

The Independent Form: Henry James's Criticism of the Novel

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ABSTRACT

The thesis provides a comprehensive survey of James's criticism and the introduction briefly outlines its contribution in supplementing and correcting studies of single aspects. The first chapter, 'The Young Reviewer', deals with James's criticism before his move to Europe. It shows the close relationship between James's prescriptive approach and the crusading, nationalistic idealism of his editors, and examines both the traditionality and the originality of James's analytic method. By analysing James's reviews of other critics, it establishes his developing critical principle of flexible eclecticism, derived largely from Sainte-Beuve. The second chapter, 'James and French Realism', examines James's complex relationship with his French contemporaries, his concern to modify their formalism by moral evaluation and his search for a compromise between real and ideal. Though suggesting that there were aspects of French realism to which James remained blind, it emphasises his growing tolerance of other methods, exemplified in his 1902 essay on Zola, but suggests, too, the deep-rooted mistrust of simplistic naturalism which made James dissatisfied with Zola's theory. The third chapter, 'English Controversies', examines further this ambivalent view of realism, in the context of James's relationships with Besant, Howells, Stevenson and Wells, and his growing view of the novel as the formal realisation of an individual perception. It stresses the originality of this formalism in the context of English criticism, but also the continuity between James's early idealism and later belief that art 'makes life'. Though some of James's late criticism is narrowly defensive, his major critical contribution is his fertile, creative understanding of fictional problems and the last chapter, 'The Legacy of the Prefaces', emphasises this aspect rather than his justification of point of view. James is both formalist and moralist: his intelligent eclecticism, exactly suited to the protean novel, makes it unwise to force him into any rigid critical category.

THE INDEPENDENT FORM
HENRY JAMES'S CRITICISM OF THE NOVEL

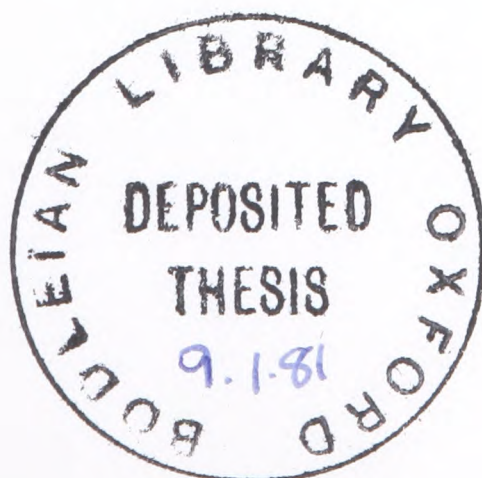
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"Art lives upon discussion, upon experiment, upon curiosity, upon variety of attempt, upon the exchange of views and the comparison of standpoints; and there is a presumption that those times when no one has anything particular to say about it, and has no reason to give for practice or preference, though they may be times of honour, are not times of development - are times, possibly even, a little of dulness. The successful application of any art is a delightful spectacle, but the theory too is interesting."

"a novelist of a high esthetic sensibility must always find more in any other novelist worth considering seriously at all than he can perhaps hope to impart even to the most intelligent of critics pure and simple his subtle reasons for."

Henry James

"We must insist upon the importance of intelligent criticism . . . I mean the ceaseless employment of criticism by men who are engaged in creative work."

T.S. Eliot

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INTRODUCTION

A study of James's novel criticism has long been overdue. It is a commonplace that James stands at the watershed of nineteenth century realism and its selfconscious modernist successor, and that he is the first great English theorist of fiction, yet critics have concentrated almost exclusively on James as novelist and the last full-length study of his criticism was published as long ago as 1929. Henry James's Criticism, by Morris Roberts, is a judicious account of some of the early reviews and the major collections of essays, but it is necessarily limited - by the paucity of available material, both bibliographical and biographical, and by its closeness to its subject. Work has since been done on various single aspects of James's criticism, his essays have been anthologised and his position as patriarch of modern novel criticism is taken for granted, but his critical theory has not been studied exhaustively in its own right. This thesis is an attempt to provide such a study.

