poetic justice" fashion. "So live that when thy summons comes ..." was by no means to be expected from anything he might write, no matter how dear its moral implication might be. His own fictions were not to be so squeezed and pressed as to make them yield neat formulas and ready epigrams for life. James would have inclined to think such novelists as George Eliot too much given to hunting out moral meanings in her stories, or telling the stories in such way as to point them. Certainly, he would admit no forcing of the moral out, or even writing the story for the sake of the nicely pointed meaning. The fact is, the trouble with the story told with its moral, palpable and implicit, or even framed into words, in some cases, is not that the story must not have a moral, or that the reader does not enjoy finding one, but rather that the stating of it offends the reader's intelligence; and art, if anything at all, is a process of innuendo and suggestion. It is the hint to the wise. If the hint is dispensed with in favor of plain language, then the reader suspects that he is being treated as though he were a fool, and objects.

Besides, also, the reader who sits down to be amused primarily, resents being preached to, for sermons are disquisitions on duty, and duty is after all anything but a form of amusement. At any rate, it allows no escape, no temporary let-up in the strenuosity of life.

To put it another way, the picture of life as it is gives the reader the pleasure of learning, rightly directed by the novelist, the lesson of life. The moralizing, didactic fiction, in addition to the danger of distorting life for the sake of the purpose, or moral, brings its lessons ready-made, and therefore ugly. The thing is associated somehow ~~subconsciously~~ in the mind of the reader with some code of thou-shalt-nots, and however good the preachments may be, they fail of the surer, finer effects of art.

Henry James wrote for the wise, however undemocratic that may sound, and I believe all artists so regard their audience. Art was for him a compacting of life, a compression, a rigid economy. People who resort to art, for whatever purposes, are those who are to some degree "initiated," and, hence, are ready to be hinted to rather than plainly, over crudely, addressed. So they prefer the moral to be covered in the story.

That was what James desired. Moral meaning every story must have, but instead of the moral being a thing apart, to be superimposed on the story, it and the story are one. The story, then, is a mere illustration, according to James,

of some general truth, or set of truths, about life. It is a concrete example of a general philosophy of life. The novelist having made his observations, arrived at his conclusions, formulated his scheme of life, embodies all in concrete stories and concrete characters.

James goes to the root of the whole matter when he throws the whole question of morality back upon the writer. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit" would be James' doctrine. Fiction comes out of the fiction writer. It is, so to speak, his web; thus the quality of the web depends almost entirely upon him who weaves it. We are sure of this, for he is constantly explaining in his prefaces how his stories originated; usually as a mere wind-blown particle, a "flying hint," a "germ," as he liked to call it. The hint, or idea, or suggestion, was blown in upon him from life, but the handling of it, the clothing of it, the effect to be made of it, all was for James a matter of the artist's personality. The germ he got outside; what he made it mean to the reader was his own personal process.

Therefore, we are ready to say with him, morality is all a question of the writer, and not something to be taken on or left off at will. The writer's choices, his way of creating character, his ability to make them little or large, to order their lives this way or that, will all depend upon his own view points and horizons. Whatever in the final upshot

of things the story turns out to be will be the artist's reading of life. This will mean that events will have a certain moral color and implication, because the artist set them in scenes of his own creating. They will therefore reflect his own mental or emotional being; his personality, in brief.

But the novelist, to be sure, will not bounce upon the stage, Thackeray-like, to tell us what we should see, or to put into final statements what it all may for practical morality mean. Again, there will be no "so live," or "this teaches." To offer these would be to insult the intelligence of the reader. More than that, the story may, in fact does, mean a variety of things; all moral in their essence, of course— that is, to one reader "Vanity Fair" is this truth of life, to another that. Even as bits of life itself, it is capable of as many moral readings as there are readers with eyes to see. And there is the beauty of your story— that it does furnish its wide variety of nourishment. Suppose your artist did step forward with his particular reading of the tale, might not the reader dare dissent, and prefer his own, as doubtless he does in many others, ~~let us say, "Thanatopsis."~~

So for reasons almost too numerous to be listed, James would think it a poor story that was not its own moral, and certainly he would be no true Jacobite who would have to have extracted a moral for him.

It logically follows, therefore, that if fiction, or art, is an interpretation of life's muddlement, it must be moral. What else could it be if not moral? It is, of course, possible to feel one's way through life without any question as to what it means, or any sense of values, but such living is the exception. For those who are engaged in the strenuous business of helping themselves and the world along the primary questions always are, What is the better way? Which is the best choice? Is this as good as that? For in practical living, indeed, in all living, one thing is better than another, one means more than another. It is all thus, in its lowest terms, a question of morality. It would be a queer story, as James sees it, which would have simply massed facts in no order of arrangement; and hence the moment order begins, the artist's personality comes into play, and moral implications are guaranteed.

James felt that art would drive home its own lesson, and thus we have another reason for his not attempting to point the moral. If the picture as presented did not interest and hold and win its way to the reader, and thereby work its intended results, then no sermonizing along the way, or at the close, would do the thing any better. Certainly the mere moral tag would do little. It rested, for James, upon the great fact that lessons we learn from experience stay with us, while those preached at us, or advised at us, rarely mean

much. Each of us is only as wise as his experience, or, at least, his reading of it, and fiction is a form of experience—a vicarious experience. Life does not actually point the moral, though, like the waves on the shore, it without doubt turns it up to view.

In any consideration of this sort, the "novel with a purpose" looms up and gets into the tangle. Of course it comes back, after all, to the question of morality. James admits no such thing as the purpose novel, on the grounds that art would thereby suffer. Life is life, a picture is a picture, and if the picture is to be accurate its only concern is to be an accurate representation of life. Concerning oneself with a special purpose, or design, in writing fiction, other than to accurately portray life, would endanger the integrity of the portrayal.[76]

But how about the decent and the indecent in art? If one is allowed any picture one will, the only requirement being that one must be accurate, is it not highly probable that something of an immoral nature will get into art? And here is the mare's nest in all of the discussions, it seems to me. Here is where all the "art for art's sake" defenders fly the track and leave the earth—all except Henry James. The average reader, for example, will say that "Othello" or "Measure for Measure" is an immoral play, while "Hamlet" or "Lear" is not. He will say that "The House of Seven Gables"

is a moral novel while "Tom Jones" or possibly "The Scarlet Letter" is immoral. He will contend that "Venus and Adonis" is an immoral poem, while "Paradise Lost" is not, and so on. What does he mean? "Hamlet," "Othello," "Lear," ~~and~~ "Measure for Measure," "The House of Seven Gables," and the rest, all picture forth immorality, they all contain vicious characters, they all concern themselves with various sorts of sin. It happens, however, that "Othello"and "Measure for Measure" deal with sins that are ordinarily taboo, or unmentionable, in mixed company. One may discuss murder, or filial ingratitude, anywhere and everywhere, but sexual irregularity and immorality he may not so discuss. Here, then, lies the distinction for hundreds who essay to discriminate between the moral and immoral in literature.

James came at it on other and far more tenable grounds. To him morality, or immorality, depended, as we have already noted, upon the accuracy or inaccuracy of the picture. To be accurate, true to life, was, according to James, the sole virtue, and it did not matter what the bit of life he attempted to exhibit. Strictly speaking, he was right, for if the first and great commandment of the artist is to picture life, it follows, of course, that the only sin for him is in failing to do that.

But this does not dispose of the matter; certainly not for the reader. He isn't the artist and has no special care

about the mere painting of life. He, perchance, is desperately engaged in living life—in building railroads, abolishing saloons, raising children, driving out prostitution, or what not, and hence it matters very much to him whether this picture or that seems evil or good. One picture depicts the sort of thing that gives him trouble, and, hence, it is immoral for him; the other depicts that which is giving him legitimate pleasure, and, therefore, it is moral. So he reasons, and when he finds a book narrowed down to the depiction of the grossest forms of adultery, or general sexual irregularity, it takes bigger reasons than the "art for art" cry of the novelist to keep him from finding the book immoral.

Of course he fails to discern the difference between the real evil and the picture; and there you are, as James would say. Suppose you insist that art is a picture of life, nevertheless it takes the whole picture to be life; hence the individual pieces and pictures can't, separate and detached, present it. And so the danger that any particular work of art will be immoral in its effects.

As already indicated, James did not make the mistake of thinking that any individual specimen of art taken alone was moral. He even complains at a French writer or two who concern themselves too much about sex. The solution for James in all of it was that art would always be moral if it were sufficiently general.

This, it seems to me, is James' charter of liberty on the whole vexed question. Certainly then the reader who merely runs and skims cannot reasonably complain of contamination if the artist will but show him all. Some one has spoken of James' esthetic idealism; here it is. He was neither a filthy realist, nor a soaring romanticist, but a decent and respectable idealist. The fault he found in all vicious art was not so much inaccuracy of report on the special case, as partial presentation. Sex is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, (if we heed the Freudians) of the facts in human life, but a mere barbarian can see that it is only one. It happens, however, to be one of the taboo topics in Anglo-Saxon mixed company, and so gets the lion's share of attention which the forbidden always gets. James would constantly pluck the arm of the spectator and remind him that the sex picture, or whatever, upon which he gazes, is just one out of many others in life's gallery. He would direct his eyes away from the carnal, since the spiritual also exists. To stare forever upon one scene distorts the vision, he would say, and vitiates the conclusion. The novelist must properly relate his facts and thus bring the whole matter back to accuracy and hence to morality.

James saw further that the artist had more to do than merely to set down what his eyes saw; more to do than use the Camera and Graphophone. This to him, as we shall note more fully

later, was one of the very bad things ~~of all~~ in all art; chiefly because it was the negation of art, and worse still, because it was immoral. James, to say it once more, saw no sort of meaning in life outside of the human intelligence, and he was never done insisting that the artist must impose that intelligence on life, ~~so he spoke.~~ Not that he thought life was immoral; not that— it just wasn't either, it was neutral, non-communicative, mum, as he felt it. Now the only thing that could make art at all, certainly ~~to~~ make it moral, according to James, was for the artist to reflect upon it and make these reflections the reference of his story.

Absence of reflection, and thus a philosophy, in the writer made him out little more than an infant or an imbecile, ~~and~~ who might wander into all sorts of compromising places with his reader. Such procedure would, to James, be blindness of the worst stripe— a case of the blind leading the blind. By reflection, however, James did not mean that the text of the story should be interlarded with the author's comment. Trollope, Thackeray, and George Eliot did not please him in this respect, for he rather expected the reflection to have been done before the story began, and to guide the actual writing it out. The determination of its methods and ends was the province for James where reflection told most. It was in his creations and in what they did, or

said, that came out the author's reflection. It cannot be reiterated too often that the artist, in the James view of it, should at all times remain behind his work, revealing himself, not in appearance, in persona, but rather letting his work stand for him. He was to be a sort of stage manager and playwright combined, but with no curtain speeches, by any means.

If the artist was to efface himself, as James insisted, just how, may we ask again, was he to bring out the moral of his story? Just what were the means of getting the full moral values out of life? For we have already noted that there is danger of the separate and individual picture's being a distortion, or at least a partial presentation. We have found that there might even be something of the immoral in such a view, such a presentation. James, in his usual thorough and sound judgment, took care of this contingency in his understanding of morality in drama. And his way out of this particular handicap was to see that there should be a large number of pictures, and hence a large, general, and complete view—and so the moral effect.

Here, as it seems, is the key-stone of the arch. Give the novelist unlimited freedom in the choice of subject; let him be sincere, let him be accurate, and then if he will but work largely enough, and encompass the whole picture of of life, there can be no danger that any fiction will be of

an immoral tendency. Thus James regarded his own work as a sort of philosophy of his age, and in "competing with life" it became a history of his own time. So much is this the case that Mr. Ford M. Hueffer has gone so far as to say that Henry James was while he was alive about the most valuable, not to say the greatest, man in Britain, and that simply because he more than anyone else revealed the real Britisher to himself. James was a sort of statistician, a prognosticator, in Mr. Hueffer's view, for the British merchant, or manufacturer, or statesman.

I believe, however, that while James was not unaware that his fiction was in some sense a record— a psyschological record— he thought of the total more as a complete and rounded view of life, just as was Browning's or Shakespeare's.

Range and variety the novel must have, "plasticity and liberality," but all growing, it appears, out of the novelist's experience. Here again the writer turns out to be the magician. He is the showman, and himself the most interesting part of all. It would appear that James believed the novelist to be, in his own experience, the typical, representative, character of life; the mirror, or rather the specimen, from which others might be read. Therefore, he should be highly sensitive to impressions, he should know and sympathize with human nature. Such a view as this had a great deal to do with the sort of morality James believed in. It would

appear to be, not only an accurate picture, but a body of outside reference, as one may say, that gave value to picture. As if somehow the artist so placed his personality, his moral essence, into the work, ~~his moral essence~~, as to be of itself a more or less definite moral umpire. I should say that he means by this such a handling of things as to make the reader feel that, whatever the turn of the story, all is well so far as morality goes; that something in the characters themselves—what they do and say—~~that~~ always shows them finely cognizant of the moral law, though not smotheringly aware of it, and tediously and laboriously vocal about it.

The morality that James meant, I should say therefore, was a thing of atmosphere as much as anything else; a sky that bent over his fictional world, and not a disgusting odor that kept his characters sniffing and talking about it eternally. It was the Whitman view. No man was more deeply religious and moral in his creed than Walt Whitman, but in spite of it, he averred that he rather liked oxen and the dumb brutes generally because they weren't forever worrying about their sins.

Or to put it another way, James is a stage manager to whose integrity and honor we trust for a clean performance. Manner then, and atmosphere, and color, all had subtly to do with the producing of this morality, or moral quality, which James steadily maintained fiction should have.

As for art in general, so for the novel in particular, James held that it must entertain and give the reader the illusion of life and thereby the vicarious experience so often spoken of. He seems to be sound in this, or at least to agree with both critics and readers, ~~though we do not~~ but whether or not his fiction does that is another matter, ~~and will be taken up later.~~ I am certain, however, that James, like any other novelist, wrote for a special kind of reader, and therefore made no attempt to entertain all kinds.

V

FORM AND PLOT

Henry James seems to have held very decided views on all the matters that pertain to fiction, but he seems almost vehement occasionally in his insistence upon form.

"It is form above all that is talent. . . ."

---Notes on Novelists, page 441.

"It has been said that what makes a book classic is its style. We should modify this, and instead of style say form."

---French Poets and Novelists, page 180.

"Does any work of representation, of imitation, live long that is predominately loose? It may live in spite of looseness; but that, we make out, is only because closeness has somewhere, where it has most mattered, played a part."

---Notes on Novelists, page 192.

"Madame Bovary . . . is a classic because the thing . . . . is ideally done and because it shows that in such doing eternal beauty may dwell."

---Notes on Novelists, page 80.

"I cannot imagine composition existing in a series of blocks, nor conceive, in any novel worth discussing at all, of a passage of description that is not in its intention narrative, a passage of dialog that is not in intention descriptive, a touch of truth of any sort that does not partake of the nature of incident, an incident that derives its interest from any other source than the general and only source of the success of a work of art—that of being illustrative. A novel is a living thing, all one and continuous, like any other organism, and in proportion as it lives will it be found . . . that in each of the parts there is something of each of the other parts."

---Partial Portraits, page 391.

"But as the soul of the novel is its action, you should describe only those things which are accessory to the action."

---Notes and Reviews, page 25.

"The great thing, of course, is to have architecture."

---Partial Portraits, page 315.

"But woe to the writer who claims the poet's license, without being able to answer the poet's obligations; to the writer of whatever class who subsists upon the immunities, rather than the responsibilities, of his task."

---Notes and Reviews, page 17.

"We can surely account for nothing in the novelist's work that hasn't passed through the crucible of his imagination. . . . "

---Preface to Vol. XV, page 17.

"We get the impression of a direct transfer, a "lift" bodily, of something seen and known, something not really produced by the chemical process of art, the crucible or retort from which things emerge for a new function."

---Notes on Novelists, page 275.

"The question of the whereabouts of the unity of a group of data subject to be wrought together into a thing of art . . . becomes always, by my sense of the affair, quite the first thing to be answered; for according to the answer shapes and fills itself the very vessel of that beauty—the beauty exactly <u>of</u> interest, of maximum interest, which is the ultimate extract of any collocation of facts, any picture of life, and the finest aspect of any artistic work. . . Call a novel a picture of life as much as we will—it has had to be selected, selected under some sense for something; and the unity of the exhibition should meet us, does meet us if the work be done, at the point at which the sense is most patent."

---Notes on Novelists, page 394.

"The sense of a system saves the painter from the base-

ness of an arbitrary stroke. . . . . "

---Preface to Vol. VII, page 14.

Every turn of Henry James' critical screw indicates that he believed in form, but what exactly did he mean by it, for almost any other writer believes in the same thing? Is form the mere sum, or list, of things done, and descriptions and analyses and settings something else?

Is the novel divisible into that sort of division, and is it a thing to be joined together as the parts of a mahogany table, for example, or a radio receiving set? Not for Henry James. The best way to state the James view would be to say that the novel was in many ways a piece of exposition, or better still, an argument, with all of it built around the thing to be explained, or the point to be proved. In an unusual sense his doctrine was just that, and his practice was likewise just that. Not that it turns itself into a thing as prosaic as exposition, or argument, despite the fact that many readers so feel that in James. The novel for him was always narrative, even in its passages of description, but it was narrative told in some such manner as a speaker's anecdotes; illustratively. He holds that so far are plot, or form, and content one and the same thing they constitute a living organism. And he would admit the full analogy of the human body, from which, of course, the

flesh may not be severed from the skeleton, and the body remain alive. Pushing the figure further, James felt, it appears, that just as the body—bones, muscles, lungs, or what not—is composed of cells, blood, so should good fiction ~~should~~ be constituted; the point being that the living conception of the artist should flow blood-like all through it; with such result that no part could even appear as separate, or in any wise be distinct from the rest. All was to be a symmetrical whole—fully and completely adjusted in the various parts.

Such a conception would, as we have already seen, exclude any comments of the author as such; it would eliminate any purple patches of description simply for themselves; it would preclude any more excursions, no matter how fine, in and for themselves. The only separable parts are the author's "germ" which he begins with, and the finished story; but this is hardly relevant to the discussion here.

Henry James believed that, at all events, the novel is narrative. No one need think he misunderstood the function of fiction, for no matter how full of idea, or ideas it might be, James held to the view that it was after all "story" in the good old sense that something was always happening. Thus, no sort of mere propaganda might hide in fiction, no mere tractarian purposes, such as, for example, one sees [illegible] in Mr. H. G. Wells, or Mr. Upton Sinclair. The

story was not, for James, a string on which to hang one's "pearls" of discussion; no mere place to grind axes, or anything of the kind. And no ideal about moral meaning, or idea, ever turned James away from the view that the novel is, above all, a tale, a story, a narrative.

The novelist gets tossed up to him somewhere, or somehow, out of the mazes of human existence a theory as to what may be the meaning of given life phenomena, and, accordingly, sets going a story which shall enclose the idea. Or, we will say, he starts with a soul, a spiritus, in his hands, which he breathes out into a body— the story. Hence, this body, this story, must possess nothing that does not yield the full measure of flexibility and happiness to the soul, the idea, which informs the body. Therefore the body by no means exists for itself, despite the importunity of readers who care little for idea, but are keen about adventure. Nothing not accessory to the action must go in, and even description, by this view, is another sort of narration— because it is putting objects in the order of place instead of events in the order of time.

Such doctrine surely plays havoc, so far as James' work goes, with the anthology makers and the volumes of selections, and [illegible], that one meets on almost every hand. And it is interesting to see that nobody "selects" from James, or presents "excerpts" and "scenes"; at least, it has not been my

experience to find any fine passages detached from him. One might as well try to mend humpty-dumpty or make distinctions between tweedledum and tweedledee.

The novel is all action for him, even though some are inclined to feel that the stories get nowhere. Description, as we have noted, dialog, and all, turned out to be various phases of progress, or action, in his stories. The point about all is that there is nothing static, according to James. No matter what the circumstances, he seemed to see the narrative as moving on like some steady, persistent, ever-deepening stream. It might not eddy, or meander slowly through flat meadows, but everywhere, and at all times, must move straight ahead. Such a figure James might have used of his art, inasmuch as no writer has seemed fonder of figures than he. Of course, as with all figures, it will not do to make them proceed on all-fours, for James had little of the precipitate and hasty action in his stories. There were not often times when the current broke and thundered over shoals and shallows. More often the action moved slowly and majestically, like some Mississippi, that seemed hardly to move at all. ~~But I must heed my own caution and not keep up the figure too far.~~

Plots were not to be lifted, as were Shakespeare's, or discovered complete in life, or even taken whole from anywhere. They were to be made by the weaving of the novelist, as subject, idea, characters, demanded that they be woven.

James constantly maintained that plot was not some sort of mould, or skeleton, into which material was poured. It was of another process entirely. It was rather a "germ" that grew into proportions, the proportions of a story. And in this view there can be no such thing as an interesting, or uninteresting, idea ~~per se~~ of itself, but only ~~such~~ as the novelist makes so. The truth of James' contention is often felt in the case of those fictions that seem to bulge with events, and stand all stuffed and packed with ideas, but ~~never~~ that somehow do not to leave behind any but the most ragged effects. Such, I think, is Lawrence Sterne's "Tristram Shandy." Here is plenty of fun and frolic and "life," but what does it all amount to, except as a sort of museum; which, of course, always has a certain interest? I recall a great ~~deal~~ many of the odds and ends of the tale, but not any single impression of the ~~sort~~ kind one gets in "The Scarlet Letter," or "The Return of the Native." And the trouble, as James would urge, was that the material does not yield its full amount of interest; or, in other words, that the novelist had not made it interesting—he had not really presented it.

We find, thus, that James believed firmly in form and finish, and in what Poe calls unity, or totality of effect, though I don't see that James thought of plot in the usual sense of it. Surely there was no great outward complication

of incident which he advocated as plot. Plot means a weaving together, and so had the connotation always been of a much tangled web, but James seems not to have thought of it, or spoken of the novel in such terms. Reading his stories merely for seeing what is to "happen," or something of that sort, no one ever does, and the reason is that James has little, or none, of such "happening" in them. Let us say it again; his stories were bits of exposition and argument, and when that was wound up the story was over.

James had a deep-seated aversion to looseness of plot as found in any method which did not hold the artist to his purpose; and such a method he found the "autobiographic" to be. This was the very incarnation of evil in art, as James saw it. Indeed, it was no art at all. If James had been a Walt Whitman, or a Mark Twain, with great animal spirits, burly and robustious, he might have seen the matter otherwise. If he had been akin to Dickens, or to Shakespeare, let us say, or Browning, in their abundant life, he might not have insisted so much upon the fact that mere life in a book is not art. But he was not of these high-spirited fellows to whom everything alive seemed of interest. And, strictly speaking, there is fine logic in the Henry James position, even if life is at all points interesting. For no one could successfully contend that it is at all points

valuable, or that a given portion is as valuable and significant as any other.

The logic of James' insistence upon the novel's being organized and selective was unescapable, as he saw it. To go a little further into it, he would say that the universe is composed of organized and unorganized matter; that is, animal and plant life represent the organized, while mere inert matter—gold, silver, water, air, [illegible]—represents the unorganized. In any case, the organized tends toward, and becomes life; so that one might say that plant life, animal life, human life, strictly speaking, comprize all life, and what is not of these is mere dead matter. Or in other words, the upshot of the whole process is that life, of whatever kind, means organization, and organization means the selection of this and the rejection of that; [illegible] all for the purpose of producing this or that organism with this or that function. Thus such an organism demands one thing for its makeup and rejects another. Or it has a sense of values. Inert matter does not, for it exists for no particular function, since it is dead. All life is organization and all organization is selection.

This is a clumsy way of coming at it, but it may help to clear up the view, I feel, and tends to show that whatever may be said to the contrary, art, in the true sense of the word, is, and must become more and more, a thing of

specialization or selection; a thing of definite form. Not only does the analogy of physical life support the view, but human history, as well, shows considerable tendency toward specialization, and the gradual organization of scattered groups and forces. Hence it was inevitable that art, which undertook to imitate and represent the process of life, should follow the same principle of selection. In this view, accordingly, some things are bound to be better than others, and the artist's game is not simply and only to photograph life.

VI

CHARACTER AND SETTING

To Henry James character and incident were the same things. Indeed, the whole matter of life and art was so much of a unit that one finds him rather ruthlessly breaking down many more or less acceptable divisions. Plot and idea were one and the same thing, and so he comes to say that character and incident are the same thing. Well, such views are evidence, at least, that he had gone philosophically down to the bottom of the matter, and found that many things broken up into pieces for convenience of handling were very essentially of one ultimate piece.

"There is an old-fashioned distinction between the novel of character and the novel of incident which must have cost many a smile to the intending fabulist . . . the terms may be transposed at will. What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?"

---Partial Portraits, page 392.

"If Dickens fails to live long, it will be because his figures are particular without being general; because they are individuals without being types; because we do not feel their continuity with the rest of humanity. . . ."

---Partial Portraits, page 318.

"Madame Bovary is typical, like all powerfully conceived figures in fiction."

---French Poets and Novelists, page 205.

"Character, in any sense in which we can get at it, is action, and action is plot, and any plot which hangs together, even if it pretend to interest us only in the fashion of a Chinese puzzle, plays upon our emotion, our suspense, by means of personal references."

---Partial Portraits, page 106.

" . . . the fiction hero successfully appeals to us only as an eminent instance, as eminent as we like, of our own conscious kind."

---Preface to Vol. I, page 14.

"If persons either tragically or comically embroiled with life allow us the comic or tragic value of their embroilment in proportion as their struggle is a measured and directed one, it is strangely true, none the less, that beyond a certain point they are spoiled for us by carrying of a due light. They may carry too much of it for our cre-

dence, for our compassion, for our derision. They may be shown as knowing too much and feeling too much—not certainly too much for their remaining remarkable, but for their remaining "natural" and typical, for their having the needful communities with our own precious liability to fall into traps and be bewildered . . . the wary reader for the most part warns the novelist against making his characters too interpretative of the muddle of fate, or in other words too divinely, too priggishly clever."

---Preface to Vol. V, page 9.

"A character is interesting as it comes out and by the process and duration of that emergency."

---Preface to Vol. X, page 13.

"He (Adam Bede) lacks that supreme quality without which a man can never be interesting to men—the capacity to be tempted."

---Views and Reviews, page 21.

"It is a familiar truth to the novelist . . . that as this or that character belongs to the subject directly . . . or the other belongs to it but indirectly."

---Preface to Vol. III, page 17.

"Verily even, I think, no story is possible without its fools . . . At the same time I confess I never see the

leading interest of my human hazard but in a consciousness . . . . subject to fine intensification and wide enlargement."

---Preface to Vol. V, page 12.

"I profoundly doubt whether the central object of a novel may successfully be a passionless creature."

---Views and Reviews, page 22.

"They (characters) are interesting, in fact, as subjects of fate . . . in proportion as, sharing their existence, we feel where fate comes in and just how it gets at them . . . Therefore it is not superfluous that their identity shall first be established for us, and their adventures, in that measure, have a relation to it and therewith an appreciability. There is no such thing in the world as an adventure pure and simple; there is only mine and yours and his and hers—it being the greatest adventure of all, I verily think, just to <u>be</u> you or I, just to be he or she. . . . What befalls us is but another name for the way our circumstances press upon us— so that an account of what befalls us is an account of our circumstances."

---The Question of Our Speech, page 105.

" . . . that reflective part which governs conduct and produces character."

---Partial Portraits, page 286.

" . . . the figures in any picture, the agents in any drama are interesting only in proportion as they feel their respective situations . . . (have) the power to be finely aware and richly responsible. It is those . . . who "get most" out of all that happens to them and who in so doing enable us, as readers of their record, . . . to get most."

---Preface to Vol. V, page 7.

Henry James believed that character was to be set in action under the full law of its being, and whatever it did in response to that law constituted the plot, no matter how little conventional it happened to be. There was to be no romancing, or hunting for the bow-wow strain, or anything of the sort. If the kind of people one found on earth did not engage in heroics, it was no business of the novelist, James believed, to put him through such heroics.

On the other hand, characters, for James, were not people who remained inert and static. The only way he could understand them or help the reader to understand them was by getting them into action. Nor might such action be a mere use of the legs, but also the eyes and the ears, the faculties, or, in a word, whatever implements were on their hands to use. And incident was no detached thing either, with James, for he could see no performance of any sort in a vacuum. Just as there is no sound without an ear to record it, so for him there could be no incident except as

character produced it, and was determined by it.

Henry James would insist that characters be typical, representative, and this doctrine should be obvious, though there is confusion, in some quarters at least, as to the matter. For example, I have seen it stoutly contended that a character should be more than a type, should be individual. Of course, this is true, if one understands it properly, and it may be that all parties are right, if they but knew how to get together. If fiction is an image of life, or, at least, if it is to give the illusion of life, it follows that those who people its pages shall be human beings. Fiction is addressed to human beings, and hence the figures in it should be human to really win our favor. True, they may be individual to the point of caricature, as with Dickens, but usually such caricatures are merely intended to be humorous, and so can lay no claim to our serious regard. I don't see how any one could contend that a character could be more than human. All of us are, of course, more or less individual, but we are, perhaps, more typical and alike than we are unlike, and the moment we become absolutely different from the rest of humanity, we become prodigies, or lunatics, or freaks, and thus place ourselves beyond the pale of ordinary human sympathies. This was James' meaning, undoubtedly, in his contention for typical characters.

Another matter which might be listed as a phase of the

preceding, or very closely akin to it, is James' requirement that all characters should be human; in the sense that they possess at least some of the foibles and weaknesses of humanity.

All this sounds well from the mouth of Henry James, especially as he has been thought of as creating characters that lack the fire and fury of life; characters that are too fine-grained and remote for general sympathy. However that may be in the actual practice, James' theory about it was correct, or, at least, conventional. The theory is, I presume, old and runs back to the Elizabethans, and, peradventure, to the times when the morning stars sang together. Everyone knows that it was the early theory of drama that the hero in tragedy should have some defect in which the forces of opposition might lodge their attack, and thus present the spectacle of defeat through no fault of the reigning gods, but through his own.

James does not hold the theory for the same reason, but he does see that characters intended to interest human beings must be human, and everyone knows what it means to be human, which, as Pope said, is to err. Blundering is the method-in-trade of humanity, and it has always done that to fine perfection. Of course James would not have put it so cynically as I have, but he realized, and said, that the novelist's creatures must not get above the human predica-

ment. They must not be above passion and temptation; at least have a fair supply of human frailty. Otherwise, how can human beings see and understand and sympathize?

The novel, for James, was, in a large sense, drama, as he stated at times, and the interest we have in drama, or any other exhibition which we call play, or make-believe, is that we may withdraw, or escape, for the moment, from the pressure of life and watch our "earth-born companions and fellow-mortals" puzzle at it. If they are too perfect, or too wise, or too alert and god-like, we don't enjoy it; they aren't enough like us. We, for the time, must be the gods, and there would be no pleasure in watching a spectacle that did not present us the Calibans and Cains of life.

James was always interested in what he liked to call the "human predicament," for he firmly believed, as he said, that life was full of them; indeed life itself was a predicament. Therefore, the best characters were those who were in it, and not only in it, but fully aware of it. For him that was the interest of the matter, and it accounts in large measure for his most sensitively alert creations--"little Henry Jameses", as they are sometimes called. He speaks, as quoted above, of the personal attitude toward everything that happens. There is no adventure pure and simple, but yours and mine, and just being you or I is, in itself, an adventure, because it carries all the risks and

liberties that each of our set of circumstances presses upon us. Even the circumstances themselves were in some degree adventures. And how amazingly alert James himself was; or, at least, how delicately sensitive he was to life! It was all exciting to him. Not only the hair-breadth escapes in hunting up a North Pole, or in maneuvering an army, for example, but just in being oneself, anywhere and everywhere. Some of this doctrine, one inclines to think, came out of James' own peculiar circumstances. A man who at all times led a sheltered life, a sort of invalid in youth, one remembers, a man of rich and fine cultivation, whose life was spent amongst the finer vibrations, as he would say. But withal a man of robust intellect, an Olympian in many ways, pondering life, observing it, every nuance of it, till the smallest thought, or feeling, or emotion, or even shade of these, registered itself in his brain. I say I think that James was greatly in these alert, aware, highly sensitive, marvelously clever people he creates—and that would have been but a sort of fulfilment of his doctrine, whereby the novel took its color from its author. Thus he would have seen no special vice in his creations being, in many respects, "chips from the old block."

Such characters as these, "finely aware and richly responsible", are those that get most and give most, he says,

and isn't there, again, a profound truth in that? Certainly, for the attentive reader of his fiction, James has much to give, though he was always complaining that there were few such readers. He did not despair, as he expected civilization would gradually produce more and more of them. One inclines to wonder if that is not, after all, the tendency?

On the other side there is the popular notion that unsophistication is to be desired, and innocence is the sweetest thing on earth to look upon. So it may be to many, but, as the exasperatingly clever Mr. Shaw has brought out, no first-rate soul ever ~~wants refuge~~ seeks refuge in a return to a carefree Garden of Eden, or a land of Lotus eaters. The march of progress has meant more and more sophistication, more and more awareness, as James would say, and, rather than diminishing man's pleasure, he thought it tended to increase it. Thereby there proved to be a double pleasure. One not only had the pleasure of this, or that, experience, but he received the added pleasure of knowing what it was while he enjoyed it, and exactly what value it was to him. No, unsophistication to James meant blindness. Children might enjoy life, but certainly their pleasures were not to be compared with the awareness of manhood.

James, then, was fond of the "aware", the "alert", the "richly responsible" character. The game of fiction thus

became a marvelously subtle thing, and every turn of it was dramatic, since out of these turns came the issues of life.

If the novelist could explain the circumstances of character he explained character, for out of these by a slow process character was made.

One other point to be noted before one leaves this matter of character, and that is that character, while it must be aware and clever and alert, and all that, was not to be all head and no heart. Passion, or heart, or human interest, must enter into its make-up. It comes back to his statement that the test of fiction, or art, is its heart interest. And it may be said here that generally James lived up to this tenet in his creed.

Henry James created a great variety of characters, as do most novelists, and observes that some are directly in the light, others not; some are mere stage furniture, accessories to the main ones, and thus we must judge his work by his intentions— by his leading characters.

A great deal more might be said about the James theory here, though we may revert more fully to it later. He seems to have regarded character as a hypothesis to account for the phenomena of human nature, and therefore it could in no sense be separable from the facts of life. Action and character, character and action,- they were always interchangeable terms for him, each being determined by the other.

VII

STYLE AND METHOD

We come now to a topic which is perhaps the most important in the Henry James literary creed, and one which might cover the whole study, for manner, method, is the one term which includes all the others. So much does James represent and stand for method that we hear much about his earlier and his later "manner", and surely in the case of James "style was the man", as Buffon put it.

" . . . it takes method, blest method, to extract their soul and to determine their action."

---Notes on Novelists, page 345.

" . . . we are prone to conceive of the ultimate novelist as a personage altogether purged of sarcasm."

---French Poets and Novelists, page 251.

"Then comes that extensive human sympathy, that easy understanding of a character at large, that familiarity with man, from which a novelist draws his real inspiration, from which he borrows all his ideal lines and hues, to

which he appeals for a blessing on his fictitious process, and to which he owes it that, firm locked in the tissue of the most rigid prose, he is still more or less of a poet."

---Notes and Reviews, page 201.

"A case is poor when the cluster of the artist's sensibilities is small, or they themselves are wanting in keenness, or else when the person fails to admit them . . . . to what may be called a legitimate share in his attempt."

---Partial Portraits, page 249.

"Really, universally, relationsstop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the novelist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily appear to do so."

---Preface to Vol. I, page 7.

"It is, not surprisingly, one of the rudiments of criticism that a human, a personal "adventure" is no <u>a priori</u>, no positive and absolute and inelastic thing, but just a matter of relation and appreciation—a name we conveniently give, after the fact, to any passage, to any situation, that has added the sharp taste of uncertainty to a quickened sense of life. Therefore the thing is, all beautifully, a matter of interpretation and of the particu-

lar conditions; without a view of which latter some of the most prodigious adventures, as one has often had occasion to say, may vulgarly show for nothing."

---Preface to Vol. XVIII, page 23.

"It may be said that in a thoroughly agreeable style good breeding is never an agressive quality . . . ."

---French Poets and Novelists, page 190.

"Your (Bourget) love of intellectual daylight absolutely your pursuit of complexities, is an injury to the patches of ambiguity and the abysses of shadow which really are the clothing--or much of it--of the effects that constitute the material of our trade."

---Letters - Vol. I, page 289.

"Miss Birdseye" was evolved entirely from my moral consciousness, like every other person I have ever drawn..."

---Letters - Vol. 1, page 104.

"Each of us, from the moment we are worth our salt, writes as he can and only as he can . . . to do the thing at all, you must use your own, and nobody's else, trick of presentation."

---Letters - Vol. I, page 288.

" . . . you will find in it something of the same strange <u>eloquence</u> of suggestion and rhythm as I do: which

is what literature gives when it is most exquisite and which constitutes its sovereign value and its resistance to devouring time."

---Letters - Vol. I, page 203.

"Passion and sentiment must always be more or less intelligent not to shock the public taste."

---Notes and Reviews, page 96.

"It is brought home to us afresh that there is no complete creation without style any more than there is complete music without sound."

---Notes on Novelists, page 255.

"It is because these things are described only in so far as they bear upon the action, and not in the least for themselves." ---Notes and Reviews, page 24.

" . . . I think your (Mrs. Humphrey Ward) material suffers a little from the fact that the reader feels you approach your subject too immediately, show him his elements, the cards in your hand, too bang off from the first page— so that a wait to begin to guess what and whom the thing is going to be about doesn't impose itself. . . I should have urged you: Make that consciousness (of your "center" character) full, rich, universally prehensile, and stick to it— don't shift— and don't shift arbitrarily— how otherwise do you get your unity of subject or keep up your reader's sense of it?"

---Letters - Vol. I, page 322.

"The eternal time question is accordingly, for the novelist, always there and always formidable. . . . . ."

---Preface to Vol. I, page 15.

"There is, to my vision, no authentic, and no really interesting and no <u>beautiful</u>, report of things on the novelist's, the painter's part, unless a particular detachment has operated, unless the great stewpot or crucible of the imagination, of the observant and recording and interpreting mind in short, has intervened and played its part--and this detachment, this chemical transmutation for the aesthetic, the representational, end is terribly wanting in autobiography brought, as the horrible phrase is, up to date."

---Letters - Vol. II, page 181.

"Newman . . . was to be the lighted figure . . . at the window of his wide . . . consciousness we are seated, from that admirable position we "assist". . . . A beautiful infatuation this always, I think, the intensity of the creative effort to get into the skin of the creature . . . the effort of the artist to preserve for his subject that unity . . . that effect of a <u>center</u> which most economize its value."

---Preface to Vol. II, page 21.

"None [story.] was ever very well told, I think, under the law of mere elimination."

---Preface to Vol. I, page 16.

" . . . in art economy is always beauty. . . . . ."

---Preface to Vol. XVII, page 20.

"At least when you (Hugh Walpole) ask me if I don't feel Dostoieffsky's "mad jumble, that flings down in a heap' nearer truth and beauty than the picking and composing . . . . I reply with emphasis that I feel nothing of the sort, and that the older I grow and the more I go the more sacred to me do picking and composing become. . . . Don't let anyone persuade you . . . that strenuous selection and comparison are not the very essence of art, and that Form is not substance without it. . . . Form alone takes, and holds and preserves, substance . . . There is nothing so deplorable as a work of art with a leak of interest, and there is no such leak of interest as through commonness of form. Its opposite, the found (because the sought-for) form is the absolute citadel and tabernacle of interest."

---Letters - Vol. II, pages 237,238.

"The story, if it represents anything, represents the subject, the idea . . . of the novel. . . .This sense of the story being the idea, the starting point, of the novel, is the only one that I see in which it can be spoken of as something different from its organic whole; and since in proportion as the work is successful the idea permeates and penetrates it, informs and animates it, . . . in that proportion

do we lose our sense of the story being a blade which may be drawn more or less out of its sheath."

---Partial Portraits, page 400.

"I was myself so much more antecedently conscious of my figures than of their setting . . . I could think so little of any fable that didn't need its agents positively to launch it. . . . ."

---Preface to Vol. III, page 9.

"There are two elements of the art of the novelist which, as they present, I think, the greatest difficulty, tend thereby most to fascinate us: in the first place that mystery of the fore-shortened procession of facts and figures, of appearances of whatever sort, which in some lights is but another name for the picture governed by the principle of composition. . . . The . . second difficulty is that of representing, to put it simply, the lapse of time, the duration of the subject; representing it, that is, more subtly than by blank space, or a row of stars, on the historic page. . . . Quality and manner of statement account for it in a finer way— always assuming, as I say, that unless it is accounted for nothing else really is."

---The Question of Our Speech, page 108.

"I hold that interest may be, must be, exquisitely made and created, and that if we can't make it, we who undertake to, nobody and nothing will make it for us; though nothing is more possible, nothing may even be more certain, than that

my quest of it, my constant wish to run it to earth, may entail the sacrifice of certain things that are not on the straight line of it. . . . The fine thing about the fictional form to me is that it opens such widely different windows of attention. . . ."

---Letters - Vol. II, page 487.

" . . . it (Isabel Archer's Vigil) is but the vigil of searching criticism; but it throws the action further forward than twenty "incidents" . . ."

---Preface to Vol. III, page 20.

" . . . we proceed by "centers"— and I have never, I confess, embraced the logic of any superior process . . . there is no economy of treatment without an adopted, a related point of view, and though I understand under certain degrees of pressure, a represented community of vision between several parties to the action when it makes for concentration, I understand no breaking up of the register, no sacrifice of the recording consistency, that does not rather scatter and weaken. In this truth resides the secret of discriminated occasion— that aspect of the subject which we have our voted choice of treating either as picture or scenically, but which is apt, I think, to show its fullest worth in the Scene. Beautiful exceedingly, for that matter, those occasions or parts of an occasion when the boundary line between picture and scene bears a little

the weight of the double pressure. . . ."

---Preface to Vol. XIX, page 16.

" . . . I drew on a sheet of paper . . . the neat figure of a circle consisting of a number of small rounds, disposed at equal distance about a central object. The central object was my situation, my subject in itself, to which the thing would owe its title, and the small rounds represented so many distinct lamps, as I liked to call them, the function of each of which would be to light with all due intensity one of its aspects."

---Preface to Vol. IX, page 16.

" . . . I delight in a deep-breathing economy and an organic form."

---Preface to Vol. VII, page 10.

"I have not the least hesitation in saying that I aspire to write in such a way that it would be impossible to an outsider to say whether I am at a given moment an American writing about England or an Englishman writing about America (dealing as I do about both countries) and so far from being ashamed of such an ambiguity I should be exceedingly proud of it, for it would be highly civilized."

---Letters - Vol. I, page 141.

" . . . I, for one, should have looked much askance at the proposal . . . to graft or"grow" . . . a picture by another hand on my own picture— this being always, to my sense, a lawless incident. . . . Anything that relieves responsible prose of the duty of being, while placed before us, good enough, interesting enough and, if the question be of picture, pictorial enough, above in itself, does it the worst of services. . . . One welcomes illustration . . . with pride and joy; but also with the emphatic view that . . . it would quite stand off. . . as a separate and independent subject of publication, carrying its text in its spirit."

---Preface to Vol. XXIII, page 9.

"It is as if, for these aspects, the impersonal plate— in other words the poor author's comparatively cold affirmation or thin guarantee—had felt itself a figure of attestation at once too gross and too bloodless, likely to affect us as an abuse of privilege when not an abuse of knowledge."

---Preface to Vol. XIX, page 17.

"How do we know given persons, for any purpose of demonstration, unless we know their situation for themselves, unless we see it from their point of vision, that is from their point of pressing consciousness or sensation?"

--The Question of Our Speech, page 98.

"As it stands, the denouement shocks the reader most painfully. Nothing has prepared him for it; the story does not move toward it; it casts no shadow before it."

---Views and Reviews, page 32.

Dialogue, as it is commonly called, is singularly suicidal from the moment it is not directly illustrative of something given us by another method, something constituted and presented. . . . There is always at best the author's voice to be kept out. It can be kept out for occasions, it cannot be kept out always."

---Notes on Novelists, page 442.

"Working out economically almost anything is the very life of the art of representation; just as the request to take on trust, tinged with the least extravagance, is the very death of the same."

---Preface to Vol. XV, page 12.

"The ever-importunate murmur, "Dramatise it, Dramatise it!'"

---Preface to Vol. XVII, page 14.

"A psychological reason is to my imagination an object adorably pictorial; to catch the trick of its complexion— I feel as if that idea might inspire one to Titianesque efforts. There are few things more exciting to me, in short, than the psychological reason . . ."

---Partial Portraits, page 402.

"The first half of a fiction insists ever on figuring to me as the stage or theatre for the second half. . . . ."

---Preface to Vol. VII, page 12.

"The moving accident, the rare conjunction, whatever it be, doesn't make the story— in the sense that the story is our excitement, our amusement, our thrill and our suspense; the human emotion and the human attestation, the clustering human conditions we expect presented, only make it."

---Preface to Vol. XVII, page 20.

"But we prize it (Helene) as we prize all the very best things, according to our meditative after-sense of it. Then we see its lovely unity melting its brilliant parts into a single harmonious whole."

---French Poets and Novelists, page 224.

"I adore a rounded objectivity, a completely and patiently achieved one, and what I mean by your (H. G. Wells) perversity and your leak is that your attachment to the autobiographic form for the <u>kind of thing</u> undertaken, the whole expression of actuality, "up to date" affects me as sacrificing what I hold most dear, a precious effect of perspective, indispensable, by my fond measure, to beauty and authenticity."

---Letters, Vol. II, page 334.

"One's work should have composition, because composition alone is positive beauty. . . . Had I meanwhile made him (Lambert Strether) at once hero and historian, endowed him with the romantic privilege of the"first person"—the darkest abyss of romance this, inveterately, when enjoyed on the grand scale—variety, and many other queer matters as well, might have been smuggled in by the back door. Suffice it . . . that the first person, in the long piece, is a form foredoomed to looseness. . . . ."

---Preface to Vol. XXI, page 17.

" . . . . how little of life he (Kipling) can make use of. . . . Almost nothing of the complicated soul or of the female form or of any question of shades--which latter constitute, to my sense, the real formative literary discipline."

---Letters - Vol. I, page 271.

"The ugliest trick it (the report of spoken words) plays at any rate is its effect on that side of the novelist's effort—the side of most difficulty and thereby most dignity—which consists in giving the sense of duration, of the lapse and accumulation of time. This is altogether, to my view, the stiffest problem that the artist in fiction has to tackle. . ."

---Notes on Novelists, page 441.

"He (Maupassant) has taken his stand on simplicity, on a studied sobriety, being persuaded that the deepest science

lies in that direction rather than in the multiplication of new terms . . . the right way is to distinguish with an extreme clearness all those modifications of the value of a word which come from the place it occupies. Let us have fewer nouns, verbs and adjectives. . . and more different phrases variously constructed, ingeniously cast, full of science of sound and rhythm."

---Partial Portraits, page 262.

"No privilege of the teller of tales and the handler of puppets is more delightful, or has more of the suspense and the thrill of a game of difficulty breathlessly played, than just this business of looking for the unseen and the occult..."

---Preface to Vol. XXI, page 9.

"I hate the hurried little subordinate part that one plays in the catch-penny picture-book— and the negation of all literature that the insolence of the picture-book imposes."

---Letters - Vol. I, page 231.

"The breath of the novelist's being is his liberty, and the incomparable virtue of the form he uses is that it lends itself to views immeasurable and diverse to every variety of illustration. There is certainly no other mould of so large a capacity."

---Partial Portraits, page 163.

"The effect, if not the prime office, of criticism is to make our absorption and our enjoyment of the things that feed the mind as aware of itself as possible, since that

awareness quickens the mental demand which thus in turn wanders further and further for pasture. This action on the part of the mind practically amounts to a reaching out for the reasons of interest. . . . This is the very education of our imaginative life. . . . .Then we cease to be only instinctive and at the mercy of chance, feeling that we can ourselves take a hand in our own satisfaction and provide for it,making ourselves safe against dearth. . . . "

---Notes on Novelists, page 315.

". . . for the appeal (of the novel) is truly to the faculty of attention . . . (and) . . . we may already be said to have practically lost it."

---The Question of Our Speech, page 89.

"The thing is to lodge somewhere at the heart of one's complexity an irrepressible appreciation. . . ."

---Preface to Vol. X, page 14.

"I have ever, in general, found it difficult to write of places under too immediate an impression—the impression that prevents standing off and allows neither space nor time for perspective. The image has had for the most part to be dim if the reflection was to be, as is proper for a reflection, both sharp and quiet. . . . ."

---Preface to Vol. II, page 11.

"A good ghost-story, to be half as terrible as a good

murder-story, must be connected at a hundred points with the common objects of life. . . . Half its force is derived from its prosaic, commonplace, daylight accessories."

---Notes and Reviews, page 110.

"All writing is narration; to describe is simply to narrate things in the order of place, instead of events in the order of time."

---Notes and Reviews, page 27.

"When it is a question of an artistic process we must always distrust very sharp distinctions, for there is surely in every method a little of every other method. It is as difficult to describe an action without glancing at its motive, its moral history, as it is to describe a motive without glancing at its practical consequence. Our history and fiction are what we do, but it surely is not more easy to determine where what we do begins than to determine where it ends— notoriously a hopeless task. Therefore it would take a very subtle sense to draw a hard and fast line on the borderland of explanation and illustration. If psychology be hidden in life . . . the question immediately comes up, 'From whom is it hidden?' From some people, no doubt, but very much less from others; and all depends upon the observer, the nature of one's observation, and one's curiosity. For some people motives, reasons, relations, explanations, are a part of the

very surface of the drama, with footlights beating full upon them. For me an act, an incident, an attitude may be a sharp, detached isolated thing, of which I give a full account in saying that in such and such a way it came off."

---Partial Portraits, page 256.

"We have in the whole thing (The Ring and the Book) at any rate, the element of action which is at the same time constant picture, and the element of picture which is at the same time constant action."

---Notes on Novelists, page 399.

"He has a mighty fund of life, but the waste, the vice of a not finer doing are sickening."

---Letters, Vol. II, page 324.

"It is the very atmosphere of the mind; and when the mind is imaginative . . . it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations."

---Partial Portraits, page 388.

" . . . appreciation, attentive and reflective, inquisitive and conclusive is . . . the golden key to our pleasure . . . . the more it plays up, the more we recognize and are able to number the sources of our enjoyment, the greater provision made for security in that attitude, which corresponds, by the same stroke, with the reduced danger of waste in the undertaking to amuse us."

---Notes on Novelists, page 327.

"These are the circumstances of the interest . . . but where is the interest itself, where and what is its center, and how are we to measure it in relation to that?"

---Notes on Novelists, page 326.

"The enjoyment of a work of art, the acceptance of an irresistible illusion, constituting, to my sense, our highest experience of "luxury." The luxury is not greatest, by my consequent measure, when the work asks for as little attention as possible."

---Preface to Vol. XIX, page 21.

"George Eliot . . . has the microscopic observation, not a myriad of whose keen notations are worth a single one of these great sympathetic guesses with which a real master attacks the truth."

---Notes and Reviews, page 207.

"The material of "The Ambassadors" . . . is taken absolutely for the stuff of drama . . . ."

---Preface to Vol. XXI, page 20.

"She (George Eliot) overloads her canvass with detail."

---Notes and Reviews, page 115.

"The best originality is the most unconscious, and the best way to describe a tree is the way it has struck us."

---Partial Portraits, page 260.

". . . forbid the terrible fluidity of self-revelation."

---Preface to Vol. XXI, page 17.

"It (Felix Holt) leaves upon the mind no single impression."

---Views and Reviews, page 26.

"The novelist is a particular window, absolutely—and of worth in so far as he is one . . . ."

---Letters, Vol. I, page 165.

" . . . it (Silas Marner) has more of that simple, rounded, consummate aspect, that absence of loose ends and gaping issues which marks a classical work."

---Views and Reviews, page 8.

"With a relation not imaginative to his material the story teller has nothing whatever to do."

---Preface to Vol. IX, page 12.

"I begin short tales as if they were to be long novels."

---Letters - Vol. I, page 104.

"What a man thinks and what he feels are the history and character of what he does. . . ."