An examination of the overall topography of James's criticism is important, I think, not simply because it fills a gap, but because in drawing together the various areas which have been dealt with individually - James and the French novel, 'The Art of Fiction', James and Wells, for example - it helps to correct the distortions introduced by exclusivity. My debt to the editors and critics who have covered particular areas is of course huge, but a developmental approach has enabled me to supplement and modify their conclusions: James's relationship with the French realists, for example, was much more complex than critics eager to emphasise

French influence would claim - and perhaps the most important French influence, that of Sainte-Beuve, has been consistently missed. Most importantly, by combining a contextual with a developmental portrait, I have been able to suggest the vital continuity which makes James's late 'modernism' ('it is art that makes life') close kin to his early traditional neo-classical idealism. The key to that continuity is James's selfconscious eclecticism, his discerning independence of dogmatic critical positions in the tradition of his master Sainte-Beuve - an eclecticism particularly suited to the protean novel. I stress James's flexibility in the face of the common assumption that his criticism is little more than a defence of his own creative method. Without wanting to over-emphasise James's critical achievement at the expense of the novels, I would suggest that the criticism transcends both mere self-defence, and the terms of the particular controversies in which he was involved. Certainly self-defence is sometimes at odds with critical objectivity, but James's general understanding of the novel form cannot be over-estimated and a study of the criticism for itself reveals how often his own creative experience made him appreciative of other kinds of 'doing'. Again, exclusivity has distorted the picture: the Prefaces, James's most frequently cited critical statement, are best understood in the context of his overall critical development and in the last chapter I have tried briefly to correct those critics who claim James as a wholly committed modernist. James was acutely aware of the novel's peculiar engagement with life and in the Prefaces, as always, he is both formalist and moralist, paying illuminating tribute to 'the most independent, most elastic, most prodigious of literary forms'.

I should like to thank the librarians of the Houghton

Library, Harvard and the Bancroft Library, Berkeley for permission to consult unpublished James material. My greatest debt is to my supervisor, Professor John Bayley, for his unfailing encouragement and for the benefit of his thorough understanding of the novel form.

ABBREVIATIONS

References to works frequently cited are included in the text, using the following abbreviations. References to articles collected by James are to the collected version. In the case of articles left uncollected by James but later anthologised by other editors, the original appearance is given for the first citation.

- AE The American Essays of Henry James, ed. Leon Edel (New York: Vintage Books, 1956).
- AM The Atlantic Monthly
- AN The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces, ed. R.P. Blackmur (New York: Scribner, 1962).
- ELE Essays in London and Elsewhere (London: Osgood, McIlvaine, 1893).
- FPN French Poets and Novelists (London: Macmillan, 1878).
- H Hawthorne, English Men of Letters (London: Macmillan, 1879).
- Harlow Thomas Sergeant Perry: A Biography, by Virginia Harlow (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1950).
- HF The House of Fiction: Essays on the Novel by Henry James, ed. Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957).
- HJ & HGW Henry James and H.G. Wells: a Record of their Friendship, their Debate on the Art of Fiction, and their Quarrel, ed. Leon Edel and Gordon N. Ray (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1958).
- HJ & RLS Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson: A Record of Friendship and Criticism, ed. Janet Adam Smith (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1948).
- LB 'The Question of our Speech' and 'The Lesson of Balzac' (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1905).
- Letters Henry James: Letters, ed. Leon Edel, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1974, 1978).

- LRE Literary Reviews and Essays: on American, English and French Literature, ed. Albert Mordell (New York: Grove Press, 1957).
- Lubbock The Letters of Henry James, ed. Percy Lubbock, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1920).
- MY The Middle Years (London: Collins, 1917).
- Na The Nation
- NAR North American Review
- N&R Notes and Reviews, ed. Pierre de Chaignon la Rose (Cambridge, Mass.: Dunster House Press, 1921).
- NB The Notebooks of Henry James, ed F.O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock (New York: OUP, 1947).
- NSB Notes of a Son and Brother (London: Macmillan, 1914).
- NN Notes on Novelists (London: Dent, 1914).
- NYT New York Tribune
- PE The Painter's Eye: Notes and Essays on the Pictorial Arts by Henry James, ed. John L. Sweeney (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1956).
- PP Partial Portraits (London: Macmillan, 1888).
- PS Parisian Sketches: Letters to the New York Tribune 1875-6, ed. Leon Edel and Ilse Dusoier Lind (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1958).
- PoPl Portraits of Places (London: Macmillan, 1883).
- SA The Scenic Art: Notes on Acting and the Drama 1872-1901, ed. Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1949).
- SBO A Small Boy and Others (London: Macmillan, 1913).
- SL Selected Letters, ed. Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1956).
- SLC Selected Literary Criticism, ed. Morris Shapira (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968).

TS Transatlantic Sketches (Boston: Osgood, 1875).

V&R Views and Reviews, ed. Le Roy Phillips (Boston: Ball, 1908).

CHAPTER ONE: THE YOUNG REVIEWER

'Deep in the timorous recesses of my being is a vague desire to do for our dear old English letters and writers something of what Ste. Beuve and the best French critics have done for theirs. . . . I feel that my only chance for success as a critic is to let all the breezes of the west blow through me at their will.'