---Preface to Vol. V, page 11.

". . . clearness and concreteness constantly depend, for any pictorial whole, on some concentrated individual notation of them."

---Preface to Vol. V, page 14.

" . . . no meanness in art is so mean as the sneaking economic . . . ."

---Notes on Novelists, page 89.

"Catching the very note and trick, the strange irregular rhythm of life, that is the attempt whose strenuous force keeps Fiction upon her feet."

---Partial Portraits, page 398.

"On the interest of contrasted things any painter of life and manners inevitably much depends. . . . "

---Preface to Vol. XIV, page 5.

" . . . nothing can exceed his (the novelist's) own solicitude for an economy of interest . . . . ."

---Preface to Vol. V, page 10.

"It is one of those rudimentary truths which cannot be too often repeated, that to write a novel it is not necessary to be a traveler, an adventurer, a sight-seer; it is simply necessary to be an artist."

---Notes and Reviews, page 62.

"The first thing we do (in estimating a work of art) is to cast about for some center in our field; . . ."

---Notes on Novelists, page 395.

"The lyrical element . . . is in fact not present in Balzac, in Scott . . . nor in Thackeray, nor in Dickens— which is precisely why they are so essentially novelists, so almost

exclusively lovers of the image of life."

---The Question of Our Speech, page 72.

"In every novel the work is divided between the writer and the reader; but the writer makes the reader very much as he makes his characters . . . when he makes him well, that is, makes him interested, then the reader does quite half the labor. In making such a deduction as I have just indicated, the reader would be doing but his share of his task; the grand point is to get him to make it. I hold that there is a way. It is perhaps a secret; but until it is found out, I think that the art of story telling cannot be said to have approached perfection."

---Views and Reviews, page 18.

"I needn't remind you that there are all sorts of tastes; who can know it better?"

---Partial Portraits, page 397.

"This light is of course always for the author to get somewhere."

---Notes on Novelists, page 360.

"It is no less apparent that the novel may be fundamentally <u>organized</u> . . . . ."

---Notes on Novelists, page 353.

" . . . in the writing of fiction there is no grander instrument than a potent imagination . . . ."

---Notes and Reviews, page 32.

"Even George Eliot . . . often swells out her tales with mechanical episodes, in the midst of which their moral unity quite evaporates."

---French Poets and Novelists, page 217.

Sincerity and simplicity seem to be Two of the first requirements James would look for in style. And if there ever was a writer who followed his own advice, Henry James did in this. His prose is of all the great prose I can recall in English literature the most gramatically accurate, and the most thoroughly and finely logical. It seems to me to be the most peculiarly English of any I know. These are strong statements, but that is how I regard Henry James' prose.

There are many kinds of prose in English, of course. Some of it we feel to be of this period, and some other of that period; some is popular and some learned. Some prose tends to follow Anglo-Saxon idiom, and other to Latinize, Helbinize, Hebr... or otherize, itself. Indeed, English, the great borrower among human tongues, as often as not, flavors itself now with this language and now with that; and it is generally true that such flavors are produced by the copious borrowing of foreign terms. Thus the usual so-called learned prose is likely to carry a large percentage of words formed out of Latin and Greek. One feels this wherever he runs across sophisticated English. Milton is a good example; George Meredith is another; Pope is another. But there is the

other sort of writer who prefers to follow the old idioms, the native resources of his language, its bouncing ruggedness. Shakespeare was such a writer, Mark Twain was such a writer, Henry James was such a writer. Of course, I do not mean that these men eschewed the word of foreign origin, or exercised any arbitrary choice in the formation of their style, but that their instincts and training kept them at all times within the native resources of their own mother tongue. Writers of this sort are usually of a robust and burly temper, masculine, racy, and autochthonous. Burly diction, at first blush, sounds out of place in connection with James, but nevertheless this is the case; and I fancy that the greatest writers are, after all, of that sort. I mean to say men who are not afraid of the homely phrase, or the uncouth figure, but turn it to the rarest and finest uses. Most assuredly, there is room for all kinds of styles in English, and there are all sorts, but, for one who loved old England, as did James, it was inevitable that his idiom should be of the purest English idiom.

It is not necessary to go into it at length at this point, but I will say that for a man of James' finish and refinement, the popular notion is that his English must have been of a learned sort, or else somewhat feminine in flavor. And there are here and yonder feminine phrases and terms, as, for example, his use of "so" for the more common "very". But, on the whole, one is

constantly impressed by the fine masculinity of James' style, by its great strength, and, above all, by the purest of English idiom which would imply strength and robustness.

The mistake usually made here, I think, is in confusing manner and matter, for the matter is of the super-refined, and the minutely psychological, but the way James has of expressing this impresses me as the most characteristically English of any first class writer of my acquaintance. And to me this is one of his great beauties. No matter how abtruse his idea has seemed to become, or how elusive, the thing is scented out, and hunted down, by means of the robust and homely phrases that are eminently English in their color.

Let there be no mistake about this; there is plenty of the other sort of vocabulary— learned if you will--but whatever the content of sentence, or paragraph, it is all pieced together in the good old strong, poetically-tempered fashion. James slighted no chance to employ the borrowed word— he can amaze one with his enormous fund of learned terms, but he seems to have felt always that they all had to behave in the English way. The mind of James was eminently the poetic, the image-making, mind of the Anglo-Saxon.

James held that the author must be detached and thoroughly objective to produce a good picture— which is but to agree with Wordsworth's definition of poetry as emotion recollected in tranquility. Of course, James means that the

really significant phases of an impression cannot be ascertained when one is too close to it. There is a loss of perspective, and in the heat of impression, ~~he/that~~ what is permanent cannot be separated from what is ephemeral and temporary.

Besides all this, the matter comes back to that view of his that all life needed to give the novelist was the "germ"; his imagination did the rest. It was a synthetic process, of course, with James, but one in which he got most of his materials from his own mind. Life, through his experience, placed many raw materials in his consciousness, but they were all to be worked into a new combination, a new organism, with the life of the author as the new life. There could be no mere reporting here, no copy produced on the battle fields. Rather, brief notes must be taken, and carried home to be made over after the smoke has cleared away.

Henry James believed that fiction was a sort of poetry, and his suspense and rhythm mentioned above, his dark patches, [illegible], indicate such a belief; and this despite what many say about his being a scientific novelist. He might have appeared to some scientific, but he certainly held no such intention. Science supposedly confines itself to facts, and earnestly desires, and attempts, to bring all out into the daylight. Indeed, it hardly dares talk in twilight, or behind closed doors. Yet here is James saying explicitly

that it is a fault of a novel that there are not "patches of ambiguity" and "abysses of shadow". This is entirely consistent, too, with his dictum that heart interest must be in fiction, and what is heart interest, at the present understanding of the matter, but a certain percentage of romance, a modicum of sentiment—a whole range of feeling which defies analysis and well-nigh defies psychoanalysis?

That is just the thing, James would say, to drive for in the novel; make your reader wonder, fill him with a sense of awe before the mystery of life. Thrill and excite him with vague whisperings from the more and more unknowable. Surely James has been misunderstood by those who say he wrote novels scientifically, if they mean by it that he turned on a brilliant and all-revealing daylight.

James was not for crowding the canvass with details, as we shall note later, but he did find much interest in running down what he terms the "psychological reason." James gives pretty clear and cogent reasons for the psychological method in fiction, and there is no necessity for any comment of mine, to try to make it any clearer. It is plain that he saw human life and character as made up, not only of what was visibly done,— done with hands and feet and voice, but what was thought and felt as well, even though these were not ~~as~~ commonly as visible as the rest. For him, there was no separating in the old way— of mind, spirit, body, [illegible], but all

was one. The action of hands and feet— the deeds of life— were only a half of the action, which in reality began in the brain, it acting too. So, since "out of the heart are the issues of life," he saw no logical reason for the novelist to confine himself to the external action— the deeds. For him, the thoughts and feelings,— the psychology, in a word— were in reality the more important and larger part, since they constituted the real person, deeds being often false evidence of character. By James' very definition of the novel, and the duties of the novelist, it is his business to bring forth what may be hidden from some to the light of all, and thus simplify and interpret the mystery. For the novelist is expected to be a seer, a prophet, one who is expert in the art of divination.

James, with all his interest in the subtle and the psychological, did not believe that mere observation and reporting made fiction. To repeat his phrase, it was no art of the slate pencil, and required more than addition. It was chemistry rather than mathematics. The novelist becomes a crucible, a prophet, a seer, an inspired guesser. He has a high sense of feeling, a sixth sense ~~whereby he gets more real of~~ whereby he gets more than the dry facts taken alone can mean. There is science in him only in the sense that he has a hypothesis, as did Darwin and Wallace when they argued the theory of organic evolution. This doctrine readily squares with his theory that the novel is a projected thing, a new

pattern, let us say, a thing not seen before.

Life, according to this, is the premises, and literature the conclusion, in the novelist's syllogism, though the novelist's method seems largely inductive; or, at least, his demonstration to the reader is inductive. The novelist himself begins with his conclusion, which has come to him inductively, and instead of beginning, like a debater, by stating at the outset the proposition to be proved, he reserves it for the close of his story, the story being the inductive proof. That is to say, the conclusion emerges clear at the end of the story, though of course, as James saw it, the conclusion must not be drawn out, and put into so many words, like a moral tag, by the novelist himself. Thus the novelist "projects" life through "sympathetic guesses." He observes his facts, he draws his conclusions, and then with the principles in hand he raises, "projects", a new superstructure, though no whit less true to life, and even more so, we often feel, than the actual.

There is no intention in saying all this, however, to try to deny the fact tha the novelist in some more or less mysterious manner comes at his understanding of life, for herein exactly, according to James, lies his power. Did he possess only a prose faculty of deduction and induction, he would be a mere scientist, and no more; in which case literature would at once become a branch of science, and not litera-

ture at all.

There must be no wastage in producing the effect in fiction, James contended. That is what life is, waste, and surely art isn't life; if so, there is no excuse for it. But its very definition sets it against the waste of life. True, from one view-point, there is "the economy of nature", but it is only the economy of one that has endless time for disposing of things. In such a view as that, nature does not waste, but for the close-up, short view, nature really is a wastrel, and a prodigal. Art is short, despite the proverb, and thus must economize its time, and conserve its energies. The reader doesn't come to fiction for the long study, anyhow, but rather to enjoy life vicariously in a compressed and telescoped presentation. Man has ever been impatient of nature's slow methods, however good they may be, and so has constantly sought to change them, or to substitute his own. This he has done in almost every phase of his activity, and art would be expected to follow suit. Such, at least, seems to have been the Henry James view.

The economy referred to above would naturally call for only such matters in the story as served the central purpose or idea. Description and dialog cannot exist in and for themselves, though there used to be a popular notion that such was the case. And often they did exist for themselves. There are, indeed, many places in famous novels where the author seems to have forgotten what he was about and spent his time

in elaborating upon a fine scene, or a beautiful picture. Again, there are spots in certain novels where dialog seems to take the bit in its teeth and canter along to be seen of men. One feels this about places in Bulwer's "Last Days of Pompeii," or about spots in "Vanity Fair," or even, on occasions, about "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" or "The Return of The Native." But one never, never feels it about a novel of Henry James. Dialog may get pretty dull in James, but if one is attentive at all, he knows exactly what it is for, and where it is going; and as for description, there is never the least suspicion that James is lingering fondly over it.

Fiction often took the color of drama for James, but it was never confused with drama, as it seems to have been in the minds of many of the great fictionists. Indeed, I fancy that many practitioners of the novel regard it as a sort of omnibus which carries all; to them it is a variety show that may be now drama, now lyric poetry, now narrative, now satire, or what not. Certainly there is much to indicate such an attitude. Such was not the view, however, with James, and though he saw fiction as the freest, the broadest, and the noblest form of art, he at the same time held that it had very definite limitations and principles.

Let us remind ourselves again that he believed the novel to be a story, a narrative, with a single effect. It was a process of unfolding character, of setting forth an idea, a bit of interpretation whose unity lay largely in the view of

the novelist behind it. To accomplish all this, it resorted to many methods, but no method, in his view, was the thing itself. If the story became colloquial at times, or descriptive, or whatever, this was a part of the process, and there was no tendency in James to think that it had, for a moment, forgotten that it was a novel rather than drama, or poetry.

This is a good place to bring up, the fine distinction James is always making between the novel and all other literary forms. For the whole history of prose fiction shows how easy it is to confuse it with other forms, and to regard it as a sort of crazy-quilt in the literary family. James held that that great fundamental difference was in the "foreshortening" process, as he called it; the mysterious manner by which the novelist indicated the passage and accumulation of time. Drama does it by a shift in scenes, or setting, or by a note on the printed program; or by other more or less crude methods. Even fiction itself had its methods, such as a row of dots, or dashes, or asterisks, and so forth. To James this was all ungainly and awkward. Life does not walk forth and sweep clear the arena and refurnish it before our eyes, but takes its own mysterious time to do it subtly, and imperceptibly. Therefore, thought James, fiction ought to do likewise.

Just exactly how this is to be done, James does not say in so many words, though he does indicate that it was not to

be crudely and awkwardly done. This is, so to speak, one of the trade secrets, or rather mysteries, since the individual artist himself was to find his own best way. The actual passage of time is more or less mysterious— certainly the effects of it are so, and it is, hence, the peculiar, the unique, business of narration—fiction—to indicate. This, for James, was the peculiar, the unfailing difference between the novel and all other literary forms.

If the novel is a tower of logic, it must proceed from cause to effect, with suspense in its movement and casting its shadow before it.

Some critics have thought James worked by a process of elimination, but this, in view of his own statements and practice, seems not to have been the case. And not only do the quoted statements bear out my contention, but his unfinished novel "The Sense of the Past" shows that he did not proceed by any process of elimination. He seems rather, as we should expect, to have conceived his story in outline, and wrote that out— its bare facts— its plot. Then at points where the action had not been well grounded in the proper motives, he took pains to so ground it. In other words, his first draft of the story, let us say, was life visibly presenting only the action. The final product was life complete, or art, assigning these actions definite causes and reasons for being. Here is room for his statement that the "doing"

of it constituted the art of it, and that very little of interest resided primarily in untouched incident.

The force of this truth came home to me in reading "The Sense of the Past." I remember that the story moved off very well in the Jamesian manner. I very soon, however, seemed to scent, ever so slightly, a something wrong. There was a hint of bareness, as I recall it, a thinness, as it were. This did not particularly spoil things until the hero interviewed the United States ambassador in London, and at this point there yawned great gaps in the motivation, till, my misgiving becoming insufferable, I concluded that the hero was suddenly gone crazy. I turned then to the Notes and found that James had explained how the gaps were to be filled in, and the action rendered plausible.

Thus is borne out his contention that the idea or story is all ready at the outset, and the process is one of integration and assembling, rather than elimination. Otherwise the eliminating process might find the bird all feathers and no meat.

James has said a good deal about method, about unity, about idea, about form, about logic, and so on, but in the quoted statements he gives his own method, and, as I take it, recommends it; especially as he can see none superior. To anyone who has read the prefaces attentively "centers" carries at once James' meaning, and he reiterates over and over again

the doctrine. By "centers", or "registers", he, of course, means some character— some consciousness, some "appreciation", who experiences the story; that is, sees what happens, and gives its own interpretation of it, the novelist's duty being to report what that central character thinks about things. This means, then, that such a character shall be entirely competent to experience the story by being "aware","alert", "richly responsible", but it does not mean that it shall be too much so, for in that case the reader would find none of his own predicament and bewilderment revealed in the persons of the story, and thus he would miss one of the main things for which fiction exists.

Such a demand for centers accounts at once, of course, for the highly conscious, super-refined creations of James. No other sort could get all out of the story; no other sort could detect the fine vibrations that come in a "consensus of the educated" and in the flower of civilization. This central figure becomes a mirror, a "reflector," as James called it, where the reader may see life pass. Such a character gives the story unity, that summum bonum of fiction, that consumation devoutly to be wished by Henry James. Well, why not let this center be the author himself as a sort of omniscience over the scenes? That is just the point, omniscience is so broad as to have no unity and to be able to give none. Unity is oneness, omniscience is plurality ad

infinitum, or generally amounts to such, thought James.

Furthermore, the author's word for things does not carry the weight of conviction which the other method carries. James always looked upon the novel as closely akin to drama, which, of course, presents its story by the indirect method; that is, by having the characters act out and tell their own story, rather than by letting the author tell it. This, too, is the most powerful method known of presenting character, and the novel could not do better, thought James, than to use it. So the method of drama he recommended, but with this difference, that instead of the characters talking out their thoughts and feelings, the author was to report these in his own words. In no event, however, did James believe in the inordinate use of the author's omniscience. True, he had it, in a sense, but certainly not in the usual sense, for the author in the James novel appears to know only what may be deduced from what really takes place among the characters. It is true that there is a sort of omniscience in the author's being able to report what is said and done by one or two, or more, characters, either alone, or together. He is able to report their thoughts and feelings, and acts, but even at that, he does not give all away. It is not really omniscience after all, but partial knowledge, even though he secures it in ways unknown to mortals. One might argue

that it was no worse, nay even better, to know all and confess it than to know the comparatively small part that James thought he ought to know.

James had his reason for it all, however. The author's word, for one thing, is not interesting; it is too easy to get, it is not convincing, it is too ready-made. It tends to deaden the reader's own thought, and to kill his attention. James was always complaining of the decay of attention, and to such a point that he said that it was dead in most readers. For him this was deplorable, indeed.

James desired what Emerson called creative reading ; for he took his art seriously. True enough, he said that its purpose was to entertain, and all that, but he also said it was history, that it was to be a picture of life, that it was to be sincere, and so on. Indeed everything goes to show that James was a serious, hard-working craftsman, who dedicated himself soul and body to the high cause of art. One surmises, from sketches of his life, that it was for the sake of his art that he never married; that it was for his art that he left his family connections to live more or less alone in England; that it was because of love for his work that he refused to modify his theory by one jot or tittle merely to serve the time by writing pot-boilers. In fact, no novelist ever lived who took himself and his art more seriously.

Now if James was so serious about his work, it is hardly to be expected that he would have been content to play the Harlequin to his readers. He felt that he had something worth his reader's while, hence he expected the reader to meet him half way. To James the novel was no empty pastime, no predigested food, no mere confection. It was stout old port, as Browning would say, that produced much coughing and frowning and sputtering, as it went down, but nevertheless nobly worth swallowing.

And so for this sort of reader—scarce as ~~workers~~ worlds though he is—James felt that the author's own affirmation was "cold" and "thin", or "gross" and "bloodless." Accordingly, there must be a central figure through whose mind the reader might see all.

Another way to put ~~it~~ is to call the central character ~~is~~ a window. ~~Through~~ But this figure, and the difficulty some have of reading James, have led many to feel that ~~all this~~ the result ~~is~~ as ~~in~~ too much detachment and separation from the subject. That in the effort to avoid the cold, bare statement of the author, the result is, according to one critic (Philip Littell), as if one were looking through a knot-hole at somebody watching somebody else watching somebody through a knot-hole. And there is a grain of truth in it, but let us interpose to such a critical wit that he paid Henry James a compliment unwittingly, since such knot-hole procedure is

generally interesting, sometimes exciting, and even profitable. This much may be said, at any rate, that whatever may have been the effect upon the reader, James was entirely consistent; the indirect method was the only one for him, or for any novelist holding his views.

Another point is made in the quoted passages; James liked to treat his story "as picture and scenically", and especially scenically, though the "weight of the double pressure" he found beautiful. By picture he seems to mean the descriptive parts of his novel; that is the parts where the author had to report what went on in the minds and hearts of his characters. The scenes were the patches of dialog and action done before the reader. Or to put it another way, as he liked to put it, picture was the stage set, the lights, the music, the wings, and the rest. The scene was the appearance of the characters before the audience—the play itself. All of which sounds like a drama, tho' we remember that this report of the author's—the picture—was far and away different from any mere stage-set; for here the author got opportunity to prepare for the scene and to "foreshorten" as was necessary. Here lay, for James, the prime distinction between fiction and drama.

It would seem that James regarded the scene as very important, and he did, but he did not always prefer it; in fact he was never bound to any one method, for the art of

fiction was too broad and free a thing for him to attach himself exclusively to any one way of getting a thing done. There were times when he considered the author's own reporting of the characters consciousness as getting the story along in a way which scene could never hope to achieve.

James calls the novel an "ado" about something, reminding us that it must deal with the missteps of humanity and with its perplexities. This gave ground for an unlimited choice of subject, especially for the depiction of sin. When things go well there is no story, anyone may see, and therefore fiction must always deal with sin of some sort, whether it be avarice or murder, covetousness or adultery, though the superficial almost always draw the line against sexual misbehavior and give carte blanche to the rest. This has all been touched upon already, and I recur to it to bring out more fully the meaning of Henry James' theory that art makes the story one thing or the other--filthy and nasty, or high and holy. This point cannot be stressed too often, for to James it was with the artist as to what became of the subject and the reader's interest in it. It is a matter of touch, a matter of emphasis, a matter of general philosophy. Shakespeare handles all sorts of sexual irregularity, in his plays, but with scarcely a trace of salacity; for example, "Measure for Measure" and "All's Well that Ends Well." The dramatist's mind plays over the topic but never to make evil

seductive, and the spectator sees the crime, but always with the ultimate meaning of it in view. There is no forgetting its relation to the rest of life, which is always the case when sin is made to appear attractive in literature. The same is true of the Bible itself. The most sickening depravity imaginable is mentioned in its pages, but always in the full light of its connection with the rest of human existence. The manner is the secret, I wish to say here, and this is what James means under this head.

Manner, or style, makes the interest of a story, the popular notion to the contrary notwithstanding. Many incline to think Kipling's topics must have some magical interest to start with, or that Dickens must have known a London far different from the one his contemporaries knew. Or that Hawthorne knew a strange and peculiar New England, full of ready-to-hand romance. And here lies, perhaps, the secret of shrine hunting, and pilgrimages. But what does one find in Salem, or India, or "Sleepy Hollow" or the house where Poe wrote "The Raven" or any of the other places literature has made famous? To say the least of it, nothing of the glamor and aroma with which the literature seems to endow these places. Oh yes, we feel, if we had been where Conrad had been we might have written "Lord Jim", or Edgar Lee Masters, we might have written "The Spoon River Anthology." But after all our adventure we discover the truth, so insist-

ently urged by James, that it was the manner, the style, of the artist that made all. He is prince of dreamland, master of the moon country, mogul of magic, and what he finds in life is a mere germ, a mere spark-plug, (to be Sandburgian), which sets off his mighty pyrotechnics that illuminate, for a spell, an unseen world.

Other points in style and method with James are interesting also, one that he wrote his short stories in the same way as his longer fiction, which indicates the expository method again, as I like to call it. The only reason the short stories were short was because the problem to be worked out was a smaller problem. There was in James none of this pedagogical dictum to the effect that the short story is a literary genus, and hence has its own laws and principles. Short story and novel were to all intents and purposes the same, according to James. The method was the same in both instances, and he frequently found his short stories evolving into well-nigh full length novels—"The Spoils of Poynton" and "The Sacred Fount." About the main difference with James in the two forms was that the novel, starting with more characters, and thus a more complicated problem, took longer to work out.

James thought of his fiction as a good deal like drama in that he saw the first half, or part of it as a preparation for what was to follow—a setting of the stage, and then the action. He hardly urged this method, though the method of the

novel was just that, he thought. Explain the status or crisis of things at the opening of your story, and then show what came of it.

Poetic sentiment and passion should play over fiction, but all should be intelligible, else it cannot be understood and respected by the intelligent reader. So he favored none of the sentimental, none of the Dickensesque. And here is another indication of how serious and sincere his art was, and how much he meant by it. He wanted to be taken seriously and by serious people. He expected the intelligentsia to read him and not merely the stupidentsia.

He believed the novel no place for lyric outbursts and mere rhetoric; another indication of his belief that the novelist must never appear in person. Suppose the crisis is acute and touching, as occurs in "What Maisie Knew" or often in the career of "Tess", it is no business of the novelist to push forward and hold forth in raptures. Fiction, according to James, was written in a thoroughly neutral and detached manner, it being the province of poetry or oratory to deal in ecstacies and ravishment.

There must be no sarcasm in the novelist's manner, for life has none, and if the writer is to represent it he must be like it. Besides, sarcasm and satire never offer any solution; they merely raze and destroy.

And now a final word here about style, so far as James expressed himself. Good breeding in style demanded, as he

said, quietness, and certainly no agressiveness. Nothing flamboyant, empty or hollow. No melodramatic seeking for effects, no bowing to the galleries, no toadying to the reader, no boot-licking generally. The subject is the only master, and anything that leads one beyond its demands leads him astray. But a good style, he says, should be suggestive and rhythmical, and, I may say, poetic, for James never forgot that fiction was an art and not a science.

VIII

ROMANCE AND REALISM

No presentation of James' theory of fiction would be complete without his views of romance and realism, those much-discussed and vaguely understood terms. By ~~When~~ I do not mean to imply that precise and scientific meanings may be attached to them. Literary terms deal with matters that have always had, and still have, a certain mystery about them, and therefore the terms themselves are of somewhat uncertain and shifting values; with the result that almost every critic and practitioner has been free to place his own interpretation upon them. James likewise had his definition of romance and realism.

"In making which opposition (between the near and the far) I suggest not that the strange and far are at all necessarily romantic; they happen to be simply the unknown, which is quite a different matter. The real represents, to my perception, the things we cannot possibly <u>not</u> know, sooner or later, in one way or another; it being but one of the accidents of our hampered state, and one of the in-

cidents of their quantity and number, that particular instances have not yet come our way. The romantic stands on the other hand for the things that with all the facilities in the world, all the wealth and all the courage . . . . we never <u>can</u> directly know; the things that can reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire . . . the only <u>general</u> attribute of projected romance that I can see . . . is the fact of the kind of experience with which it deals— experience liberated so to speak; experience disengaged, disembroiled, disencumbered, exempt from the conditions that we usually know to attach to it . . and . . operating in a medium which relieves . . . . of the inconvenience of a <u>related</u>, a measurable, state . . . the greatest intensity may so be arrived at evidently— when the sacrifice of "related" sides of situations has not been too rash. It must to this end not flagrantly betray itself; we must even be kept, if possible, for our illusion, from suspecting any sacrifice at all."

---Preface - Vol. II, pages 15 & 16.

"It is as difficult, I said above, to trace this dividing line between the real and the romantic . . . but I am not sure an infallible sign of the latter is not this rank vegetation of the "power" of bad people that good get into, or <u>vice versa</u>.

---Preface to Vol. II, page 20.

"By what art or mystery . . . does a given picture of life appear to surround its theme, its figures, and images with the air of romance while another picture close beside it may affect us as steeping the whole matter in the element of reality? It is a question, no doubt, on the painter's part very much more of perceived effect, effect after the fact than of conscious design— though indeed I have ever failed to see how a coherent picture of anything is producible save by a complex of fine measurements. . . . The interest is greatest— the interest of his (the novelist's) genius, I mean, and of his general wealth—when he commits himself in both directions (reality and romance). . . . "

---Preface to Vol. II, page 14.

"Does not the dim religious light with which we surround its (the exotic's) shrine do more on the whole for the poetry of passion than the flood of flaring gas with which, in her (Matilde Serao's) pages, and at her touch, it is drenched. . . . . It is at the category of the familiar that vulgarity begins. There may be a cool virtue therefore for "art" and an appreciable distinction even for truth in the grace of hanging back and the choice of standing off. . ."

---Notes on Novelists, page 312.

" . . . the very ideal of the real, the real most finely mixed with life, which is in the last analysis the ideal..."

---Notes on Novelists, page 312.

"The novelist who leaves the extraordinary out of his account is liable to awkward confrontations, as we are compelled to reflect in this age of newspapers and of universal publicity."

---Partial Portraits, page 165.

"This impediment to a clear and natural vision is nothing more, we conceive, than her excessive sentimentality. . . . It destroys . . . their appearance of reality; it falsifies every fact and every truth it touches. . . . ."

---Notes and Reviews, page 169.

" . . . we would gladly see the vulgar realism which governs the average imagination leavened by a little old-fashioned idealism. . . . To be real in writing is to express."

---Notes and Reviews, page 23.

" . . . we move in an air ~~of~~ purged at a stroke of the old sentimental and romantic values, the perversions with the maximum of waste of perversions. . . . "

---Notes on Novelists, page 356.

"However this may be, it is striking that, artistically, she (Miss Woolson) has had a fruitful instinct in seeing the novel as a picture of the actual, of the characteristic--a study of human types and passions, of the evolution of personal relations."

---Partial Portraits, page 187.

"That huge all-compassing, all-desiring, all-devouring love of reality which was the source of so many of his (Balzac's) fallacies and stains . . . was also the foundation of his extraordinary power."

---French Poets and Novelists, page 116.

"But we suspect that something even better in a novelist is that tender appreciation of actuality which makes even the application of a single coat of rose-color seem an act of violence."

---French Poets and Novelists, page 185.

"I may therefore venture to say that the air of reality (solidity of specification) seems to me to be the supreme virtue of a novel— the merit on which all its other merits . . . helplessly and submissively depend. If it be not there they are all as nothing, and if these be there, they owe their effect to the success with which the author has produced the illusion of life. The cultivation of this success . . . forms, to my taste, the beginning and the end of the art of the novelist. . . . It is here in very truth that he competes with life."

---Partial Portraits, page 390.

Here are some of the best definitions of realism and romanticism that I am acquainted with, for they seem to sound the bottom of the whole matter. Of course, there have been

many attempts to define the terms; some to the effect that romance is deduction and realism induction; some to the effect that romance deals with the remote, the unusual, the past, the extraordinary, the ideal, the beautiful, while realism deals with the real, the ugly, the ordinary, the commonplace, the near at hand, the prosaic, the actual. These turn out in reality to be little more, however, than descriptions, and do not define at all.

It would seem like a sort of sacrilege for me to lay hands on James' eloquent definition and attempt to illuminate it, or otherwise enhance it. Cannot however, refrain from calling attention to one or two things. Romance, in this definition, deals, of necessity, with the spiritual and the ideal, things ineffable, as it were, or, as James says, things that can never come directly save "through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire." Romance deals with the imponderable, the intangible and the unhandable. It is of the "finer grain" again, and belongs to the realm of the imagination and the mysteries—shadowland, to be plain.

Thus, the romancer chooses his own world where he will, makes its laws and creates characters amenable to this world, and no other. Thereby he is unlimited, "disembroiled" and "disencumbered." Realism, on the other hand, has no choice of its world, its parade grounds, but must take life as it

exists on the earth; the life that all of us agree is the actual life mortals lead, and therein he is confined, embroiled, engaged with forces which he must yield to or be lost. If he is dealing with Main Street, he must submit himself to the known laws of that thoroughfare or face the disapproval of thousands who know these laws.

Though a clear and fuller statement than Hawthorne's is this one of James', it amounts to practically the same thing. Hawthorne in his preface to "The House of the Seven Gables" defined the romance and realism in this way: "When a writer calls his work a romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume, had he professed to be writing a novel. The latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience. The former—while as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart—has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing, or creation."

And Hawthorne, continuing, agrees with James that "He will be wise, no doubt, to make a very moderate use of the privileges here stated, and especially to mingle the marvelous

rather as a slight, delicate, and evanescent flavor, than as any portion of the actual substance of the dish offered to the public."

But Hawthorne does not make his definition as fine and as satisfactory as does James, for he does not show how romance is confined to the things that "with all the facilities in the world . . . we never <u>can</u> directly know." No one ever hit the core of the matter so beautifully as James, and one feels like saying immediately that this is the end of the whole matter.

But there are other phases of romance and realism that James remarked upon. He has been classified in all sorts of ways, placed in all sorts of categories. Some speak of his esthetic idealism, others of his scientific realism, and yet others of his romanticism. Well, for one thing he had no good words for "vulgar realism", nor on the other hand did James subscribe to sentimental romance and rose-color. The quotations show that he was neither a realist nor a romanticist, and that is the truth of it; and, too, the logic of it. How could he, after all he has said about the mysteries and the patches of shadow, and the rest, be a scientific realist, as some have thought him? And how, after so much talk about accuracy, about the "illusion of life", about "competing with life" and about the novelist's being a historian of life, could he be a romanticist? He was neither the one nor the other, but both. He thus lives up to his doctrine, in that when he deals with the knowable, he is a

realist, that is, accurate, and faithful to the facts in his reporting. But when he reaches toward what cannot possibly be known, he is a romanticist, in that he is charting his own country, formulating his own laws, creating his own people. This accounts for the various ways of classifying him, and for the debate about him. But one finds hesitancy and misgiving with the critics even after they have classified him. James would have smiled at attempts to classify him one way or the other, for, as with regard to plot and character, he would have said that the novel is an organism and not a thing of separable parts and classifications.

James was perhaps more of an idealist than either romanticist or realist and this fact comes with special refreshment in a literary age of much "vulgar realism" and downright filth. It brings comfort for the lover of romance, and for the lover of realism, for to a good many neither romance nor realism is satisfactory. There are moods when all of us are inclined to fly away to the rose-gardens of romance, and loaf and invite our souls—eat the lotus fruit and forget. Yet even then there is misgiving and fear lest the thing is not real, or at least too good to be true, and must sooner or later turn bitter in our mouths. In other moods we become a trifle cynical and "scientific," and proceed to pull away the veils, and disport ourselves as Homines Boobi, as Mr. Mencken would say, glorying in our naked ugliness. Here again,

the misgiving comes, and the deadly philosophy of cynicism and realism palls on our spirits, till we yearn for our rose-gardens and rose-colors again. So we are shunted from one to the other, dissatisfied and unsatisfied with both.

But James offers the real satisfaction; "The ideal of the real, the real most finely mixed with life." Such a doctrine is bound to satisfy for it violates none of the actualities, as romance often does; nor does it deaden the aspirations, as realism often does, but places a goal for life, bestows upon it a haven and a heaven toward which it may grow. Fiction of this sort meets the full conditions of life, and thereby proves to be the staff of it. This accounts, in some measure, for the enthusiasm which James creates among his admirers, few though they sometimes seem to be. They are nourished on a balanced ration which they return to again and again after the mere confectionery which they often find elsewhere.

James disliked the recklessness and illogic of the romancers just as much as he despised "vulgar realism." He did not refuse a place to romance, as we have seen, but he saw no escape in it from the logic of its own laws and conditions.

Realism as generally practiced was not only repugnant to James' theory, but was at the same time a false method in handling many things which, as already noted, he regarded as unhandleable. It was so in the treatment of passion; of love. This for James was one of the places where art did

its work. Love to him was perhaps one of the unhandleable things of life, like music, and the best way of treating it was by going around it and translating its effects rather than trying to touch it directly. To put one's hands on it was but to soil it, or to condense it, and thus permit its flavor to vanish and escape. It comes back to romance in that it is the only method of dealing with a great many of the delicious mysteries, the haunting, wistful melodies, in a word, the unknown. And just as the best definition of poetry is a poetic definition, so to James the best definition of the mysteries was likewise a poetic one.

James was an esthetic idealist with his foundations always in the real. He was anchored, so to speak, to the actual. He believed in a fine accuracy, and in employing the normal and natural. Well and good; would he admit the extraordinary or the erratic? It seems that he did, though it wasn't his business to deal with it. His world is the world of the trained, the educated, the secure, the sheltered, and with such people the extraordinary and the unusual are more or less entirely eliminated. The sudden finding of fortune does not belong to them. They aren't living in a world of sudden upheavals and turn-overs, as may be the case with those of other stations in life. Hence you find little place in James for sensational events, and sudden catastrophes. Here, he is logical, as usual, and consistent with the main

body of his doctrine.

James was an "esthetic idealist" or a realist-idealist, and made fine provision for his sort of fiction, even if it was rather too fine-spun for the daily food of the democratic masses. He was a democratic aristocrat, because in his conception, art itself was aristocratic; that is, selective.

IX

MISCELLANEOUS

In the running down of Henry James' theory of fiction I have discovered several matters that hardly warrant a classification, and yet they seem to relate to the theory. Such are those found in the following quotations:

" . . . the general public has small sense and less taste."

---Letters - Vol. I, page 123.

"It is not out of place to allude to the fact that he (Turgenieff) possessed a considerable fortune; this too is important in the life of a man of letters . . . I think that much of the fine quality of this work was owing to it."

---Partial Portraits, page 310.

" . . . the reader with the idea or the suspicion of a central structure is the rarest of friends and critics. . ."

---Preface to Vol. VII, page 11.

"Of course, as every novelist knows, it is difficulty that inspires . . . . ."

---Preface to Vol. XIX, page 18.

"The effort of the novelist is to find out, to know, or at least to see, and no one in the nature of things can less afford to be indifferent to side lights."

---Partial Portraits, page 60.

"But they (the readers) would all agree that the "artistic" idea would spoil some of their fun."

---Partial Portraits, page 382.

" . . . the (story) teller is but a developed reader."

---Letters - Vol. I, page 66.

"I go so far as to think that the literary sense is a distinctly waning quality."

---Letters - Vol. I, page 136.

Here is impatience with the reader, the masses, and the bourgeois in general; their laziness, their indifference to the real values in art, and so on. But with all this fuss with them, James was never willing to truckle, and play to the galleries. He became more and more fixed in his opinion that art was serious and should be taken so, and hence we must admire his consistency and defer more and more to the significance of his work.

There are several hints, too, in his criticism of what he thought should be the status of the novelist himself. First of all, he should be a man of a "cluster" of ~~the~~ finer sensibilities; he should have broad human sympathies, and

thus understand his fellows; he should be a thinker, a man of ideas; he should, if possible, have a competency, or certainly be placed beyond the necessity of earning his bread by his pen. Only in such circumstances could he hope to say anything worthy of being said. It was, hence, one of his complaints with the literature of his own day; it merely voiced the mob, and made no attempt to give them ideas, and largely because the fiction writers were men trying to live by writing best-sellers. James, it cannot be denied, belonged to the fine old school--too scarce we are inclined to feel--that set itself above materialism and the mob, and saw life as an art, a thing of high dignity and possessed of rigid codes of honor. Getting a living according to this view of life was secondary to life itself, and so there was no glorification of commerce, no deification of the God of Getting On, as Ruskin called it. James makes the point in one of his prefaces that he feared the "down-town" sort of story, and so fled to the "up-town" subject, and he states that he feared a fall, or a slip, should he ride his courser along Wall Street. But there was more than that in the way he turned. He declared himself an observer of life, rather than an actor, which his poor health kept him from being, and thus life becomes to such an observer a thing of the finer grain. There is something in James that identifies him with the old Southern code; at least we Southerners like to think so. Life becomes, by this ruling, a much richer thing in

many ways than the wide-spread commercialism of James' latter days made it. But however all this may be, we all incline to think that Henry James had struck the right trail out of the mazes, and that the finer and finer the grain and the higher and higher the circle, the more will humanity approach the world of Henry James.

P A R T T W O

PRACTICE

I

ART AND THE ARTIST

It would be quick disposal of this part of the subject to say that Henry James, fictionally, practiced what he preached, for such is the feeling I myself happen to have as I approach the matter of his practice. No novelist, so far as I know, has had so much to say about his art, and with so fine a logic, it seems to me. And to approach the prospect of the ready disposal again, no man has been so consistent, so that all that might seem to be necessary would be to recall one by one his points he has made about the writing of fiction and say to him, "You have kept the faith"—the faith once and a while, and over and over again delivered to his adherents, or whoever could take time to make out what it was.

I do wish to say that Henry James generally practiced his own announced theories of prose fiction, and, as I have already pointed out, he seems to have had these theories rather well ~~filled out~~ developed from the start. I am aware at this point, however, that objections have often been raised against James to the effect that he was mechanical, scien-

tific, unendowed, uninspired—made to his own order, in other words. Which means that he began as a book-reviewer and critic, and, having talked about fiction for so long a time ~~he~~ developed a theory that was a sort of garment designed to fit his own virtues and limitations, and that through the years this garment was drawn in here, enlarged there, sewed in yonder, to keep it adjusted to the idiosyncrasies of his peculiar sort of fiction. All this may have a grain of truth in it, though I am inclined to think that while Henry James was a most patient and laborious novelist, he at the same time was immensely endowed for his particular sort of fiction. And I further feel that the sort of fiction which he produced was, as he saw it, the best and only kind to produce.

But I do not know that it is within my special compass to tilt over whether Henry James was one of the Olympians or not, but I do find him, let me repeat, thoroughly logical. Grant him his premises and you cannot escape his conclusions; and he was logical in asking you to grant his premises, for fiction was to him a personal record, which, if true—and many have affirmed it—then you must allow him his premises.

I realize, however, that my affirmation, no matter how confidently and boldly made, will not dispose of the matter, so that it becomes necessary to apply more or less

point by point the theory we have already set forth to the fiction to see the fit— or the misfit. And to proceed by topics as in Part One, what about art and the artist?

The artist must be saturated with his subject, and no man was more so than Henry James. We have already pointed out how an accident which incapacitated him for an active participation in life turned him to letters. We have seen also that his long residence in England, where many observers have inclined to think that he was lonesome, was for the sake of his chosen profession. He found there in Europe all that his heart longed for in the subjects congenial to his sort of fiction, and there he had opportunity to fill himself, indeed to steep himself, in the international situation which he loved so well to handle. He loved the topics that dealt with the cultivated and educated and highly refined, and no man could have been both by nature and training more completely saturated to overflowing with his love for art, and his particular sort of art.

James thought the artist should possess a "cluster of sensibilities," and if so, certainly Henry James did. This is one of the things that impresses one about James, especially in his letters and his private life, so far as one may get at it. He seems to have been a man amazingly vibrant, as he would have said. A man whose mental apparatus was a sort of high-tuned perceptive instrument, which caught the most infitesimal nuances of thought and feeling. A mind which trembled with the infinite number of breathings upon it from an infinite number of directions. I don't mean by

this to say that his was a mind that always reacted upon these vibrations, and made conclusions about them, but that it, at least, registered them. Thus James' character creations are creatures of his own mould.

We can take his own word that it was difficulty in art that interested him, for his fiction seems to want nothing better than a stiff problem to work out.

On his theory in art that it will be always of the quality of the mind of the producer, no one will likely affirm that this was not true of James himself. In fact, I have seen the criticism that he offered to the reader a puppet show— the puppets being little Henry Jameses. However that may be, I think it is generally agreed that there is no novelist whose work bears the stamp and image of its maker more than does that of Henry James. Jane Austen wrote out of her somewhat limited experience in an English village, and with her own peculiar imprint upon her work. Scott wrote the big "bow-wow strain" which, of course, rings true in large measure to his personality. Thackeray from out his rather disappointing experiences colored his novels with a mild cynicism, which is his own. Nathaniel Hawthorne breathed a pensiveness out of his own make-up into "The Scarlet Letter", "The House of the Seven Gables", etc. And so on, all the great fictionists have given their own special eccentricity to their work, but none to the degree, I think, of Henry James.

Where is there fiction so peculiarly its author's? One thinks of George Eliot, but George Eliot's is never so unmistakeably hers as the fiction of Henry James is inevitably his. I speak, of course, of the more representative and major novels— the novels written after he got his stride.

Art is expression, said James, and if what we have just said is true, Henry James gave the full measure of expression of himself. The artist, he said, should have the capacity for receiving straight impressions, he should have a familiarity with men, and withal be a sort of prose-poet. Of course his theory of fiction could not fairly be applied in the matter of the endowment of the writer, tho I do think that James was in a considerable measure what the novelist should be, a prose-poet. I do not mean that he ever wrote what we should call poetic prose, but rather that his prose is full of those figures of speech which are ever characteristic of the poet. James saw life largely in figures— similes, metaphors, and the like. Wherever one lays hand on his prose, however scientific the thought may seem to be, it is usually garbed and gowned in the most shining figures; but all in the prose mood— the mood rational rather than emotional. "He watched little brisk figures, figures whose movement was the tick of the great Paris clock, take their smooth diagonal from point to point; the air had a taste as of something mixed with art, something that presented nature as a white-

capped master-chef." "Was it the most special flare . . . of the esthetic torch, lighting that wondrous world forever, or was it above all the long straight shaft sunk by a personal acuteness that life had seasoned to steel?"

These passages are picked up at random from "The Ambassadors", and even better ones might have been hit upon ninety-nine times out of the hundred. James was in many ways the finest and truest poet of all our prosers. He saw almost everything, apparently, in the terms of personality. He endowed the most commonplace objects with the movement and manner of human beings. And all, as I say, in the daylight mood of prose. There is none of the ecstacy of the stock novelist; James has not forgotten himself, his feeling is not in the saddle, but his fancy, his imagination, are flying about the scene. It is as if Pan were aloose in Wall Street, or the magician had come plainly out of the dark to make his magic, having left all his hocus pocus behind.

As to his endowment then, James measured well up to his ideas as to the sort of equipment the novelist ought to have. I think this artist strain, this mystical, poetic quality, is shown in his father who, we are informed, was a philosopher and a Swedenborgian. His brother William is said to have made psychology and philosophy as interesting as fiction, and there are some critics today who incline to regard William James as more of a producer of literature than a philosopher. The surprising thing is that more persons have

not taken the pains to note how much undistilled poetry is in Henry James.

The artist must not be a cynic, he must be optimistic, and James was assuredly this, also; no novelist more so. In fact, I cannot recall in all his fiction that James himself gives off anything in his own words— descriptions, observations, or whatever— that have a cynical sound. There is no sarcasm, and though his characters may be good, or they may be evil, there is apparently none of the author's snarling and snapping that are often found in fiction.

To be sure I do not mean to imply that James did not here and there give vent to spleen against what he did not like. There is plenty of that, sometimes even a gentle irony, but no bitter carping and sneering and scoffing. Even in the early reviews, rather than resort to the easy cynicism and sarcasm to dispatch a poor book, he reasons the matter all out and forces it out of currency.

Such a doctrine was supported by his view that if the novel was to be a sincere bit of history, it could not remain true to its purpose and employ the gross methods of the cynic and the pessimist.

II

THEMES AND SUBJECT-MATTER

His theory about the theme was that there was no limit to be placed upon the artist, though he himself felt that the happier themes were to be preferred. What sort did he choose for his own? Is his range of subject as broad as he allowed for in his doctrine? These questions may be answered in the affirmative. James chose the cleaner themes, as a rule, and eschewed the filthy ones—the "soiled linen." In all his list of stories and novels, there is not a single one, as I recall, that might be called unclean, that is to say, there is no story, no matter how realistic the sound, that would seem to demand in any artist's treatment a soiling of his hands. One thinks over the long list, "Roderick Hudson", "The American", "The Europeans", "Confidence", "Washington Square", "The Portrait of a Lady", "The Bostonians", "The Tragic Muse", "The Princess Casamassima", "The Spoils of Paynton", "What Maizie Knew", "The Awkward Age", "The Golden Bowl", "The Sacred Fount", "The Wings of

the Dove", "The Ambassadors", and all the rest, down to "The Sense of the Past", and "The Ivory Tower", and all of these imply inherently nothing of the suggestive and revolting. James, true to his theory, preferred "clean linen" in practice.

As to the range of subject, James placed no limit upon himself, I think, though, of course, he selected the topics that best suited his own temperament and equipment. Certainly there was no edging away from any topic for conventional or other sorts of reasons. I mean to say that James treated many subjects that no one else would have seen much in. For example, the ordinary novelist would expect in advance very little from the theme of "The Awkward Age" or "What Maisie Knew", or even "The Spoils of Poynton". And it is reasonably certain that "The Sacred Fount" would have brought no glow of interest from either the intending fabulist or the reader. But James said the novelist had the right of his choice, and, readers notwithstanding, he wrote upon these commonplace themes. And that, too, in the face of warnings from many sides. We know that he was constantly being disappointed at the failure of readers to create any great demand for his books. We know that many critics were doing everything to remind him that his earlier manner was his better one, and so on, yet in the teeth of all this he persisted in handling such themes. Other novelists were generally inclined to look for the sen-

sation in event, or incident, for the romantic, in a word, but never did Henry James. It was the commonplace for him. The bird's-eye view was more often the view his contemporaries liked, but James liked, if I may use an ungainly phrase, the snail's-eye view. By which he preferred to study the significance of the close-at-hand, and the small. So, I repeat, James permitted no restrictions upon his subjects except his own predilections and limitations.

It was a favorite theme, or idea, with Henry James to deal with the contrast between Europe and America, the international situation, as he liked to call it. The difference of viewpoint, the difference in the social organization, the difference in culture, the imponderable degrees and shades of life in Europe as compared with the far simpler status of America— all this was at the bottom of most of his themes from "Daisy Miller" on through. We have it in "The Point of View", "The Ambassadors," "The Portrait of A Lady," "The Reverberator," "The Golden Bowl," "Madame de Mauves," etc. But all this was readily consistent with his theory, since he had opportunity to get at the leisure classes, the most cultivated which the old civilizations best produced. He in this way could bring the best of Europe in contact with the best of America, for he concerns himself only with the rich when he deals with the American in these international novels.

If civilization was moving to the breaking up of bar-

riers and into a sort of higher mathematical realm of pure thought and feeling, of course the contrast of the best British and American cousins, or the best French and Americans of the cultivated classes gave the best study of it. France, England, America, Italy were, for James, the epitome and pinnacle of human civilization, and no one ever finds him squinting at any other. The Greek, or the German, or the Spanish, or the Hebrew, never seemed to interest him at all. Indeed there was not enough of the refined product in these, so far as he was concerned. Or, perhaps, these, especially the Greek, or Spanish, carried too little of their glory in the present and too much in the past, and despite his love for old civilizations, he seems never to have cared for defunct ones. The old was interesting to him because it had its own roots near at hand for study. It was the very latest product of the old that James really cared for studying.

His themes amply meet his stated demand that the subject of a novel must be valid, genuine and a result of a direct impression of life, for surely no one would have so persistently clung to subjects that fared badly at the hands of both critics and readers if they were not, for him, genuine. His subjects are very original, as almost anyone who studies the matter will agree. James was one of the first, I believe, to handle the international situation and thus invent the international novel. And we will all agree, I think, that there

are no topics just like his in other fiction; at least there were none up to his time. Characters might wander here and yonder, but they remained themselves to the end. "Gerard" in "The Cloister and the Hearth" meets "Dennis," the French soldier, in France, but they are not studied for contrast. Neither are the characters contrasted in "The Tale of Two Cities." Indeed, I can't recall a novel prior to those of Henry James that takes for its purpose a study of the contrast of people of different situations, and certainly no one ever dealt as did James with these characters there.

It seems reasonable to say that James wrote for the direct impression of life, and whether readers liked it or not, kept steadily at giving fiction to the world in his own way.

James held that the novelist's themes should be human and none were so human to him as those that presented that dilemma whereby bliss and bale are so terribly and hopelessly mixed; themes where somebody's "right and ease" proved at the same time to be somebody's ~~ease~~ "pain and wrong." It is needless to say that such themes as these were Henry James' stock in trade. Indeed, I suppose there is hardly any author—and I must beware of the superlative—who has seemed more obsessed in his fiction with the human predicament than Henry James. Of course, he talks of it in his prefaces, but one may read it constantly between the lines of his prose fiction.

his characters "have their pauses," or it "comes back to them," or "she waited" before answering, and thus by hundreds of little signs and innuendoes we note that they are aware, painfully aware often, of the wonderful significance of what they are saying and doing. Aware, that is, that they can hardly speak, or act, without in so doing entailing both pain and pleasure.

One recalls the dozens of instances of this in "What Maisie Knew," and it meets one at every side in "The Wings of the Dove." What else causes the deft and skilful maneuvering of Maggie Verver in "The Golden Bowl" except her trembling awareness that any move she might make was fraught with all sorts of ambiguous consequences? For James there seems to have been no more interesting thing for the novelist to do than to deal with the human muddlement and he both urged this as capital subject-matter and set about practicing it likewise.

We know that James maintained that difficulty should be the inspiration of the artist, and that the hidden and unseen were the things especially interesting to be dealt with, and his practice follows the theory out at almost every turn. One may say that his novels are problem-novels; that is, problem novels, not with the problem stated and left, but novels with the problem worked out, solved. The international situation appealed to James largely for the reason that there was so much hidden to be brought up, hence his choosing it

for so many studies. Outwardly and externally a Britisher looked and acted much alike, but beneath the surface there were many things to be explained, and James set about to do it.

The problem in James' sort of problem novel was this, to find out what had happened, or why it happened, or what motive lay behind it, or something of the sort. He was interested to unravel a complication, in a detective-story fashion. "What Maisie Knew" is a superb example of this. How will the parents' action affect Maisie? or How did it affect her? is the problem. Likewise, in "The Golden Bowl" the question, after we know the past of the characters—or, their present status—is How will the Princess separate her own husband from his illicit connection with her own father's wife? The story seems to be broken into halves, the first being a history of the problem, and the second the solution. "The Ambassadors" is another problem-novel, in this sense, and so are many of them. The short stories are very often of the problem type. Surely the abstruse appealed to James—indeed almost anything out of the beaten way.

I don't find the marked and abnormal appealing to him, however. This would have been contradictory to his theory that characters, subjects, in fiction should be human, and though the highly organized was immensely human, the abnormal and morbid were not. There is no contradiction here, since he would have no outsider place limits on the artist, his own preferences, tastes and capacities doing that. For

James, then, nothing morbidly realistic and curiously abnormal. I don't recall a single story where his characters are not finely normal and natural, even if always amazingly clever and intelligent. And if there is any abnormality it is super-normality, and not subnormality.

He parts company, thus, from a great many of the school of realists who, like the hero of the Dunciad, dive into the cesspools, or plunder the prisons and the institutes for the feeble-minded.

Henry James preferred the wholesome subject, and nowhere does he deviate from this in practice. Hence, there are no sensual scenes, no filth, nothing unsanitary, nothing salacious; nothing, in brief, which might in the remotest way interest a censorship. Adultery in various branches, is handled, but it is so done as to banish any suggestions of lubricity. The point needs only to be stated to be obvious to any reader of James.

Henry James allowed, in theory, any sort of subject for the novel, though his own range is somewhat limited. He almost never deals with sensation, novelty, politics, religion, social questions, and such. He confines himself to his supermen and women in a species of super-world. Here he circulates, but never leaves his field.

III

DEFINITION, PURPOSE AND SCOPE

It is not easy to say whether James' novels meet his definitions of the novel fully or not. He held that the novel should be a history as much so as conventional history, and if we are to take Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer's view, James' novels are the finest history of contemporary English life at all. He urged, as we have seen, that the reading of James' work was the most valuable reading a British merchant, statesman, solicitor, physician, or anyone else, could do. This, too, is high praise, be it said, but there is truth in the statement. The Henry James fiction is, I believe, what he thought fiction ought to be—history. But it is not the history of externals by any means. It is no history of thought, of government, of wars, of economic policy, of manners, of reform, of law, or anything of the kind. If it is history at all, it is history of human feeling, perception, aspiration, ambition, psychology— of the better classes— in the England, or America, or France, of James' own day. It is a history of the hidden, a record of the remote, in his

own time. It is history of the favored few, that James likes to treat in his novels. His work is in some sense the spiritual history of the humanity of his own time. It is the history, one might say, of the culture of his own time.

But there is no need to press this phase of the matter too far, as James was thinking more of the individual character than otherwise, even if he did urge that ~~the~~ character should be representative.

Does Henry James' fiction represent life, as he contended fiction should? It does. Indeed, the reader never feels that James is lifting him out of a cross section, a "slice of life" and serving it to him unprepared by the novelist. Rather the James world is a microcosm whose figures are signs and symbols of the great world of reality. They do represent, stand for, speak for, life. James, like all good novelists, gives the sense of reality in the fact that these figures of his are typical, by which, of course, he means that the reader from what is given him may fill out the picture.

This is a nice point here, and though we all think we pretty well understand it, we may not, as a matter of fact. Nothing is truer than the fact that neither the novelist nor anyone else, can produce actual life. Of course not, be he realist, idealist, romanticist, actualist, or what. Art is art, and not life. It is the science of innuendo, if I may so phrase it, it is the science of suggestion. This being true, whatever goes into the book must merely suggest life,

the reader feeling out and reproducing actual life in his imagination. If he is given a profile, he sees the whole face. If he is given a Cyrano de Bergerac's nose, he sees the whole face. If he is given merely a set of teeth, sometimes, he fills out the face— that of a Roosevelt. Give him "Barkis is Willin' " and he sees Barkis. Give him ten lines of Alfred Jingle and he sees the whole Jingle. Show him a certain dis--quisition on turnips and he sees Colonel Sellers. Now all writers, or artists, since they can't give all, ought to content themselves with a careful selection, though some do not think so, apparently, but attempt to give everything. They adopt the catalog method, or the identification-card process, and thus stultify the reader, as James thought. This is just why he insists on representation. His conception of art was that since it could not present, but represent, since it could not say all, but must suggest, therefore its best plan was to make itself as compact, as condensed, and thus as highly suggestive as possible. To do this it had to select the points of the scene most typical, representative and significant. If a scene, a character, a landscape, was known only by certain features, then the artist must present these; in fact, whatever would evoke the rest. James in some sense means that the novelist is to catch the idiosyncrasies of the picture, or the character; perhaps the mannerisms of his people. At any rate, he must condense, compact, suggest, and never expand, expatiate and extend.

James did not believe in any breaking up of the illusion, such as happens when the novelist in person harangues the reader, and he almost never does it. Hence, we find in James no fine, sententious phrases and proverbs, no asides and squints at the reader. He is more like the dramatist in that he effaces himself and lets his characters do all the work. He is behind them, never in front. There are few novelists of my acquaintance that do not very considerably talk to the reader in person, but James in his later and best novels never does. He is purely objective and detached, never uttering his own thought as such. James takes the attitude of the historian and scientist absolutely, and thus the reader never is reminded that the fiction he reads is anything but actual history.

Do the James novels cure souls, maintain us in the practice of great indignations and great generosities, as he says the novel should? Do they muffle the ache of the actual? Do they offer us another world? It all depends, I should say, upon the reader. If he is of the James type of mind, then they do. If not, they do not. And there you are, and here he is, as he would say. So far as my own experience goes, James does not move me so violently toward anything as do Meredith, Hardy, Dickens, George Eliot. One could almost fight anything for Oliver Twist or Tess, but not for Daisy Miller, or Maggie Verver. I won't say, however, that James moves me any the less valuably. He affects one imperceptibly, but certainly and surely. James is a trifle pedagogic in his effects, I should

say, in that what one gets from him is had by a slow, steady process of absorption and saturation. James moves the intellect as well as the emotions, and hence leaves more permanent effects than the more sentimental novelists. He therefore appeals to what I regard as a more sturdy, dependable reader than many novelists appeal to. So I think that the right sort of reader gets the quiet thrill at the renunciation of Milly Theale, or her courageous and beautiful fight for life against so much that is dark and sinister. I think the right reader feels a heightening of his own virtuous inclinations at the sacrifices of Fleda Vetch and Hyacinth Robinson. I believe the sympathetic reader finds his affections settling with great power about Maisie. But let us remember always that it is for the prepared, the sympathetic reader that all this happens. In that way James' fiction meets his theories, but only in that way.

In such a way, too, James cures the soul, and in such a way he gives us another world and muffles the ache of the actual. For by all odds it is another world. I can't say, however, that this other world of James always muffles the ache of the actual, for as I have already noted somewhere, James' world is frequently so filled with supermen and women that it stretches our little legs pretty distressingly to keep the pace. And whether our brains are little or large, we occasionally feel that the world of some of the James novels is worse than our own, and aggravates our aches, or

even supplies new ones, rather than muffles any. The thing gets to be a sort of quadratic equation, or binomial theorem, for many, and hence proves no refuge at all. Some of his stories absorb me and refresh me, but some of them tire me and weary me whether I will or not.

If the novel must be interesting also, according to James, his living up to the doctrine depends, too, as do the other matters, upon the reader. What I am saying does not mean that I am finding too much fault, for certainly the writer has a right to choose for whom he shall write, which means that James is generally interesting to that kind of reader he writes for. The fact is, interest is a bird of many colors, anyhow, and so varies with the reader and the reader's moods. It is a thing that may be created, as James says, either by the novelist or by the reader himself. An alert person may be interested in almost anything, though what especially concerns him is always what will <u>most</u> interest him. Interest thus may be manufactured if the novelist can show a close relation between his story and the reader's own life and affairs.

So James interests his readers in proportion as they fit the life he sets forth or do not fit it. I doubt whether he actually manufactures much interest, and so does not meet the full test of his theory. Yet it must be remembered always that James was dealing with pretty remote matters, and could not be racily absorbing to the reader; certainly not to the

average novel reader.

His novels do have charm, I think, as he said they ought; none are more charming than his and that is the word we apply to the cultivated nearly always. Anything may be interesting, but few things are charming. The James novels, to the reader intended to read them, are charming.

That the novel should create the ideal as well as portray the real was a part of James' theory of fiction, and his do it to an eminent degree. Indeed, I like best to take them that way. Suppose the claim is made that human beings are not what the James characters are. Granted, but shouldn't humanity be more of what James pictures for it? Certainly; even the most critical of James' readers will doubtless admit that. His world is not my world and perhaps not yours, and we very often feel cramped in it, but we know it is a beautiful one, and one we should aspire toward.

His whole body of work is in some sense history, but in a still higher sense it is a forecast for the future, a utopia, a sort of terrestrial heaven. This is the finest thing about Henry James' novels. Utopias are usually pretty carefully, and often prosaically, worked out, and seem to stress material things. Romances may likewise present the ideal, but they too are not satisfactory, for they get too far removed from reality, and hence ourselves. Now this ideal in the real is the best sort of ideal, and that is what the James novels are. He seems never to leave the actual world, though everything

seems to be in a perpetually aspiring world. His best figures are human, they are of the common clay, though it is a clay tipped and touched by the gleaming fires of the ideal, and so transformed into an uncommon clay. James' novels then come to be charters of liberty and high and holy freedom for those who follow their lead out into the high altitudes.

IV

MORALITY AND MEANING

James allowed no place in his theory for the moral tag, the didactic, nor any in his practice. Indeed, there is no story of his that by the most violent wrenching could yield, in the "Virtue Rewarded" sense, a moral lesson. But in the rounded view of life presented there is always the "moral reference" as he called it. That is, there is always the feeling that, though the story is a picture of life, fair and unbiassed, the elements of the picture are assembled under the guiding hand of one who was aware of the fact that man is a moral being; of one who had a moral taste. James' stories are stories of life, clear full stories, that end happily or unhappily as life itself ends them. They very frequently deal with evil, with the vitiated motive of humanity, but always they are presented in the light of their moral meaning. Which is to say that one never mistakes evil for good, or vice versa. There is no shuffling of the cards till one would mistake hearts for diamonds or spades for clubs. There is no grooming of evil that makes it appear other than evil, and no costuming of good to make it a whit

more good. To go to the individual novels, no reader could fail to see the exact status of affairs in "What Maisie Knew," for there is never a word that softens the depravity of the parents and step-parents in the story. Maisie's lot is that of terrible, pitiable loneliness, and no capers of the parents are winked at as though theirs were a delicious game. Likewise Kate Croy in "The Wings of the Dove." She is, I suppose, the real villan of the story, or perhaps some one behind her, but no one fails to see that, as no real sympathy is ever elicited for her, The story deals with the immoral, but always as the immoral.

The Short Story, "Madame de ~~Madame de~~ Mauves," is, again, a case in point. Madame de Mauves is an American-born woman, a puritan, if you will, her husband is a roué, an intriguer, a libertine, and there is every chance for the reader to fall into sympathy with his plan of evening matters off and quieting things by allowing her the same chance to be what he is. With the young American in love with her, and she with him, we think, I say there is capital inducement for the writer to befuddle his reader, confuse the issue and make the crime, if not seductive, at least sufferable. But such was not the method of Henry James. And herein was he moral.

Maggie Verver in "The Golden Bowl" might have gone on and grown tolerant of her husband's conduct with her father's wife, she might have become callous, but it wasn't in keeping with the ethics of the Henry James Code. Again in "The Princess

Casamassima" Hyacinth Robinson might have found some less violent, and more selfish, way out of his predicament, but he met it in the only honorable way, so far as suicide could be such, and it was James' way of vindicating the moral view in all his art. There was a chance for confusing the values in "The Author of Beltraffio" by vindicating the wife in some measure for her crime of letting her own child die rather than grow up to read its father's stories, which she did not like, but no such thing is done by Henry James. I think there was likewise such a chance in "The Spoils of Poynton" to throw sympathy to Mrs. Gereth. But James refused the chance; and so it went in the rest of the stories. He surely had the opportunity time and again, for his stories deal many a time with those blurred boundary lines where the moral meanings are by no means clear and unequivocal. Some matters—the common everyday sort—usually admit of no juggling, or sophistry, but these were not the kind James loved to deal with. He was the hair-splitter, as it were, a sort of Robert Browning who liked to get into the skins of these difficult situations; and here, of course, is where the integrity of the writer is most surely put to test. It is a transaction in the dark, as it were, and the reader must trust to the novelist not to tamper with the scales. James proved his honesty, his "moral taste" as he called it, and it is in this sense that his fiction was moral.

Has James a philosophy of life, as he contended the novelist should have? I presume he does, though it is naturally harder to discover from his fiction than it would be to find, let us say, George Eliot's, for George Eliot and Thackeray and George Meredith and others have more often come before the reader in person and expressed themselves than has James. James, in fact, almost never in his novels speaks in persona, but is content to stand out of sight and let his characters do their own interpreting. His method of telling his stories by "centers" precluded him even more than ever from any hints at his own beliefs. He was eminently the detached, objective writer, almost scientific in this respect.

Since then there is nothing in James' fiction spoken in his own person, the only way left by which to find a philosophy is by a sort of psychoanalytical process. That is, by his fruits it is to be known. If he had inhibitions or repressions, or a philosophy, one must get it as an embodiment in the concrete characters and stories, and not as any expressly outlined system.

First of all, I doubt whether James had what would ordinarily be called a philosophy, for his mind does not seem to brood and reflect. It was a curious inquisitive mind, but not one altogether synthetic in its processes. Life, for James, was a constant riddle, but he is more interested in making one feel the predicament than in offering the solution, if he had any. His procedure, then, was somewhat inductive

rather than deductive, or, at least, seems so.

But whether he was reflective or not, his stories have to amount to something, and the deeds of his creatures, of necessity, lead somewhere; they surely do leave some sort of conclusions in the reader's mind as to life. Judging from these, the, there are a number of elements in the James faith which may be suggested. For one thing, I think he found life a considerable muddle, a curious, queer predicament, a mighty mystery. His stories constantly reveal that attitude, for he seems to enjoy placing characters in such places and having them work at the mystery. How very true this is of Hyacinth Robinson, Isabel Archer, Christopher Newman, Merton Densher, Lambert Strether, Maggie Verver. They all in large degree are confronted with their predicament. And this muddle was to James all the worse, in that it turned out weal for some, but woe for others; in fact that was about what the muddlement was. It was these misfits of life which James saw so prevalent everywhere.

James apparently found that the pure, the unaggressive, and even the weak, got more out of life than those of coarser paste; a large percentage of such characters seems to indicate that. Think over the list: Milly Theale, Lambert Strether, Fleda Vetch, Rowland Mallet, Maggie Verver, Hyacinth Robinson, and almost every one of these heroes and heroines suffers largely because of his rather too fine organization; too fine, that is, for the hard uses of life.

These are victims of life's predicaments. Of course, there are plenty of the other sort; Henriette Stackpole, Caspar Goodwood, Mona Brigstock, Barnaby Striker, Mr. Dosson. But these are not central figures, and hence we feel that they do not enter into his doctrine.

We infer, again, that James found that the virtues most worth handling in fiction were among the leisure and cultivated classes, the artists, the heiresses, the wealthy, those, in brief, who were emancipated from the ordinary cares of life— the cares of making a living. He doubtless thought there was more significance in these, since the essence of human character could best be seen where people were relieved from the pressure of making a living.

He believed in the "ideal of realism" he said, for, as has been noted previously, his stories are what many regard as romances, but which after all, I think, are pretty well anchored to earth. Indeed, I can think of hardly any of the longer novels whose plot and characters are not to be found in real life. They are not bizarre, or exceptional, or otherwise over strange, but at the same time no novel fails to prophesy, as it were, a future even better than its present; this by the very fact of its laying bare its mind and heart so fully.

James loved the present, I take it. His characters do not seem to look behind them, or even before them, very

much, and in several plots there are unmistakable signs that James is extolling the supreme virtues and values of life as it is. A notable instance of it is in Lambert Strether's outburst in the Garden of Gloriani, the artist, in Paris. There is no finer piece of descriptive matter in James than this enlargement of Strether upon the beauty of life, the joy of living. Such is the situation in Milly Theale's case. Here is a young "heiress of all the ages" with personal beauty, cultivation, wealth, charm, but afflicted with a mortal disease, and as she slowly, gradually, but with pitiful reluctance and regret, releases her hold on life, we see through her eyes how fine it was to live it, how fine to have kept on living it. "A Passionate Pilgrim" carries the idea also. The fact, too, that James has little to say of ordinary human problems leads one to think that he thought the present very good. There are none of the issues of various sorts that fiction of his day was full of. It was art that he loved, beauty, the finer vibrations. There are no axes to grind in him, no propaganda to spread, and while Dickens was sentimentalizing over debtors' prisons, or orphans, or this or that abuse; while Meredith was satirizing systems, and egoists; while Thomas Hardy was excoriating the inconsistencies of the Christian philosophy and offering a Hardyized paganism instead, James was quietly plying his own trade of creating beauty, hunting out the fine essences of life to present. Thus he must have held an abiding faith

in this creed of beauty, and he reminds us of Keats and Shelley, in that beauty became for him, we infer, a kind of slogan.

Despite his finding life a predicament he rarely runs his stories into tragedy, even though many have unhappy endings, for he apparently thought it avoidable among alert and thoroughly intelligent people. And so it is; for it is the fools who cause trouble he once said. One infers from his practice, as well as his theory, that life's troubles might be avoided if handled in the right way. He was thus an optimist both in theory and practice. He was not a sentimentalist, either by theory or practice, for he found no occasion to force happy endings, or even any endings, at all, on his stories. They are not unhappy or tragic endings, but more often mere leavings off after the main problem set out for has been cleared up. Thus James must have seen that human life was a continuous process, and not a thing ordered by some individual and personal duty.

But James has little, or nothing, to say about religion. I am not aware that he ever subscribed to any denominational creed. His father, as we understand, took his children to various churches without allowing them to take membership in any, but as to what notions about religion James may have had, there is little evidence in his works. His characters don't seem to go to church, or discuss religion,

or theology, or any of the other ologies of the time. They seem to be people to whom morality was a fundamental, a matter of course, and to such extent that there was no call for debating it or even mentioning it. And that is, I presume, Henry James' philosophy. His letters chat along in most delightful manner about himself, his friends, his health, but I don't recall any reference of any kind to religion, and only once in a while to politics. He seems to have dedicated himself exclusively to art, so his work has little to say of anything else. His characters, at any rate, come nearer to making life an art than anything else.

Heaven and the hereafter he did discuss by special request in an article once, and we know he believed in immortality; or at least made no denial of it, but his fiction has about one mention of it, so far as I recall, and that in "The Great Good Place," tho' surely there is none of the Biblical notions about any of these things in James. All this seems remarkable, too, in James; his detachment, his intense specialization. Whether he was widely informed about the past I do not know; presumably he was, but however, there is little reference to matters of the sort. He seems peculiar in fiction in that he seems to have found his own age sufficient. It was London, Paris, Rome, New York of his own nineteenth century, and the nineteenth century countries in which these were situated, that furnished him the field for the play of his imagination.

We judge that he must have trusted greatly to reason and not overmuch to feeling, since his characters are eminently intellectual and not by any means to be called emotional. Alertness, awareness, fine composition, intellectuality, delicacy of feeling—these were human virtues one gathers from James' fiction.

There is a rich vein of humor in James, but no tendency to laugh things out of court, or to scoff it out either. Life, we take it, was serious for him and, as already noted, dignified, touched at times with tragedy, tho in the main happy—a thing to be accepted rationally and reasonably and lived happily. There is no revolt in him, no howling at fate, no easy complacency, no cynical indifference, no gluttonish fondness. It is all to James a fine, fair, beautiful art, a rare gift, a thing to prize and be conscious of, but a thing to live out to the fullest, however it comes. Live, live, live was his attitude, if we are to take our cues from his fiction. Such doctrines remind one of youth, of the normal attitude; not unreflective, I judge, but"aware," "alert", "conscious,"—and what is this but the tacit assumption of youth? Youth curious, excited, poking into the forbidden and mysterious, energetic, realistic, romantic, idealistic, hopeful.

So there is no morbidity in James, nothing sensual or filthy, no emaciated sentimentality, no robustiousness, no animalism, no loud laughter, no rough and tumble world,

but rather, to put it in a few phrases, the world of the exquisitely refined and cultured; a world of choice and rare souls; a world, which, once acquainted with, never ceases to be a thing of beauty and a joy forever. And since all these are what appears in his work, we infer naturally that these constitute the philosophy which he said the novelist should always have— this is his body of "reference," his understood, but unexpressed rules of the great game of life. We look for a philosophy in the body of James' work and this is what, by the grace of inference and imagination, we find.

But, as may be readily concluded, James' fiction has not a wide range and variety, as it seems to me. True he has a good deal of variety of character but little of situation and story. It is some form or other of the international situation, and the troubles of the leisure classes. The stories usually move on out to the close with no violence of any sort and thus one who knows three or four of them knows them all, as far as that is concerned. To be certain there is none of the thundering variety and bang bang of life itself. James flies— soars— not as the sparrow darting in and out of the clang and clamor of street and highway, and perching here and there among the haunts of men, but rather as the eagle, pitching his level far into the serene heavens and there in an unruffled atmosphere modulating his wing forever to its infinitesimally intangible vibrations. There may be variety there, but it surely is not the variety that

most of us are able to feel and know.

A good many students and critics of James have observed that many of his characters are given to renunciation and a fine unselfishness; if so, James must have had considerable faith in such a way in life, and this conduct in them fits into his desire for beauty in his work. I believe, as already stated— certainly hinted, that if James had any creed at all, it was the creed of beauty, beauty in the sense in which Shelley or Keats used it. That is to say, James saw human conduct pitched, not upon the plane of the ethical, or the expedient, or the utilitarian, but rather upon the plane of the esthetic, which, I want to say, comes to a higher form of these things. Morality amounts, as I have said, to utility, and so is but a way of getting along in the world. Being moral is being constructive rather than destructive. But that isn't getting far, for when one has merely been moral, merely gotten along, he isn't very far, surely, for the bleakest world imaginable is one where the inhabitants are merely good, only moral. No, morality, as I understand it, is but a means to an end, and not an end in itself; so that characters in a story that are merely impeccable in conduct don't interest us greatly. But the people who, either in life or fiction, are actuated by the higher ideal of beauty, are at least setting the goal higher, even if they do not give it finality. Beauty proves to be a higher morality, in that it is not content with ~~merely~~ the

adjustments of conduct merely toward one's fellows, but expects adjustments and harmonies toward everything. Absolute beauty is but absolute harmony, is but perfect adjustment. It becomes, then, a matter of conduct, a matter of taste, a matter of thought, a matter of feeling, a matter of attitudes, a matter of relationship, a matter of spiritual discernment—a matter embracing every shade and color of man's existence. It turns out to be almost the summum bonum, we feel, for James, such that, though he could not offer the attainment of beauty as the end of human existence, he could suggest it as the law of gravitation drawing him toward his ultimate heaven. This is high ground for the artist to take, even if it does not give us any ready made theories to carry off with us; a thing that art does very poorly anyhow. And isn't that novel the best which sets us an ideal and makes us fall in love with it, though such a novel can offer us no plan for achieving it? I should be inclined to agree with Poe and Emerson that beauty is its own excuse for being, because (to make their doctrine a paradox) it is the flower of all life and goal toward which all is moving. James' characters do right, but they don't seem impelled to by moral considerations. They do it because they find right the fine, attractive thing. Fleda Vetch gives up her lover to a rival, but she, in the Browning fashion, keeps it in a purer form. Christopher Newman, as dull as he seems, gives up his revenge because, perhaps, he discovers how ugly it is after all. And

there is something of the kind in a great many of James' leading figures. It all comes back to what we said a while ago that beauty is a higher morality, and the reason why James' characters show no perplexity as to the distinction between the ethical and the esthetic is that the ethical is assumed as a matter of course; which it is for those who are in the quest of beauty.

I don't find any thing in the James fiction or theory as to man's place in nature and his relation to the eternal and to his God, so to speak, and hence infer that he cared little about that. Hardy makes a good deal of that sort of thing, as do Meredith, and, of course, most of the poets; but James seems to regard man altogether as a social creature. Taste was a big word with James, and that has to do with one's fellows. James may be logical here also, as it might be argued that the essence of religion is to treat one's fellows properly. At least that is practical religion and James does not refer matters to any supreme deity, it appears. There is little tendency in him to discount the present and to look for a remedial future.

Judging from his detachment toward his characters, their own control of themselves, one must judge that James held no philosophy which placed the blame for individual conduct on anyone but the individual himself. There is no word in James to this effect, but his characters give us the feeling always that they, and not society, or God, or fate, or chance, or any-

thing else, is "richly responsible" for what they do. They have dignity, they have courage, they have their wits, and for James these are enough. Hardy loves to shake his head in despair at man's poor fate, and offers no balm. Byron likes to shake even his fists at heaven for man's, or perhaps Byron's, predicament. But James puts the responsibility where in practical life it is usually put, upon individual shoulders.

Such, we might say, is something of the philosophy of James, though it is not expressed anywhere in so many words. Such is the "body of reference," as he called it, by which he meant, as I take it, his view of life, and I draw this philosophy out, because he stated that we have the right to look for such a view, such a philosophy, in ~~the whole body of~~ a man's fiction, taken as a whole.

V

FORM AND PLOT

I presume there is no English novelist whose fiction has been more rigid in structure than that of Henry James, for certainly of all his literary doctrines, form to him was the central tenet of his faith. Form to him means that the novel was to be a thing beautifully reasoned out and planned in advance, a system, a pattern with all parts fitting, with nothing loose, and thus with no "baseness of an arbitrary stroke." And when we turn to his practice, his fiction is the most definitely and carefully worked out that we have. It is eminently the conscious product; one knows it is to be that before he begins to read it, and nothing in it spoils the effect, the unity so much desired. One might pause to ask why James was so careful about form, even though he himself has answered the question at length, and all he says is true. One other reason than his is that for the sort of subjects he handles nothing else is admissible than the reasoned out and well built. The handbooks on fiction still like to tell us that the artist may introduce a good deal of coincidence or use chance, for this, they say, is life; but I don't recall any such advice in James. Nor do I recall, indeed, that he ever employs chance anywhere

in his fiction. Yet how full of it English prose fiction is! How often has the reader thought back through a story and wished— well-nigh softened to tears— that some note had been discovered, or she had just seen him in time, or if somebody had just known something. ~~(These wishes used to be made be-fore the days of the All's Well That Ends Well of the movies)~~. Isn't this sort of thing in great measure the moving thing in many of the Hardy novels? Angel Clare fails to find the note Tess has slipped under the door, and the rug too. Bathsheba Everdene in a fit of mischief sends a valentine to a serene old bachelor next farm away and thus precipitates an actual tragedy. Evangeline and Gabriel practically brush each other as they pass on the Mississippi, though they are searching for each other; and she often glimpses the fading smoke of his dying fire, but only just when he has moved on out of sight. Chance has a large place in the novels of George Meredith, and Richard Feverel seems its victim time and again. Indeed it may be safely said that there are few of the great English novelists that do not make considerable use of it. And how much better it makes the pathos, especially for the young reader, or any other who takes his fiction sentimentally. But so does life often employ it, and with as much hinged upon it as the novelists I have cited. Most especially is it a large element in the fortunes and misfortunes of any nation or people, society, or group, which is not in a state of stable equilibrium. But no matter where, it seems to take the lion's share

in human affairs.

Now reason is just the negation of chance and fortune. It is the process by which man foresees and forestalls his fate. Therefore, to come to the point, Henry James has none of it. I can recall but one single instance of where it plays any significant part in any of James' stories, and that was in the early novel—"Roderick Hudson." In "Tess of The D'Urbervilles" the reader feels that if Angel Clare had found the note there might have been an entirely different fate for "Tess". Or, to begin further back, if her father had not heard of his titled ancestry, she might not have met the spurious Alex D'Urberville, and so might not have suffered the ruin that followed. Or if—but Hardy has filled in so many in that story that it practically hangs on chance. Jane Austen lets Elizabeth Bennet overhear Darcy's remark out of which grows ultimately the love affair and the marriage. And if we turn to drama, chance would seem—till very recently—to be the staff of life.

But James uses it neither here nor there. He will have none of it high nor low, little nor much. His stories move out and on, and close according to an inevitable logic. One need not ever fear in James that anything unprepared for is going to happen. There will be no shipwreck. When Newman returns to America for a brief visit to attend to business, one need not fear that yellow fever will take him off, or that he will be injured, or killed, in a strike. Hyacinth Robinson isn't going to be imprisoned by the anarchists and socialists

of London, and fail to meet his appointment with Christina, the Princess. No, James' stories are going where they start, and such surprise as the reader gets is in what is gradually unfolded about character and relationships. And this is universally the case, except in "Roderick Hudson", who falls over a cliff merely to stop the story, one feels, and not for any other reason. And I believe James later admitted that such an ending was a poor one.

James' reason for refusing any use of chance was, as already hinted, because it is not rational, and in the highest and best phases of human existence does not really amount to much. Or, rather, it is the exception, rather than the rule, that it turns destiny one way or the other. In an old and settled country, like so many in Europe (before the World War), or even among the wealthy and established classes anywhere, life is usually so well ordered as to preclude any sudden reversals, and certainly nothing could be built upon the rare and the occasional.

Hence, James insisted upon form, logic, architecture. And most of his stories possess it in a high degree. Form with James was the unfolding of a problem, or a relationship, the demonstration of a process, and hence according to James' view of fiction, his own could not help but be strict and rigid. Take, for example, "The Ambassadors". The whole story is told to demonstrate how Lambert Strether is converted to the European view-point. Whatever characters are necessary to help this along are placed in the story, and no more. Whatever ex-

periences the hero must go through are given, and no more, and that is the end of it. The unity comes largely, then, from the central theme, or purpose. The reader watches the process practically always through Strether's eyes, but however, the demonstration of the process seems to me to be the backbone of the figure.

"The Princess Casamassima" is a novel which seems to me in some ways the least unified and closely-knit of any of James' fiction, though when one finds what is being done, takes the "after view" that James insisted upon so much as a test, he sees the unity. This unity and purpose would seem to demonstrate the eternal rightness of things as they are, the inevitable predominance of aristocracy and talent, by showing how a revolutionist, a rebel and a revolter, taken from among the vulgar, and submitted to the influences of this high civilization, gradually sees the light. The book is in many ways a spectacle, but viewed from its central purpose one sees at once its fine proportions.

"What Maisie Knew" proceeds in the same manner to submit Maisie to such influences as were intended to develop in her the final moral sense all independently of any definite instruction about it. It turns out to be the resultant in her of the shuttlecock existence she had led between parent and parent, and then step-parent and step-parent. The reader shifts about and about as does Maisie, but he always reads from her intelligence, and this constitutes the unity, the form of the story. And so on with the other stories. James applied the same principles to the novel of character that Poe applied to the short story

of incident— namely, the single effect; thus there is no sub-plot in James, no double or triple story. There may be, as is inevitable, the separate tale of each character represented, but James does not handle that. He takes rather the story of their several relationships to a given situation or problem. One is aware of only one situation in "The Golden Bowl", that created by the conduct of Charlotte Stant and the Prince, and in which all four of the characters are vitally concerned. The book, ~~the~~, breaks into halves, but merely for convenience of treatment; the side of the Prince and the side of the Princess, though the central situation remains constant. It is the presenting, in the first half, of the situation, and the working out of it in the second half. This is the form for this story. And so in like degree with the rest of the stories.

Form meant logic and logic meant the admission of nothing not relevant to the demonstration; so dialog, description, all were given as fully as was necessary to secure the desired completeness of exhibition and proof, but no more. There was no satiety and over-demonstration. No going aside to merely amuse the reader with a good scene, a lively bit of repartee, or whatever, but just enough of it all to give the life and color necessary to the picture. By which I do not mean that there is no fine dialog in James. He is rich in it. I do not mean that there are no purple patches. One may find some of these. I do not mean that there are no lively scenes. There are all these, but they are only illustrative, and James is the magician standing with you at a window, as he thought of it, and pointing you

out what will illustrate his view. Or, again, he is telling you a story to show how this or that principle of human life operates.

A word right here about unity, that is, a word of my own. James agrees with Poe and others, of course, that a novel should have unity of effect, undivided interest, ~~&c~~ Much ink has been expended upon the topic, and great has been the travail of soul in attempts made to explain what it is in a work of fiction. What I wanted to say was that unity is not an absolute, unvarying, quality in fiction. James insisted upon it and attained it, but just how may one unfailingly locate it? One critic will find it, or fail to find it, here, another there. Unity in fiction depends, as it seems to me, ~~depends~~ upon the view-point, the angle of vision, ~~in fiction~~ just as in anything else. And more often than not, unity depends upon the reader's getting the view-point of the author. Of course, I do not mean that the reader should not be his own judge of the matter, but I do mean that after all, the author's way of seeing unity in a given work of his, especially if he has striven for it, is the only correct way to find it, and unless the reader can somehow approximate that view, he can have no right to complain at the lack of unity.

Poe was very fond of saying that there could be no such thing as a long poem, that "Paradise Lost" was but a series of short poems, and to that extent lacked the single effect poetry should have. But is "Paradise Lost" lacking in unity? It is from some view-points. There are readers who think there is too

much of it, and that the story breaks down about the end of the temptation scene, ~~etc., etc.~~ Thus from that view-point, I grant, there is a certain looseness and ragged effect, but when one sees "Paradise Lost" from the ~~viewpoint~~ view of of Milton's purpose, he notes that there is a much finer unity. That purpose, as announced in the first few lines of the poem, was to "justify the ways of God to man." So every incident, every deed, every piece of dialog, every bit of description, all the drama of it, are essential and necessary to show that God is just to man. The reader may complain that there is even at that a lack of balance in some places, but he has no right to say that until he has seen the poet's own view, and tested it out fully. Again it may be urged that no reader can hope to see it altogether in the same light as the author sees it, and perhaps this is true, but he should approximate the author's view of it, and if the author has been worth his salt, he will make the reader see it. The objection does not hold, however, for no one would expect a twenty year old, unlettered boy to see in a given book what a fifty year old, highly cultivated, man would see; nor even the unlettered boy to see at twenty in the same book what he would see at forty. And it is highly probable that any unprepared person will fail to see anything like what the author saw and intended.

The high school boy reads "Gulliver's Travels" as a mere adventure story, but the same boy at forty re-reads it as a bitter and fearful satire. And yet the book was the same book all

the time. Such unity as it possesses was there all the while. Shall any reader or critic, or body of readers or critics, have the right to say a book is or is not a unity, and offer their insufficient insight and taste as final to the matter?

The analogy of ordinary experience to the whole matter is close. Down in a narrow valley a hill near by may loom as the biggest thing in the landscape, but when viewed from a high mountain top might turn out to be a mere molehill in the general landscape. The landscape is the same always, but the correct view of it, no doubt, was always from the mountain top, lately, or perhaps never, scaled.

We judge our fellows by small, detached incidents, and thus allow them to pass through life as prophets without honor, but after they have quitted the scene, and the whole view, the complete judgment, of them is possible, we place a totally different construction upon their small acts, and readily relate them to the central purposes of their lives, and thus discover the unity— the unity produced by purpose— of all. But it was there all the while; they themselves having known all along what each act meant.

I, therefore, would urge this in any seeking after the unity of a book, that the author's view-point is and must be the dominant one. In this way I would apply the matter to Henry James. Unity for him lay in the fact that his novels always have a controlling purpose— not a purpose to reform something, or to dispense propaganda, or to give a variety show, but to picture life,

and by picturing life to make us aware of what it is. James is interested and curious and eager to present the reader with human motive, human experience, and this is always, as I take it, his purpose, his kind of unity. What is the core of "The Ambassadors", what is its unity? To show how a man—Lambert Strether—gradually, wonderfully learns that the great thing in life is to live it, live it, live it. It seems to me that that is exactly what James sets forth to do, and no more. The events of it, in this view, are all timed to let the reader see Strether going through the process of conversion, of letting him see the European "virus" at work. It may be objected that I am confusing purpose with effect, and I can easily see how the artist's achievement may fall below his purpose; that is how, for the reader, the book may have far less unity than the author hoped to secure. But even then the proper way to judge it is from the autorial angle.

Let us recall, too, a point that Mr. Percy Lubbock makes in "The Craft of Fiction" to the effect that a book is not just so many sentences and paragraphs and chapters distributed thus and so, but rather an effect upon the mind of the reader. The unity of the book, in this view, is going to depend more upon the purpose the author makes clear somewhere than upon any certain number of chapters to this and a certain other to that. The author is engaged by a variety of methods in sowing this unity; some brief, some less brief, but the measure of the unity of the book is not upon the number of strokes to accomplish

this or that, but upon how the strokes result.

Now it is not fair to say, of course, that the writer has all the rights in the case, because the reader is at all events the final arbiter. Hence he has the right to say, no matter how the author strove, or what he meant, just whether he made too much of this point and too little of that. The author may, often does, miscalculate and overshoot, or undershoot, the mark. The reader may need more or less description and elucidation at a given point than the author thought for, and hence the book appears one-sided, lacking in unity, to him; but even here, the thing would often clear up if the reader grasped the author's purpose, and I hold that until he does, he cannot have the right to pass judgment. I believe such an understanding would quiet a great deal of twaddle about unity, and I am certain James had some such view of it. It is one of the axioms of criticism that the critic shall at least find out, as Hugh Vereker says, what is the "figure in the carpet." I don't see how else there can ever be any broad judgment of the matter. Of course, there can be impressionistic criticism, but such criticism may or may not be intelligent. The most prefect picture ever produced requires the proper distance for seeing it properly, and the painter himself, as he painted it, had to stand back continually to get the right angle of vision. A too close view, or an unintelligent one, may find the masterpiece a mere daub.

No one would set much store by Mark Twain's reactions to European art as he gives them in "The Innocents Abroad", for he apparently took no pains to find out anything about what these pictures or statues attempted. The analogy holds good right through for fiction, I think.

Concerning this James once said that he presented a diagram to an editor to illustrate his method, which was to the effect that he presented in his stories a central situation with various lights—characters in action—to illuminate the various sides of the central situation. The author thus had his purpose to present his situation, he started with his premises, and these lights—or characters—were merely illustrations along the way. They, of course, were not of equal size and importance, nor were they placed equidistant about the central situation, but the point is that they one by one, and all together, illuminated the situation. The reader, then, looking upon it remained more or less unaware of the lights trained upon it, but beautifully cognizant, as James might have said, of it being beautifully lighted.

I believe that this was always Henry James' sort of unity. I think narrative for him was, as I have said, a sort of exposition, a sort of argument, and thus there could be no unity except as it lay in a carrying of its points, a conviction of the reader. If it took a heavy and elaborate one here, or a light one there, very well. The unity isn't in the plan, the body, but in the result. And after all, isn't that about the only unity that life presents? Doesn't beauty reside in a perfect

adjustment of an object to its functions? Isn't beauty just perfect adjustment? James is right; beauty, unity, and such qualities do not reside in the process, but rather in the achieved result. The novel—its paragraphs and chapters—is the process in which we need not look for, or care for, beauty, but rather in what the novel effects. And effects, noble effects, constitute by any measurement beauty. True, I can see, a beautiful process, but beautiful only in so far as it is going somewhere to an effect, a success, a final beauty.

It should be noted here that the analogy between fiction and painting is not complete, and herein a great deal of confusion has arisen. The painting (picture) appeals almost entirely to the eye, the physical senses, but the novel in any event attempts to appeal to the entire intellectual and emotional life and very little, we may say, to the physical senses. So the novel is a matter of mental and emotional register. Its picture is that produced in the mind and its unity, when it achieves it, is there. The picture may have, on canvass, everything toned down and adjusted to a central object—all of which symmetry could be measured by a carpenter's rule. But no such measurement could be applied to the novel, or hardly any other form of literature. It is no matter of counting paragraphs, or pages, to see whether there is symmetry, but rather it is a taking account of how well the novelist's purpose has registered itself upon the reader's mind. A chapter may be merely a page

and accomplish more toward it than another comprising half a volume.

Despite what is sometimes thought, James' novels have plenty of action, as he contended novels should have; at least, he said that action was the soul of them. I don't mean that there is a hurry and bustle. Indeed, there is nothing of that in the ordinary meaning of the terms. But action the James' novels have; that is, his characters do something, and it is about this which they do that the novel moves. We remember, however, that action was always to be explained, and so there is not only external, bodily, action, but the internal brain-work, or heart-work to count also.

Plot, in the ordinary sense, is not very large in the James novels. There is nothing of the detective-story method in him, if you mean the weaving ~~out~~ of a complicated story and untangling it. There is no "Cloister and the Hearth," "Tale of Two Cities" kind of plot in him. The interest is in what the characters do in the James novels, of course, but it is what they do as responsible beings and not as mere plot complicators. James creates characters of a highly responsible sort, and then lets them do what their kind would do; and, to be sure, they are not going to trot back and forth merely to parade themselves. They must be true to themselves, and to do that they can't race about like stock brokers, or gold hunters, inasmuch as their world does not call for any such speeding. Theirs is a more leisurely world where the mind travels rather

than the body.

Accordingly, then, the James novels are not plot novels, as is generally understood, though there are rather good plots in some of them. For example, "The Princess Casamassima" is a pretty well tangled-up story. "Roderick Hudson" has considerable plot value. "Washington Square" is not without plot, nor is "The Bostonians." And even as for that, a good many of them have a good deal to happen in them. "The American" is pretty good in this respect, for Christopher Newman does rather a good deal, as does Madame de Cintre; in fact all of them. And here are whisperings of mysteries and secrets and scandal to please the sense of a Charles Dickens or a Wilkie Collins. The late long fictions, however, have scarcely any of this; such as "The Golden Bowl", "The Awkward Age", "The Tragic Muse", "The Sacred Fount."

James held that a story should be both "picture and idea," and I think he meant that there should be thought pictured through story. At least, such seemed to be his method. There is, as already noted, an idea, a view of life, back of each of his books, and the story itself is used as a sort of photograph of it. Witness "The Ambassadors," "The Bolden Bowl," "The Wings of The Dove." James was interested to say that fiction could not be mere propaganda, or mere exposition, and he must have said this in the light of a good deal of this sort of fiction around him. The purpose-novel like "Uncle Tom's Cabin" James did not like, or any of that numerous tribe that presented a story loaded with propaganda; a story whose only purpose was

to carry its burden of doctrine— the doctrine of course being the chief interest of the writer. James had said the novel must have ideas, thought, a meaning, but he was careful to say that, at all events, it must always remain a story of action. This is its peculiar difference from other forms of literature. Thus there is no novel of his which is in the remotest sense a propaganda story. One might have expected him to argue out the matter of art in his fiction somewhere, but such is not the case, and if things of the kind are presented as in "The Figure in the Carpet," or "The Spoils of Poynton," the fiction remains in essence stories. No matter who reads them, the student of James or the casual novel-reader, they leave the impression that they are above all stories.

James defined the novel as the broadest of all forms of art, but he saw no ground, therefore, for taking all the liberties allowed him. Broadness with him was more a matter of liberty of method and subject matter than a thing to be applied to the individual novel. The responsibilities were what concerned him rather than the immunities. It was, for James, like many other callings and professions in which the larger the liberty the more the responsibility, the more to be expected. So he might have been the "omniscient" writer in his novels, he might have played the buffoon, as Sterne did, he might have run to the lachrymose; indeed he might have rambled about seeking all possible effects and by every conceivable means, but he refused these liberties, and held himself to the clear, sharp

accuracy of aim and effect which produced for him exquisite studies and stories of many phases of human motive.

The novel, he thought, should pass through the "crucible" of the novelist's imagination, and thus his fiction is almost entirely of his own fiber. In practice James was faithful to his theory. Indeed, it is singular, as every one notices, how little of the externals of life appear in James' fiction. How little there is about dress or table manners, or the details of house or landscape, or passing theories, or what not. James' novels deal eminently with the inner life, and are thus in very large degree of the mind of James. James is like the honey bee, to use a precarious figure, he gathers his nectar here and yonder outside of him, but the real honey is not to be had until the bee adds its own peculiar substance. The amazing thing about the Henry James process is that he could make so much out of mere nothing. But one should not gasp at this; it is true of all art. What did he see, where did he find it? We think he saw what the rest of us do not see, but after all the astonishing effect was produced in his own personality—his own imagination.

Who could ever find in life all that the child Maisie saw and knew? Who of ordinary mortals could see what the passionate pilgrim saw? And what about that marvelous flavor of things in Gloriani's garden? Is Paris such an Elysium? Is London so vocal to most of us as it appears in "The Princess Casamassima"? Whence come the taste and tang of "The Spoils

of Poynton," or the peculiar color of "The Golden Bowl"? These are Henry James, his personal view, his particular "rose-color" even if he did say rose-color should be avoided. But no matter if we do see that these effects come only from the writer, we are still astonished at the proportions of the images he erects out of nothing, as it seems. So James' fiction is, as he would say, "ideally done," and therein is its beauty, its abiding appeal for those who find a thing of beauty a joy for ever.

VI

CHARACTER AND SETTING

James identified fictional character with action; he thought of it as reflective; he thought of it as representative; he thought of it as superbly human, passionate, capable of being tempted; it must be richly conscious. In practice he meets his doctrine in some instances, but in some not. As for character and incident being identical in fiction, I presume his doctrine suits his practice very well, for surely no one can see where the one leaves off and the other begins with him. His characters, as we have seen, are not globe-trotters anyhow, and so carefully is what they do prepared for and led up to that the reader hardly feels that the mere utterance of speech, or the movement of body, is anything very different from their mental processes. In all the weighing and balancing that Maggie Verver goes through ~~about~~ about her situation, what she does is no very far different process. And this notion that there is no action separate from character is sound ~~anyhow~~, for, reduced to its lowest terms, nothing exists outside of the human personality. That

is, there is a sense in which this is true, and that seems to be what James means, though there is also a sense in which other views of it are correct. One may easily say that nothing exists except as the brain takes note of it, and make out a pretty good case for the view, yet an equally good, if not better, argument might be made to the effect that the brain has very little to do with it. It's a pretty nice problem in metaphysics, and there is little need of discussing it further here.

James surely follows to the letter his theory that characters must be reflective and aware, which is their chief distinction in his novels. In fact, there are very few that are not. Mr. Dosson, Roderick Hudson, Mrs. Gereth, perhaps, Mona Brigstock, Henrietta Stackpole, and ~~some~~ others; usually subordinate, however. There are no leading characters to speak of. Highly reflective are Kate Croy, Milly Theale, Maggie Verver, Charlotte Stante, the Prince, Lambert Strether, Madame de Cintre, Christina Light, Rowland Mallet. These, and the rest of the leading ones, are all thoroughly, most acutely aware, immensely vibrant. "She had a pause", is a favorite phrase with James in indicating the mental processes of his characters, and they very often remain silent for page after page, or at least seem to, while James describes what their reactions are to a statement, or question, of another character. In fact there is rarely any of the sharpness of repartee, or the bluntness of vigorous, energetic souls in Henry James' novels. Being fully

aware, and masters of themselves, the characters don't break, ~~[illegible]~~ forth unthoughtedly; and if feeling is expressed, it is guarded and guided until there is little ruffle of the smooth surfaces.

Here are some examples of that "awareness" with which James endows his characters: "Fancy stood off from that proposition as visibly to the Princess, and as consciously to herself,as she might have backed away from the edge of a chasm."

"The pitch of her cheer accordingly, the tentative adventurous expressions . . . had at the end of a fortnight brought a dozen times to our young woman's lips a challenge that had the cunning to wait its right occasion."

"Oh once more how she was to feel she had smirked."

"For which Amerigo's answer again took him a moment."

"She spoke as from the habit of her anxious conscience."

"But she waited a little—as if made nervous precisely by feeling him depend too much on what he said."

And so on, these could bemultiplied ad infinitum. Any reader of James knows what I mean by the aware, alert characters he creates.

Are his characters human and passionate, and capable of being tempted, as he said they should be? Yes, with qualifications for the affirmative. They are susceptible to temptation, though I feel that they would require much stronger ones than the ordinary human being, as they are stronger people. Of

course, there is no question about their passion, their great feeling. Here are their prominent features— the women of James are tremulous with feeling, and so are his men. Even so thick-skinned a person as Christopher Newman is rather prominently conscious. The father, Mr. Dasson in "The Reverberator", is a trifle obtuse and inalert, and heaves out pretty bluntly of *the Franco-Prussian War*, "*that Old War!!!* but there are not so many of them; besides they aren't usually heroes. On the whole, however, one could hardly say that Henry James' characters are human in the popular meaning of that term. They move in a sort of third heaven, and are rather beyond the reach of ~~the~~ most of us; I mean, of course, his leading characters— the ones he made peculiarly his own.

James noted that some characters were directly, others but indirectly, concerned with his story, and so we get a good many rather conventional people in the stories. The old violinist, Mr. Vetch, of "The Princess Cassamassima" is conventional, Millicent Henning and Miss Pynsent of the same story are conventional. Caspar Goodwood of "The Portrait of A Lady" is to me a kind of lay figure, an accessory figure.

Henry James once or twice spoke of woman as a subject of fiction, and said that her problems and questions, her mental processes, offered the novelist a never-ending study. At any rate, James was fond of treating her, and it has been noted that the number of his female characters exceeds considerably that

of his male creations, and this is to be traced, I suppose, to the fact that he found women more of a puzzle, and to the further fact that women novel readers outnumber the men readers. If one looks through the list, he finds that James creates a good many characters that meet defeat— ~~which seems to indicate that this subject appealed to him, possibly because of its pathos.~~ —Milly Theale, Christopher Newman, Hyacinth Robinson, Madame de Cintré, Madame de Mauves, Morris Gedge, Fleda Vetch, Ralph Touchett, Clement Searle, Theobald, Lambert Strether, Daisy Miller. He may not care so much for defeat as a subject except that it offered opportunity for developing the finely sensitive personality. Mr. Dixon Scott (London Bookman, March 1913) has suggested that these sensitive souls were chosen because of James' respect for normality, for his reader, and on account of his own delight in the little joys and pleasures of earth. In other words, James chooses these to make evident the value of the commonplace and small. Whatever the reason, he often created such characters.

Are the Henry James characters individuals or types, and representative? James said they should be representative. Only partly representative, I should say, for, as already noted, they do not represent many of us, we think. They are individuals to me, so far as they stand out at all. But one feels a little out of place in discussing them, as though they were angels or fairies. They aren't all as good as angels, but they don't generally impress me as representative; though on

the other hand they are not unforgettable individuals. This is another strange paradox about James. One rarely runs across a saying of a character, or an act, that furnishes one the thrill of recognition, and this seems to me to be one of the tests of the representative qualities of a character. Nor does one find himself breathlessly following their fortunes, another good test of their being both types and individuals. There is surely a remoteness about them, say what we will. One wonders now and then just what does make a character human and recognizable in fiction. Is it because it is like us or unlike us? Is it that it is itself exclusively, or just a composite of us all? I should say that both elements must enter into it; that is, a human being is to be remembered in real life because of his differences from the rest of humanity, and I mean here differences in minor matters, dress, eccentricities of speech, size, height, and so on. Otherwise we carry away no more individual impression of him than we might of a single blackbird in a flock of five hundred. But, let us note, the character must not be wholly and in every way different; which would remove him from the category of the human, and make him a monster. Poe's "Hop Frog" we remember, but not as a character. So Shakespeare's "Caliban," but not as a human being, and so on.

Now when we turn to fiction I think the same thing applies pretty well. The character must possess the fundamental human traits, but to stand out clearly, it must have its superficial markings; or even, perhaps, a more profound marking,

so long as such marking does not become unintelligible because it transcends the human. To test it out, the characters one recalls from fiction are those so marked, as I have indicated: Becky Sharp, Adam Bede, George Sedley, Sam Weller, Micawber, Miss Birdseye, Aunt Betsy Trotwood, Mr. Gadgrind, Mrs. Bennet, Mr. Collins, Colonel Sellers, Hepzibah Pyncheon, Tom Jones, Lily Bart, Barkis, Uncle Remus, Tristram Shandy. My point is that, personally, they must possess the ear-marks, or distinguish themselves by what they do; so long of course—to repeat—as they are intelligible. Of the list I have mentioned one could readily cite the traits—which are peculiarities—that one remembers them by.

It follows from this that when characters, either in life or fiction, move out of our realm, we lose interest and even power of understanding them. And this is just why, I believe, I have to puzzle so much over whether James' characters are representative or not. They do not seem to possess the eccentricity, or the faculty of doing or saying the unusual in a way to distinguish them, and besides this they move in a sphere removed from that of the average citizen of a democratic world. Thus there is ground for saying they are puppets and special products. James seemed aware of what was needed, too, for he said that the novel must have its fools, that it should not make its characters too aware and too alert, else they got into no trouble, and hence did not share the ordinary human lot; hence did not interest. Fiction is a sort of pastime

where we see our fellows in our own perplexities and dilemmas, and at the same time, just as innocent, or as helpless, as we in the same situations. The fun, or the tragedy, comes largely through their having to muddle through as the rest of us do. If they get too wise, foresee all the tricks, and are prepared and thus not confused, then the real interest of the game vanishes. It is as though the boy for whom the prank was set "got wind of it" and refused to be surprised, thereby disappointing and angering the tricksters. So for this reason, James said, there must be fools, foils, clowns, to make trouble and also that the more perfect figures may be presented by contrast. And, as he said, the leading characters must not be too perfect, or we lose interest. Or, to put it another way, the reader must have some figure through whom he may have his vicarious experience.

The leading characters of Henry James do not offer this, we feel, though the fault, perhaps, is in the reader as much as the character. For there are numbers of people—women especially—who find the James characters entirely human and life-like. Highly sophisticated people likewise, and people whose lives have been that of thought and feeling rather than action.

In further illustration of the point, many people find his minor figures more likable than the leading ones, just as Launcelot Gobbo may interest us more than Shylock, or Charmian more than Cleopatra, or even the gravedigger more than Hamlet.

I repeat, James was aware of this, though he did not correct it enough to make his novels popular in any broad sense. Most of his novels have these minor figures, and they are usually very interesting, if I may risk being called a low-brow and a Philistine. We have mentioned some of them, Henrietta Stackpole, Barnaby Striker, Mrs. Gereth, Mr. Dosson, Lavinia Penniman, Millicent Henning, though many of his novels do not have these, and certainly they are never the leading figures. James could create them, let no one doubt, as he did create them, and most successfully, but he surely must not have cared for these primarily. Here, then, is where he is not only a realist, a historian, but an idealist and a prophet, for he deliberately produced a long list of figures that were lifted to a sublime air, a purer region, for the delight of such as could follow thereto, and for the goal of those who could at least aspire.

This is turning out high praise for James, but he certainly must deserve it, and let us remember if he were as impossible as some have tried to make him out (Professor Pattee, for instance), there would not remain such a loyal group of his admirers, even though they may get credit for being of the elect and of the intelligentsia. There is a parallel here between Browning and James, though I don't mean to say that James is as robust as Browning. Their manner and purpose seem similar to me.

No, it was a special sort of character James was interested in, and while it is not as "human" as we expect to find fictional creations, it is enough so for those who are prepared

for the particular regions in which this sort of character lives. And James suffers the same penalty in his fiction which any unusual individual suffers in life; that is,to be misunderstood, maligned and scoffed at. We feel, however, that time will produce more and more persons, though they will always be relatively small in number, who will be in themselves the common denominators through which the figures of Henry James will become more and more interesting.

Another point must be noticed about James' leading characters, and that is that their talk is much alike; that is, their diction and general phraseology is the same, their differences being in thought more than in manners of expressing it. This seems due to their station in life, however, for standard English tends to a norm, and as people approach to a mastery of it they tend totalk very much alike. So that if we must judge them by their speech only, the differences seem small. Another reason this is for the difficulty some have of finding the James' characters interesting. With a great many novelists the characters are not only different in make-up, they have their localisms, and individualisms and provincialisms. They are thus tagged and labeled, branded and designated by their pet words and phrases. A whole host of the Dickens characters come to mind as he is the supreme example of this sort of thing. But Thomas Hardy and Meredith and all of the novelists employ the method, even James himself to some degree in his minor figures. But his major figures are

not so handled. He spoke of the law of contrast in handling character, but apparently does not follow his theory here, for I find none of his major characters set off by contrast. Birds of a feather flock together in James' novels, and thus are harder to distinguish than if the kinds were mixed. This is significant in James, and, as I say, makes him hard reading for many readers. One can well enough recall James' problems and situations, but his characters not so well. Yet we forget the Dickens situation or plot, but who forgets Pickwick or Dick Swiveller? Such is the James practice which is hardly up to his theory.

It has already been suggested in another connection that James' characters seem responsible only to themselves; that is, they have no tendency to lay the blame for their misfortunes, when they have these, on any other than themselves. None of them, Cain-like, throw the matter up to their creator; none of them blame society; none of them blame luck or anything else, and herein they are hardly normal, for most of us apologize for our defects of whatever character and thus get mental quiet. We salve our consciences, which is but another way of keeping our entire machinery operating smoothly. Not many human beings are aware of their faults and blame no one but themselves, for such procedure turns out to be suicide. Not many actual people are as conscious of their processes as James' characters are of theirs. We are conscious in just a few out of many directions. Indeed habit and instinct take care of most of us, our rational faculties being used only for emergencies and crises. When in actual life we become too aware—which

turns out to be nervousness—we go to pieces, and disease sets in.

Hence it is evident again that James' leading characters are not normal and natural, even though his subordinate ones are. Indeed they are usually too logical and perfect, and too little instinctive. They "talk like a book," as we often say. But I won't say that James did not intend this and defend it. I think he felt that the best world was that wherein human beings were well ordered, and he could see no permanent order unless people were awake and in possession of their faculties. That was just the trouble he found, the blindness of humanity brought on all the trouble by its failing to foresee and to take precaution. So I think James deliberately followed his theories in creating almost altogether this alert sort of character for his leading figures. The other kind he could produce excellently, as he did, but they are the fools, and he was interested in an ideal creation as well as a real. Most of us, as I say, don't recognize James' people as ourselves, and that is just the point, they are, and were intended to be, better than we--far better and finer than we.

A word about setting. It is accurate, I think, to say that James did not know setting in the ordinary meaning of the term. He conceived his characters first, and being people of strong feeling, they at once created for themselves their atmosphere and setting. Needless to say, they do not attach them-

selves locally, and so to an unusual degree there is no local color in James; he wanted none. It was his purpose to submerge locality as much as possible, and his people lived in an area that did not partake of the color of place. Even "The Princess Casamassima" is void of London local color, though its setting, so to speak, is London. James' stories occured in Paris, New York, Boston, London, or Rome, and beyond these broad areas there is no flavor of place. Well, the highly educated and cultured and refined who are concerned with their feelings are divorced from place, so that setting does not have the ordinary meaning in James. As his characters were unusual, so were his settings, and his use of setting is altogether for the purpose of bringing out character; there is none of it for its own sake, and less of it for any sake than most novelists use. Certainly James does not employ scene and climate as do Hardy and Meredith, which with them seem to take their own way about it. Character never seems with- James a product of climate and soil, but rather one of social pressure. James in his own person was such a product and was possibly influenced in his view of character thereby. Tess almost grows up out of the Wessex soil, Eustacia Vye out of Egdon Heath, and so on, but not so do any of Henry James' characters.

And when I said a moment ago that James produced unusual character, I did not mean great character in the ordinary sense of the term. The James characters are great in the _

sense that they are great feelers, if I may use that rather poor term.. They aren't, by any means, shrewd, or resourceful, or energetic, or pragmatic. They do not possess the virtues of the selfmade man, or those virtues in general which we extol as good for the hard uses of life. They do possess, nevertheless, the best virtues for their own world, and they fit, and are thoroughly logical in their place. Energy, resourcefulness, persistence, audacity, courage, and indifference, ~~[illegible]~~ are the virtues of people who must do the world's work, its dirty work, ~~[illegible]~~ but they are not so indispensable in a world of leisure and refinement.

And may I go a step further and say that if Henry James is right in taking the world he portrays as the flower of all, and the place toward which all moves, then will not ~~[illegible]~~ all virtues tend to become more and more a matter of feeling ever so delicate, ever so accurate? In such a setting, or world, as this, feeling is the virtue, and beauty the morality.

One notes that James' characters do not exhibit much feeling, though he said they should be passionate. I don't take this to mean that they do not have passion, however, because people, especially the well bred, may feel very deeply but restrain it; this being characteristically true of the Anglo-Saxon. And I must revise my statement that the James characters do not exhibit their feelings; they don't, but Henry James does it for them. That is, their talk is detached and respectable, but between their lines Henry James kindly exhibits their most intimate and minutest feelings. It would

shorten the matter to say that James' characters are above all well-bred, and such people are not given to demonstrations of emotion. This is in many ways the explanation, if there is any single one, of the James characters. Henry James himself, from all accounts I have, was a most punctilious gentleman, observing all provisions of the gentleman's code. No man in literature appears more so, it seems to me. He was thoughtful, frank, honest, possessed a keen sense of humor, urbane, clever, spiritual, generous, had taste, and whatever else the code required. And his resources placed him where he had every opportunity to make his life an art. His friends were of the elite, and from almost all considerations James might have most fittingly signed himself, with Shakespeare, "Henry James, gentleman."

Of course, James is not the only roundly cultured man of letters in the history of English literature, nor is he the first to place cultivated people in fiction. But he is the only one who so consistently does so, and who makes his characters so consistently and intensely refined. And another reason why the great majority do not find James readable is because it is not a highly refined and cultivated majority; besides the average person likes the thrill of the unconventional, and feels that conventionality and culture, as popularly understood, are stale and unprofitable. Which is true, unless you understand again that the James characters get their thrill not out of earthquakes and world cataclysms, but

from the upturnings of their own mental secrets, or the heaving and swelling of their own emotions. And assuredly there are these truths, as any sympathetic and attentive reader of James will agree. It is the thrill of the hypersensitive soul however, the soul sensitive to life as well as to language. Still I believe these thrills are there, and for one who thinks, as James does, that action is character and character action, he is consistent in his character creations.

If these characters are thoroughly respectable and proper, they probably won't make love very visibly, and it is notable that though the tender passion is vividly felt, the reader does not feel it while reading, as he may with many characters in fiction. Hardy can put the reader into as soft a mood ordinarily as he might be supposed to fall into in real life, but James never does it, though his characters all love, too; and here again is the super-refined in James. In fact, he said it were better in handling the erotic to "stand off" and not invade, and indeed he relieves the reader of much witnessing of lip-touching and swift and inevitable embracing. Hardy's"soft and silent Tess" is too luscious and liquid a creature for the fastidious Henry James. When James approaches declaration scenes in his lovers, he shies off, as O.Henry used to do, and records it in scientific phrases; not through the gasping ejaculations and broken sentences of actual lovers.

Such procedure ought to be enough, and is for many readers, though if literature is an outlet, or a place where a suppressed desire gets a lark, James is all wrong. So he will never suit the thousands whose actual pleasures are often so limited as to make them fly to literature for the unattainable or forbidden fruit. His characters are, like him, generous, they have taste, they are cultivated, they have spiritual discernment, have a beautifully moral sense, possess a sense of humor; but such a combination makes them too much of the "better sort," the "finer grain," in a word, too perfect for the general. So the public does not take James as it took Dickens or Scott or Harold Bell Wright, if I may be so bold as to introduce him into this company. Theoretically, however, James is right, I should say, and violates no canon of his faith.

VII

STYLE AND METHOD

I come now to what is perhaps the largest phase of the discussion of James' practice, namely, style and method. A topic which might be used to cover everything, though I have thought best to limit it to the more intimate matters of language and related matters. I say this phase is large and important, because James insisted on it perhaps more than any other, and critics have very often said his manner is the chief thing about him; certainly larger than his matter. At any rate, whatever else he has, he has manner and method with which he produces amazing effects.

Henry James according to his own statement conceived characters first and then built his settings around them, or rather allowed them to "set" themselves. He proceeded, as we may judge from "The Sense of Past," with an outline of what the characters were to do, wrote it out hurriedly, and then spent much time upon the filling in, or making plausible, and credible, what these characters had done. This seems to have been his broad procedure, and this means that the actual moving about which they did was small, though the mental and

emotional effort expended was large, and upon this James did much labor. After his main outline was upon paper, as it appears, or definitely shaped in his mind, he must have hunted out the "center," ~~---~~ he insisted upon so much. That is, some character through whose understanding and perceptions the other characters were to be reflected, thereby producing a sort of secondary unity; a unity for the reader in addition to the author's own. Isabel Archer is such a center in "The Portrait of a Lady." Strether, in "The Ambassadors," Fleda Vetch in "The Spoils of Poynton," "Rowland Mallet" in "Roderick Hudson," Christopher Newman in "The American," and so on. These stories are all told from their "registers." They are, as it were, bulletins upon which each of the other characters records the history of himself.

Again it seems that James used an area, or center, which he wished lighted, and thus seems to read it through the various characters who see it, which procedure is a good deal like Browning's in "The Ring and the Book." It seems to me to be his method in "The Golden Bowl" where the Prince is the medium in one half the book and the Princess is such a medium in the other half. The same method, too, is used in "The Wings of the Dove" where we get Milly's impression, Kate Croy's and Merton Densher's , about a central situation. Here there is a parallel to Browning's "James Lee's Wife" when she speaks at the fireside, at the window, along the beach, on the cliffs, on the rocks, ~~---~~ James' characters give some such variety of registers,

or impressions, about a central predicament, or idea. It's a poll of the opinions of the actors, so to speak. But this isn't so new with James, and he himself does not use it uniformly, of course. The "center," however, does seem original with him, and a rather constant method of his.

He thus employed practically without exception the "indirect method," which he insisted upon always. The first person is never employed by him, nor any of the "omniscience" which he thought spoiled the force of a work, and made for general loosemess and waste. James' method was by "picture and scene," as he said, by which he followed the plan of drama; that is, he in his own third person told what might not naturally be said by the characters by way of explaining themselves, or what they might not find out about each other--this was picture. After all such matters had been got out of the way, he let his characters talk, or at least reported their feelings and thoughts about things which would amount to talk or soliloquy--this was scene. Or to make the analogy with drama clearer, James in the third person, set the stage, made the picture; the characters enacted and talked out the scene. Such he said was his theory about it, and such we know to have been his practice. Indeed, without citing individual places, every reader of James will remember that his books have large "blocks" of dialog sandwiched in with "blocks" of the author's necessary explanation, though, mind you, none of it takes the lazy expedient of telling the reader everything. It is used as a "fore-

shortening" process, and whatever can by any means be found out from the talk and thought of the characters themselves is not so reported. The analogy to drama, therefore, is complete, and it is the Henry James method throughout, till "The Awkward Age" becomes a long talky play, such as Congreve might have written, or Oscar Wilde. The "picture and scene" method is the one in "What Maisie Knew," "The Tragic Muse," "The Golden Bowl," "The American," "The Ambassadors." And one easily observes that when the "scene" is not being presented, it is being prepared for, thus meeting James' doctrine.

The analogy to drama is brought out again in his statement to the effect that the first half of a fiction is the stage, or theatre, for the second half, for that is about what the world has generally approved as the method of good drama. This, too, is James' method. "The Golden Bowl," "The Ambassadors," "The American," "The Princess Casamassima" move this way. James spends time, a great deal of it, working up a situation, and when he has it, he spends a good deal in working out of it. A fine illustration of this is "The Wings of the Dove," and so is "The Golden Bowl." Of course he sometimes almost starts with one, and works out of the tangle, but even in his shorter fiction there had to be some preparation, however brief, to make the reader cognizant of the situation. This is in large degree the method of all fiction, though the fiction writers are apparently unaware of it, and so do not handle fiction according to the method of drama. In fact, many

novelists seem to set forth with more or less interesting characters in knightly fashion to seek adventures, the interest being very largely in what happens to them, not what they make happen. "Gerard" in "The Cloister and The Hearth" just runs into all sorts of things, whether or no, in his journey to and from Rome. These adventures might have happened to almost any handsome, spirited fellow. Of course, Dickens is full of that sort of thing, and nearly all the rest of the earlier novelists. A good many things just "happen" to Tess and Angel Clare. Nothing ever "just happens" to any of Henry James' characters. He never led forth his brood to seek adventure for them and his reader. No, he was forever against any such method, and saw characters in situation—situation of their own creating; or rather, situation created by the fact that they are what they are. All was logical and close-woven with James. It was practically drama. Professor Pitkin's definition of the short story might in some manner fit James' stories: "narrative drama with a single effect."

With James a character says something and, verily, pages of his own report about the effect of the utterance intervene before he is replied to, or speaks again. That is, these reports are but preparations for that next speech and are intended, of course, to give it clearness and therefore force. So the novel was, for James, the staging and enactment of life for the reader. And all with the author's purpose of embodying an idea—a final unity. I like to think this was James' theory and practice. The reader then should at some time, by all

means, see the author's idea, ~~view-point~~ point of view, or purpose, to note the outside, ultimate, intended unity, the shell or cover of the thing ~~[illegible]~~, and then he should at once identify himself with the "center" of the story, and see it from this window. To use a figure, the reader takes his stand with the author who ~~[illegible]~~ remarks to him that he wishes to show him a beautiful, terrible, marvelous, or whatever, (the outside unity) ~~vista~~ vista, and steps with him to a window (the "center," character who shall reflect the vista"), and little by little, detail by detail, points it out. The grand central unity, thus, as I see it, is the author's idea that the vista is beautiful, terrible or whatever and his purpose to show it so, but the window after all determines just what may, or may not, be seen. It is the shutter, the pupil, that actually admits the details of the view. The artist's idea, purpose to show it, and his pointing finger in illustration of the idea all give the unity, or totality. Such is the James theory and practice, as I understand them.

Now as James proceeded to stage life according to picture and scene, it may be expected that there will be no lost motion, another point in the analogy with drama. If one scene of a play is laid in New York and the next in London, that fact is indicated on the printed program, the set is changed about, and the story proceeds with as little delay as possible. So with the Henry James novels, for whereas many

novelists will use paragraphs to note a crossing of the ocean by one of their characters, Henry James will use perhaps three words, or certainly not ordinarily more than a sentence or two, never a long account. To illustrate, if two characters are discussing a matter in Paris, and are forced to separate before they complete the discussion, James will handle it about like this: "Newman that afternoon in Paris asked her about Madame de Centré, and two months later in London she gave him to understand," etc. Here these rapid transitions go, and this manner is somewhat unique with James. It is somewhat confounding, too, for most fiction readers are accustomed to seeing the characters get aboard trains, or boats, and consume at least some time in trips, full accounts of which are given, and hence when they have returned, or come together again, the reader feels that they have "been somewhere," and that he himself has ~~has~~ been with them.

James eliminates all this, for unless ocean-crossings, hibernations—time intervals—mean something to the development of a situation, James dispenses with them. Indeed he will have the reader do nothing but "keep his nose to the grindstone." If a problem, situation, hidden motive is to be worked out, James business-like takes his reader's hand and says "Let's get the matter over; there won't be any sightseeing, or gabbling, or other pastimes until we have completed our little task. The fun for us is to be in the doing of the work, and not in the by play." So there is a compactness, an

intensity, a seriousness, a dead earnestness, which repels many readers. They would gape a moment, or look away from the page, or scan the words with wandering attention to find to their dismay that all the while James has been saying something, something gravely significant. Hence they tend to "get lost," and move farther and farther into a hopeless maze.

There are no passages in James one may "skip", no patches of description he may omit, any more than he may omit a step in a mathematical demonstration, and it just must be admitted that most readers are not up to the task, especially for the fun of it. Even Homer is reputed to have nodded; Henry James apparently never does. And there you are, as he would say.

And how dead seriously his sentences move! How allusively and suggestively do they shoulder their thought, and with what errorless accuracy do they finally get it expressed! They remind one of the gradual shunting out and coupling up of a train of coaches with the road engine (the verb) to be coupled on last. Or to change the figure, it is as though one fastened one end of a net, and with the other end swung out into water, and after a while, drew up close to the place where he started. It isn't that nothing is said; on the contrary very much, but so many qualifying adjectives, adverbs, phrases, and clauses were needed to make it clear, unmistakable, and accurate, that the reader feels he did not swing as far as he thought he was going to. So, not only is the Henry James plot and character method one of blue logic, his style

itself is a part of it. Thus his language has flash, humor, glitter, allusiveness, sparkle, livliness, distinction. It has all the flavor of the colloquial, and hence a certain raciness at times, though it is never blunt, and rarely incisive. James was not dealing with bluntness and uncouthness, and hence was not called upon for them in his style.

Inasmuch as James was interested in the very minutest texture of human emotion and character, he needed a style, a tongue, with which to bring this out. He looked constantly for the psychological, the occult, the recondite. Accordingly, his style has its peculiarities. For example, James is very fond of putting a statement negatively. His sentences move by turns, and twists, they eddy at times, move forward a little, retreat a little, fill themselves with parentheses, accumulate qualifications, pick up adjacent ideas, and like a struggling swimmer, after much puffing and panting, land ashore. The central idea thus becomes trimmed and tailored and qualified till it possesses thrilling accuracy, and yet it appears so much related and connected that something of the whole universe seems to flow through its veins. These figures of mine may not be getting anywhere, but the apparent oddity of the Henry James style is consistent with his theory, and is actually demanded for the expression of what he attempts to express—that is, the inexpressible, or at least things "yet unattempted in prose or rime." According to Robert Louis Stevenson no one should attempt such things, for he regarded it as impossible to begin to put down all any person thought or felt

for the briefest period. But James was not of this opinion, it appears, though, of course, he does not believe in attempting a photographic record. To James human action grew out of all sorts of complexities of thought and feeling, and he felt that action could not be completely intelligible unless one knew these thoughts. He further held that personality is a unit, and a unit with the great central unity of life. In the nature of the case, then, there can scarcely be such things as absolutes in any sense. Human language was a language of compromises and defects, and hence there was little place for loose, unguarded statements. To mirror accurately the mind in language was to make it a hesitant, allusive thing, ready at any moment between the beginning and the end of the sentence to accommodate whatever bobbed up in thought as having anything at all to do with the matter in hand. So James is fond of the periodic sentence, especially, and used little, the loose form ~~especially~~ it being to James exactly what its title indicates.

This all makes for hard reading, as may readily be seen, and there are surely times when it is hard for even an idolater to hold a half dozen ideas adangle for ages, as it appears, to see what the author is going finally to do with them. And if the reader is not very much initiated, he is certain to lose some of them. Hence if this sort of sentence predominates, there is something of difficulty. But there is never obscurity, for the central core of meaning stretches directly through from end to end, and if there is any vagueness it comes through the

reader's inability to hold the premises till the writer can meander out and round up the conclusion.

There is nothing lyrical or declamatory in the style of James, and this is consistent with his theory, and also with his purposes in his fiction. If his characters do not manifest passion, they do not need song language to use themselves, or to be used in describing them. Lyrical language, and all the language we designate as rhetoric, belongs to the poet and not to the writer of prose. This lyric language is somehow the language of the writer who is taking sides, a thing James never does. No matter how much in the right, or wrong, a character may be, James never indicates by word or sign where the writer stands. This is a striking feature of his style. This utter detachment calls to mind his stories, "The Four Meetings," "The Wings of the Dove," "A Passionate Pilgrim," "The Altar of the Dead," "The Madonna of the Future," "Daisy Miller," "What Maisie Knew," "The Turn of the Screw," and such others as may seem to have offered the chance for taking sides. All these show almost inhuman neutrality. Dickens marks his villians and persecutes them, George Meredith likewise; Thomas Hardy is a sort of Pygmalion before some of his, but Henry James is as immovable as fate in the presence of his characters. Did he feel with humanity? Certainly, and very deeply with a certain kind of feeling, we think, but James' views of fiction writing kept him from any sort of meddling in the picture. He only decided what the picture would be about, and what it would illustrate, but there he

stopped. There was to be no rose-color added to anything, nor any taken away. If life did not dispose except in a certain way, neither would he. He felt, as he says, such great respect for reality that it would have seemed criminal, suicidal, for him to have distorted by the smallest this reality. He had his view of life, and all that, and thought he could present it, but he did not propose to do it by a falsification of the facts.

The prose-poetry of a great deal of fiction was foreign to James' purpose and theory for other reasons also. It not only gives the facts the wrong color, throwing emphasis here or there, but it tends to destroy the scientific value of ~~the~~ fiction in that reason gave over to emotion. A Thomas Hardy rhapsody over Tess would have been to James a species of insanity, since accuracy was the virtue which the enraptured artist could never give. James is closest ~~here~~ in this respect to George Eliot, of any English novelist I can recall ~~that here~~, tho she was far more involved toward her characters, ~~as Scott~~.

We have already said something in Part One about the diction of Henry James, and about his securing his effects by new turns of phrase rather than by neologisms or importations, or whatever. He held the view that the novelist should seek fresh effects from word order and position, rather than new words. He saw that literature, making its appeal to the emotion, must for the most part, therefore, use the words which are richest in emotional connotation. The older words, of course, have this quality most, therefore avoid the new.

Just to the extent that a novelist uses a strange term, just to that extent does he take the mind of the reader from the idea and turn it to the word. Language is a convention just as anything else may be, so new terms meant in a sense the setting of new conventions.

James was not content to be understood, he wrote so as not to be misunderstood. That is, he placed adverbs, phrases, adjectives, clauses, all, closest to what they modified, and in that way made himself sound odd and strange at times. That is to say, most of us are not accustomed to anything superlatively accurate and fine, hence, ~~it~~ absolute accuracy sounds odd. James is never done with a word, or a phrase, in a sentence until he has given it its last qualification, or its last bit of emphasis. He runs in adverbs in a sort of last-minute, standing-room-only fashion that makes one gasp at his generous, overflowing good measure. The effect is a gathering intensity of thrills. Or if the thrills have not been in the sentence previously, and it seemed destined to close stale, this final adverb redeemed all and gave the thrill; it thrills with its unexpectedness. And no man can make his adverbs say more than does James. I ~~often~~ frequently incline to say that the life of language lies in its verbs and adverbs, for there one gets the rattle and razzle-dazzle of life. "Shamelessly human," "cruelly female," "handsomely say yes," "sufficiently the reason," "preeminently to remain," "familiarly rested," "conveniently to linger," are some of the adverbial phrases of James selected

at random.

He was fond of the hyphenated term, and avoided religiously the split infinitive, a much befussed matter, though ~~I believe that Mencken has~~ it has been repeatedly pointed out that the split infinitive is historically correct usage. However, almost everyone feels that the split infinitive tends to looseness, and James would have none of that either in method or style. His theory that literature needed its language well seasoned led him, as it led Whitman, and all others who feel the genius of the language, to the hyphened word. And this is a good place to say that James' characters are not pedants by any means; their language is too racy. James seems to me to be closer to the fundamental urge of the English language than any other writer I know. I have always felt the matter in the difference between British and American writers. Our writers usually seem more bookish, less spontaneous, more afraid of raciness, more inclined to the classically-derived terms. We incline to an effeminacy of a sort in our use of English, or else we run into the very coarse and crude. It may be in the character, it may have origin in our history--I don't know what it is. Let the linguists and philosophers work it out. But here I record my own feeling about it. Our language lacks the robust, the figurative, the vivid, the quaint, the homely, the simple and the plain, which have always characterized the best of the British from Shakespeare on down. There are a certain deadness and bookishness in our use of English, it seems to me.

I feel it as characteristic of us, as though we had misplaced our idiom. Henry James brings up the flavor of real English for me, and the secret of it is that he does not shun the plain, homely term. His ideas seem alive, they "act like folks," they stalk about on their own legs. One does not feel the life vanishing from James in learned and inscrutable terminology. True he has no phobias for certain terms, but all tumble in together in true English fashion, like Shakespeare setting plays in Athens, or Venice, or Bohemia, but always filling them with lusty Englishmen. Of course it may be it is Henry James' figure-making mind, but however, these sentences of James get beautifully, wonderfully on their feet, as he would say, and literally amaze one at their agility.

It occurs to me again that James does not appear in his style to be trying to squeeze out every circumlocution in order to compact his ideas into sesquipedalian terms. They may come if they fit, six feet long, but they are not the only ones summoned. It is first come, first served with James, if they suit. Thus, then, James mearly always allows, not only the idea to be barely ~~be~~ expressed, but he gives it rope, he pitches it up; ~~he tosses it~~ he dangles it till he has let the reader see it. All of which is for the attentive reader, a very taking style, and as for my own part, I confess that no writer has sharpened my wits— shall I say-- as has Henry James.

James deals with the psychological but he seems always

to be getting somewhere, and I believe this image-making faculty of his mind does the trick. A metaphysician, saying what James says, would be more or less of an enigma to most of us. Not so James; since what we ordinarily call abstractions become amazingly concrete with him. And it is true in his ordinary expository prose, as well as in his fiction. If at any time an idea becomes elusive, he personifies it, or personalizes it— endows it with life and then, whether we understand it any better or not, we certainly become interested in it. Of course, James is not the only writer who does this. All poets tend to gather up great areas of abstract thought and turn them into the concrete and personal. Indeed this is literary procedure to unify human impression, catalog it, pigeonhole it, ~~[illegible]~~. So we may remember that if there is any way to express the inexpressible, it is to translate it and then express it. James thus at least puts the abstract where we may glimpse it, and be thrilled by it, even though we may not handle it and thoroughly know it.

So not only does he use the indirect method in creating and handling character, but also in dealing with the mysteries of thought and feeling. The poet receives a half thought, a wisp of feeling, which thrills him, and what does he call it when he tries to turn it over to you and me? Why a golden swallow, a sky-smile, or something of the sort. Of course, he does not explain it, or even hand it over; he merely gives you the symbol or cue by which you, if you are akin to him,

may see what he saw. So Henry James, I feel, catching at the flitting and fleeting bits of thought and feeling that highly sensitive souls experience in their relations to each other, tried by this hesitant, figurative style to pass on the cues.

Do the Henry James novels bear re-reading? Even as does anything classic. That is our test, and it was his, of a classic; and it seems to me to be eminently true of James. I don't feel that one finds out so much new on a re-reading in sum-total of the characters except that the light thrown upon them grows brighter and brighter. That is to say, their action seems to be better and better prepared for, and their motives become clearer. James loved a mystery, a problem, and thus the more re-reading one does within limits, the more beautifully the problem unfolds. This is a part of his method also. James never gives anything away, he never tells the reader; he creates suspense in him, and hopes that his own interest will help unravel the mystery. So reading a James novel is a good deal like attending a trial or reading "The Ring and the Book"; nobody gives one a ready-made theory but one forms it from the testimony, the cross-questions, the lawyers' objections lost or sustained, and all the rest of it. In this way the James stories are, as some one has said, something like detective stories, except that the detective story usually makes the thing so plain that a "wayfaring man even though a fool need not err therein." The thing about James is

that we too often, I think, have no Sherlock Holmes to call our attention to all the clues, and make certain that we follow them correctly. It is like the trial, we may believe the prisoner guilty or not guilty, and no one will molest us in our opinion; or we may go away undecided. That is James exactly; he will not do our thinking for us, and so the quarrel with him that many have.

But note that James gets suspense not by pushing the reader off on the wrong scent or by a "Hush-Hush," and creeping about the stage with bated breath. It is the quizzical look of the characters that is the suspense in James, and the reader is just as quizzical at times. Here James seems to me often to violate the principles of drama to which he compared fiction. The supreme delight of drama to the spectator, it seems to me, is in the fact that he sees his fellows, or himself, (vicariously) in some crisis or perplexity, and may observe what they do under it. They are in positions of the sort he himself has been in, and now what will they do? That is the fun, [illegible]. But half the pleasure would vanish if the spectator were not aware of the predicament, but had to find it out as do the characters. So detective plays are no plays to me for that reason. In other words, it is a law of drama that the spectator should not be mystified, and so I think too it is a law of the best fiction. And this is James' fault; he occasionally has the reader mystified, or at least stupefied, perhaps stultified. He had better tell him a little more rather than have him work too hard, since most readers will not work hard; they will quit rather.

Anyhow, James likes to work at the problem, and he expects the reader to earn his own bread. If the reader works it out, he finds all through James a fine logic, for there is never the unexpected and unprepared for in James. He that is filthy at the outset of the story will be so at the close, and so James takes nothing for granted in character treatment. He never drops in dashes and stars to indicate the passage of time, and startling changes in character. James' characters change and develop, but always under the eye of the reader. Of course nearly all novelists, in order to help themselves out, place a good deal of work upon time, or something other than themselves, but James would have nothing of this. He said repeatedly that he believed the art of the novelist broad and big, but very exacting, so he refused to take a short cut, or a slovenly way of doing anything at all. Here is another reason why he is tedious for many; he makes the reader see the whole process of change in character without much let up.

It should be said, however, that despite this continuous watching of the character, James introduces no disgusting poses or places. There is no morbid handling of death, no death-bed scenes, no gallows, no prison dens, no sloppy slums, no nastiness of any kind. It can't be said too often that James was well-bred, and full of the high courage and dignity which characterize lofty-souled men, and therefore, though life has much sordidness in it, James was willing to

take it for granted, and leave it unpresented. There is nothing more genteel anywhere, I believe, than this realist, who though interested in the very latest findings of science, or the up-to-the-minute progress of all sorts, yet refused to soil his hands with filth, or to give any hint that he thought mankind bound to be filthy. This is, I think, ~~a great tribute~~ to the eternal credit of James, and an even greater ~~credit~~ credit to humanity, and it is somewhat rare to find such an attitude on the part of a realist. The romanticist will give you the rose-color, but you feel that he may not know the other, or else has deliberately, and wrongly, ignored it. The realist will give you the filth, and many times the suspicion, if not the actual evidence, that humanity is hopelessly and forever filthy and animalistic, and no more. Or he will at least tell you, or hint to you, that he himself thinks so. But Henry James does nothing of the kind, and this in itself distinguishes him immensely in his own latter days.

As further evidence of James' conception that the novel is a sort of expository narrative, we never find him running back for the dropped thread. There is no getting one set of characters up to an interesting place and then dropping them and rounding up another set to the same, or another, interesting place, like a ranchman rounding up cattle. James' stories all drive straight and undeviatingly ahead, so that at a given point in the story the reader is abreast of everything, and no secret, or fact, ~~or whatever~~, has been left out. The story is

like a proposition in mathematics: everything rests on all that precedes, and this which precedes must be held in mind for the final word; another thing which makes James hard reading for many. The reader is asked to keep too many balls in the air at one time, or too many basal propositions in mind at once.

James never furnished headings for his chapters in his novels, nor did he seem to write his stories in chapters. He has no special word about this, but reasoning inferentially we feel that a story to him was not a thing to be told in sections or episodes. Stories did not occur that way in life, so why such arbitrary handling of them in art? Accordingly we note that chapters hardly conclude, but are mere breaks in the print for the convenience of the reader and not units in themselves at all. This procedure is all very accurately in keeping with his theory, however, and shows with what steady onflow the stories move, and with what unity.

It is interesting to find that James would never permit illustration of his work on the ground that prose should do its full duty. Besides, illustrations meant the superposition of a foreign element. So there was no confusion in James between painting and the novel. He expected prose to do its full duty. It must always be prose; that is, intellectual and awake, thoroughly sane, and in command of itself. It might have poetic feeling, and even poetic phrasing, as his prose did, but such elements were to be under control, as people of good breed-

ing are to control their emotions. This trait is observable all through his characters. They feel; how finely they do feel! But they don't lose themselves, or forget themselves—they are well-bred. His prose, then, is what he thought all prose should be—that is, prose. And that means well-bred language. It may, and should have, feeling, but merely as motive power, hidden and quiet.

One finds a good deal of the conversational in the style of James, though he makes no explicit statement about the desirability of it. However, a colloquial, or conversational style is the most normal of any, we presume, since human beings use that sort of language more than any other kind. It suited his characters best, since they are social creatures.

On the whole, then, James practices his theories as to method and style very well, but departs from them occasionally, or at times fails to realize them, as we have noted.

VIII

ROMANCE AND REALISM

Henry James regarded himself as a realist, we have already indicated, or better "the very ideal of the real" was his creed, which means he was an idealist with his feet set in the real. He made a very fine distinction between realism and romanticism, as we have shown, and the question remaining is, Did he practice his theory? Was he the idealist-realist, or the realist-idealist, which he professed to think the fictionist should be. I believe, in view of all that has been said in this essay, one must inevitably conclude that he was. I have said that his fiction, much of it, gives the sense of reality; very often even the tedium and bore of reality. ~~very often.~~ "The Outcry" has much of the nerve-wracking business of real life in its prosiest moments, and so does "The Sacred Fount", or "The Awkward Age", So there are plenty of instances where James seems eminently the realist. On the other hand if one regards the outcome of his stories, the disposal made of problems and situations, he certainly sees that James is after all an idealist. Doesn't idealism shine out most beautifully in stories like "Madame de Mauves", "The Alter

of the Dead," "A Passionate Pilgrim", "The Figure in the Carpet", "The Wings of the Dove", "The Golden Bowl", "The Princess Casamassima", "The Ambassadors", "The American", "Roderick Hudson", "The Spoils of Poynton", "What Maisie Knew"— in fact most all of them? That is to say, no matter how sordid, or petty, matters may appear in the story, something works out of it which is after all an ideal. "God makes himself an awful rose of down" in them all; the god of the ideal with James. How much more realistic an experience is there anywhere than what Maisie goes through, and yet how brightly gleams the beauty of the thing that ought to be, in that story? It is one of the most moving stories that I can remember, when one ~~has~~ applies his mind to it and fully contemplates Maisie's ~~her~~ case; the case of the child for whom no one especially cares, as James said, buffeted here and yonder, as Maisie was, but yet preserving, or developing, the wonderfully beautiful sense of morality that she does. Here is, indeed, a marvelous illustration of the realist-idealist creed, of the doctrine of James. It is a fine doctrine in literature, for what is the use of a mere picture of life if it points nowhere, yields no hope, no ideal? The reader is no better off than ~~the~~ with his own reading of life. James' idealism is his interpretation of life; it is in some measure his idea in his fiction; it is surely the way out in many of the stories.

We have another example of this idealism in "The Spoils of Poynton". Fleda Vetch lives in the midst of a sordid squabble over the disposal of a collection, the spoils, and

here again is plenty of the real, the seamy, the ugly. Mona Brigstock stalks big-footedly through the story, and Mrs Gereth storms her mighty way, but these are not all, for Fleda herself is the gleam of hope, and the solution. Thus the story closes with the "spoils" burned, but with poor Fleda, and James, we feel, too, left high with her ideal. Hyacinth Robinson dies for a faith we think, or, at least, because he will not slay his conscience, or violate his honor. Maggie Verver labors and waits long for a fine solution to her perplexities, and in so doing saves four persons from evil fates. Madame de Mauves refuses the easiest way, and stiffens out into a figure of fine pride and integrity. Milly Theale dies, but only after having seen the great beauty of living, having made her own beautiful sacrifice. Christopher Newman, with the weapon for the destruction of those who had wronged him in his hands, puts it aside and "lets the matter drop." Rowland Mallet leaves his interest in Mary Garland untouched for the sake of his friend Hudson. And so on with many, even most, of James' stories. One always finds in them loyalty to some cause, or ideal. Fidelity, loyalty, faithfulness, consistency, are characteristics of James' heroes and heroines.

But there is little, of course, in James that is popularly romantic; that is to say, unusual in incident. His characters don't shift and turn about to do something sensa-

tional, or bizarre. Such as happens in the stories is always what may actually happen in life. Nothing done is impossible, or even improbable, and the ideals that his characters work out are, after all , of the stuff of real life. Realism, thought James, was vulgar, as he called it, and that because it left the picture incomplete. To be sure, there could be no great harm in picturing filth, or ugliness— since it exists— if there should also be painted the impulse toward something better in those who live even in the gutter. This was James' quarrel with conventional realism. Give the facts, yes, but ugliness is not all the facts. Paint life, yes, but life does not reside contentedly in the present and the vulgar; it aspires. Nothing certainly is more essentially a fact of human existence than that human beings do aspire, and every last one of them, in some measure at least. To leave out this fact, as James saw it, was to decapitate the picture. It was striking the apex from the pyramid, hauling down the goals, or, more accurately, never erecting them.

James' idealism, it will be observed, was no sentimentalism, no unwarranted laying on of the rose-color, no lachrymose quality. It was but another of the facts of life, a part of life's solidity. Not as patent a fact as some others, but a sort of "figure in the carpet", a thing the novelist must look for and even find, for it is the thing that is more often than not hidden from the vulgar eye. An idealism of James' sort brushed aside no facts, nor left any out of account in

the getting of itself made, but it was rather the life principle in the facts, the ideal to James was life itself always advancing, always aspiring, always giving purpose to the myriad movements of man. James belonged to no pessimistic school. He was nobody's cynic or satirist. He made no outcries against life, "Hairy Ape" fashion. True, he found life full of knotty problems, but these were for him the zest of the game, and he never yielded to fatalism. Life seemed good to him, we judge, and he seemed to have a sound respect for its provisions. There are evidences in many directions of how beautiful he thought it. It must have been Henry James speaking through Lambert Strether in Gloriana's garden in Paris.

James was no rebel, or reformer. He believed, as he makes a character in "The Princess Casamassima" say, that the aristocracy were at the top because they deserved to be, and that such would always be the case if they retained their wits. Not that he distrusted the democratic doctrines, but rather that he saw life as a struggle upward with those struggling most, getting highest. There was no tendency in James to confuse values, for the very fundamental principle of organization meant selection on the principle of good and bad, fitting and unfitting, aristocratocracy and kakistocracy, to conjure up a strange term.

Hence, he nowhere in his novels yields the right of choice, and the feeling that life when lived best is very much worth it. One might change the form of government, or the

theology, or whatever creed, but James saw no necessary virtue in this, since no one could change the great law of life— the law of selection. Hence, "vulgar realism", whining, supine pessimism, snarling cynicism, abandonment to morbid moods and distempers were not manly, not gentlemanly, certainly not things for the novelists to be guilty of; he whose avowed purpose was to interpret life rather than to picture its coarseness and vulgarity.

This large respect for life as it is produced in James' fiction none of the rounding out of things into stories, complete and full, though he did not, on the other hand, hunt for the unhappy ending, Hardy-like. Of course, he would not have avoided such an ending if he had thought life gave grounds for it, but he seems to feel that it did not, to judge from his own fiction. The endings of the James novels seem to me neither happy nor unhappy; ~~and~~ nor ~~they~~ can they hardly be called endings in the sense that things are ~~to speak~~ closed. His stories merely stop; that is, stop after the problem is worked out, or the hidden revealed. The old way of dispensing rewards and punishments was in many ways untrue to life, but so is the bad ending. There are occasionally tragic fates to indiviuals and peoples, but such is not the rule. Likewise there are occasionally very fortunate destinies for the good, but such seems not to be the rule. Rather bale and bliss, as James said, belong to the lot of most of us, and no story

can be true to life which ignores this fact.

There is justification for the James method, however, from both the standpoint of art and life. He seems fond of the ending that means the suffering and defeat, though not necessarily the death, of his leading figures; and this because,no doubt, such frail and sensitive creatures as they often are cannot help but meet defeat in a hard world, especially as it is at present constituted. Such terminations give one the pathos that good art often gives, and likewise truth to life. Life does not move in stories, says the realist. But it does, in a measure,at least, run in problems and revelations, which is to say that the very fact that men plan things means problem and story. Suppose a Western woman with a past wants to straighten up and get into London society, as in one of James' stories. She works out her plan, sets it in motion. It involves various and sundry complications, seen and unseen, visible and invisible. Now whether she gets in or not is the story, and whether she does or doesn't, the outcome of the plan is a story, a sort of rounding out and finishing of a section of life. The ending may be successful for the woman, or not, but in either case, you have a story. This was the James method exactly. When the problem, or mystery, or whatever, was fully solved, the book closed, whether the outcome was successful or unsuccessful for the leading figures. Thus here is the finished story and at the same time the contin-

uity of life. Life moves in rhythms, we are told, as does history, as does nearly everything, but these rhythms are a part of the movement, and never cease or stop. So the justification for the James method. He writes stories, but stories that give life not as come to final rest and dead standstill, but life which has made and undone a complication, and is moving on to others perhaps. His stories, then, are complete so far as the particular matters under consideration are concerned, for these complications and problems are solved, disentangled.

Such is the case in "The American." The reader pulls up with a shock when he finds how Newman is balked of his prize, and, with all of his instruments of vengeance keen for action, simply quits the scene. At first we feel as if the story is incomplete, and that he might return sometime, somehow, and claim his bride. And so he might, but after we think it over, we know that he has done the normal thing, all considered, and that the story is by all probability closed. It is life, in the sense that the story is closed, but not beyond the possibility of a reopening. So Fleda Vetch's case. She sees the smoke rise from the Spoils, and she stands bleak and alone in her defeat, but might not there be a reopening of the case, a second chance for the real lovers to marry each other? Of course there might; life is never inevitably closed and ended except in death.

Most likely, however, she won't ever get such a chance, there being peculiar and queer reasons against it. So the James stories are at first blush incomplete and unfinished, but from other considerations they are not. At any rate, they are true to life, and if they often terminate in the defeat of the hero or heroine, it is because such heroes and heroines are the kind of people who in actual life succumb to defeat.

Here, thus, James again lives up to his theory in his practice. He said nothing, as I find, about happy or unhappy endings, but he is no less explicit therefore, since we have pointed out how insistent he was about the story being faithful history.

So, James' theory and practice were consistent with each other, and with the fundamentals of life, I take it. Certainly, if understood as they should be, no one could say that his novels are anything but some of the finest products of the human imagination, despite the fact that they are hard reading, stuffy at times, and tedious. To give my own personal reactions, they seem somehow to leave with me more tangible results than any other fiction I can recall. I say tangible, but I hardly mean by the word that I could tell someone else what these results are. Indeed, they are somewhat akin to the religious experience, or the love experience, one can't say much about them, but he never is the same afterwards. He possesses, as it were, a secret

like Lazarus in Browning's "Epistle of Karshish," which he can't explain, but which alters and changes the scale of values in life for him. He has seen the mysteries, ~~of~~

~~the Spectre.~~

But I am going afield, perhaps, and had better end this phase of the discussion by saying that, broadly speaking, James was a realist, a romanticist, an idealist—all three; and I see no reason for saying that he is any one to the exclusion of the others. I would incline to defend my view by quoting James, as I have, and to the effect that life and art ~~are~~ are a whole, a unit; and where there are so much fidelity and accuracy, as are in James, there are the earmarks of them all. James meets his definition of the realist, of the idealist and of the romanticist. Romance deals, he said, with what we can't ever know, and so do his novels. His characters bandy words and phrases, but it is all in the effort to pass the symbols back and forth--the symbols of the unknowable. Such is my reading of the Henry James practice as to his theory of realism and romance.

In summary, I find James to be more consistent than not in the practice of his theory, and viewing all from his theory I have been surprised to find with what persistence he maintained and practiced it. I find from my study that there were scarcely any special growth and development— evo-

lution— of the theory. Indeed, his essay on the art of fiction written comparatively early seems to have come full-grown and proved to be throughout his Magna Carta, and such utterances in the matter made prior to this, or later, but reinforce conclusions found in it. This helps account for his persistence in the sort of novel he wrote. He was a man with a theory, and lived up to it about as well as it was possible for a man to do. If he failed to please, it was not because he did not possess the power to write in the popular vein, or that he could not "turn the tricks of the trade." He possessed great gifts, he was richly endowed; not perhaps for the broad stroke, the "sympathetic guess", the swashbuckling effects, but for the finer business of the game, James was amply equipped and fully prepared.

I should not turn into a Henry James idolater in an essay of this sort, and I don't feel that I have done that, but I do know that the conclusions herein set forth are my findings in the study. If I have seemed enthusiastic at times, the discussion seemed to me to warrant it. ~~And~~ and yet, strange as it may sound, ~~I~~ I do not find myself inclined even now, after this much study of Henry James, to return to many of his novels often— my tastes don't call for them with as much high expectancy as they do for certain other writers, but despite that, I do not abate one jot or tittle of my contention that Henry James is, when all is said, a significant, a

powerful, a great novelist. I can see no other logic in the matter. If one ~~pursues~~ Henry James' theory as I have done, and tests its validity; if he examines his practice, applying to it his theory the two together, ~~seem to me to~~ make out a most convincing case for his completeness as both a critic and novelist. And, as I say, what I subscribe to mentally, intellectually, does not force my inclinations to follow suit. What I, or anyone else, happens to incline to in the matter of taste very often has little to do with what we know we ought to like, but I would not, therefore, urge any "I-do-not-love-thee-Dr.-Fell" tests. Indeed, I do not think that mere whim, or fancy, or caprice, is the test of art, but that tastes should be formed on seasoned judgments. Therefore, despite what my likes or dislikes may happen to be, I must hold to my judgment that Henry James belongs by every right to that small, but exquisite, company of English novelists that may be truly called great.

BOOKS READ AND CONSULTED IN PREPARATION OF THIS THESIS

All of Henry James' works including both fiction and non-fiction. Listed by titles, they are:

A Passionate Pilgrim, etc.
Roderick Hudson.
The American.
Watch and Ward.
French Poets and Novelists.
The Europeans.
Daisy Miller.
An International Episode.
The Madonna of the Future, etc.
Hawthorne.
The Diary of a Man of Fifty.
Confidence.
Washington Square.
The Portrait of A Lady.
The Siege of London, etc.
Portraits of Places.
Tales of Three Cities.
A Little Tour of France.
The Bostonians.
The Princess Casamassima.
The Reverberator.
The Aspern Papers.
Partial Portraits.
A London Life, etc.
The Tragic Muse.
The Lesson of the Master, etc.
The Real Thing, etc.
The Private Life, etc.
Essays in London and Elsewhere.
Terminations, etc.
Embarrasments, etc.
The Other House.
The Spoils of Poynton.
What Maisie Knew.
Notes and Reviews.
In the Cage, etc.
The Two Magics, etc.
The Awkward Age.
The Soft Side.
The Sacred Fount.
The Wings of the Dove.

The Better Sort, etc.
The Ambassadors.
The Golden Bowl.
English Hours.
The Question of Our Speech.
The American Scene.
Views and Reviews.
The Altar of the Dead, etc.
The Finer Grain.
The Outcry.
Notes of a Son and Brother.
A Small Boy and Others.
Notes on Novelists.
The Ivory Tower.
The Sense of the Past.
The Middle Years.
Gabrielle de Bergerac.
The Letters of Henry James
The Prefaces to the New York Edition.
Is there a Life After Death?
Within the Rim.
Various Introductions to volumes such as "The Vicar of Wakefield," "Rupert Brooke," etc.

Various volumes and studies of Henry James; in fact, all the available material in single volumes and periodic studies in the Library of Congress, including an examination of their special collection of James. The list is as follows:

J. W. Beach—The Method of Henry James.
The Cambridge History of American Literature.
E. L. Cary—The Novels of Henry James.
Ford Max Hueffer—Henry James: A Critical Study.
John Macy—The Spirit of American Literature.
Bliss Perry—The American Spirit in Literature.
William Lyon Phelps—The Advance of the English Novel.
Stuart P. Sherman—On Contemporary Literature.
Carl Van Doren—The American Novel.
Rebecca West—Henry James.

The files of the following named periodicals have been consulted for articles on James:

Academy.
Athenaeum.
Atlantic Monthly.
Bookman (both American and London).
Contemporary Review.

Critic.
Current Literature.
Current Opinion.
The Dial.
Egoist.
English Review.
Fortnightly Review.
Harper's Weekly.
The Lamp.
Little Review.
Living Age.
London Mercury.
London Times.
The Nation (American).
The New Republic.
New Statesman.
19th Century.
North American Review.
The Outlook.
Quarterly Review.
Saturday Review.
Scribner's Magazine.
Sewanee Review.
Spectator.
Yale Review.

Also the following List of Books:

Richard Burton—Masters of the English Novel.
F. Marion Crawford—The Novel: What It Is.
W. L. Cross—The Development of the English Novel.
H. L. Follett—Some Modern Novelists.
W. D. Howells—Criticism and Fiction.
Clayton Hamilton—The Art of Fiction.
Nathaniel Hawthorne's Preface to his novels.
Charles Horne—The Technique of the Novel.
H. B. Lathrop—The Art of the Novelist.
Percy Lubbock—The Craft of Fiction.
Bliss Perry—A Study of Prose Fiction.
F. L. Pattee—A History of American Literature Since 1870.
F. L. Pattee—The Development of the American Short Story.
W. L. Winchester—Principles of Literary Criticism.
S. L. Whitcomb—The Study of A Novel.