James had been contributing regular reviews to American periodicals for three years when he wrote to Thomas Sergeant Perry in 1867 of his 'timorous' desire to be an American Sainte-Beuve (Letters, I, 76-7). The note of self-doubt, which James was prepared to reveal to a friend, contrasts strongly with the dogmatic confidence of those early articles. E.L. Godkin and Charles Eliot Norton, editors of the New York Nation and the North American Review, for which James mainly wrote, were leaders of the intellectual movement to improve American criticism and elevate the general standard of taste. The young James eagerly subscribed to these aims, the more so since he could use them as a context for his personal campaign on behalf of the novel. Scathing attacks on contemporary trends in fiction are combined in his reviews with prescriptive generalisations about the novel's aims and the mental qualities required of the novelist. There is a powerful thematic continuity in James's criticism: it never entirely lost this prescriptive note since it was, after all, always a workshop and testing-ground for his creative practice; and it retained, for example, though in changed form, an Arnoldian commitment to Truth and the strong moral consciousness which James saw as peculiarly American. James's Sainte-Beuvian ideal transcended the narrowing effects of prescription, however, and the high intelligence, eclectic method and urbanity of James's mature criticism are worthy of his French master.

Several dangers beset a study of James's early criticism. It

is in many ways obviously inferior to his later work (though it has a wit and vigour more readily accessible than some of the later ruminations), but to use mature judgments as a stick to beat the young James is as irrelevant as to pronounce his criticism inferior because the novels fail to fulfil its potential. Such an attitude also tends to miss the vital continuity between James's early generalisations and his mature theories. On the other hand, eagerness to prove the relevance of early opinions can lead to inaccurate interpretations of comments intended only in relation to the work with which they deal. All James's general critical principles have to be inferred from reviews of particular books; the balance between the general and the particular must be accurately diagnosed. We should not be tempted to over-estimate the originality of James's early views. In the context of American periodicals, James's was a distinctive voice; in the context of the French and English critical journals which he read from an early age, it was largely the voice of liberal orthodoxy.¹

The years between 1864, when his first review appeared in the North American Review, and 1875, when he took up permanent residence in Europe, can be considered those of James's critical apprenticeship. He continued to write pot-boiling notes and articles for the Nation until 1879, but French Poets and Novelists, his first major critical collection, was published in 1878 and many of the articles included were written between 1873 and 1876. More important, James's decision to leave America marks a rejection of the creative and critical provinciality he found there, and the recognition that if 'the breezes of the west' were to blow through his work, they could most profitably do so in Europe. It was in 1875, too, that Roderick Hudson was published and exploratory

critical theory gave way to practice.

James wrote his letter to Perry in 1867, yet in 1868 in a review of Portraits of Celebrated Women, a translation of selections from Sainte-Beuve's Portraits de Femmes, he characterised the French critic as 'very little of a moralist and, in a really liberal sense of the word, not overmuch of a thinker' (Na, June 4 1868; LRE, p.78). James is objecting to Sainte-Beuve's choice of Madame de Pontivy, whose only claim on our interest is her love-story. Although he acknowledges that Sainte-Beuve relates the story with skill and sympathy, James looks askance at a tale containing 'no wit, nor wisdom, nor action'. The uneasy combination of appreciative recognition of Sainte-Beuve's sympathy, and criticism of a lack of higher interest is characteristic of the early reviews, where a growing critical eclecticism does constant battle with absolutes. What James hopes to imitate in Sainte-Beuve, he confides to Perry, is his 'intelligence and his patience and his vigour'; to this he will add something of his own.

One feels - I feel at least, that he is a man of the past, of a dead generation; and that we young Americans are (without cant) men of the future. I feel that my only chance for success as a critic is to let all the breezes of the west blow through me at their will. We are Americans born - il faut en prendre son parti. I look upon it as a great blessing; and I think that to be an American is an excellent preparation for culture. . . . We must of course have something of our own - something distinctive and homogeneous - and I take it that we shall find it in our moral consciousness, our unprecedented spiritual lightness and vigour. (Letters, I, 77)

The role of the moral consciousness in assessing art, and the problem of the relationship between aesthetic and moral judgments, are recurrent themes throughout James's critical career. His American

moral consciousness took a highly ambivalent form. Sophisticated theories of the relationship of a work of art to the mind of its producer, theories allowing in principle for anything as the subject of art, are contradicted by a strong element of New England Puritanism so that squeamish objections to, for example, Zola's novels are rationalised, as we shall see, according to 'realist' theories demanding a balanced picture of life. This essential ambivalence, which can be detected throughout James's career, is most clearly apparent in the early work. The contradiction is typical of critical opinion in both England and America: Arnold's distrust of 'l'homme sensuel moyen' is echoed in the self-conscious idealism of the American periodicals for which James wrote.

Critical contexts

Charles Eliot Norton, a leading Boston 'Brahmin' and influential literary figure on both sides of the Atlantic, took over the editorship of the North American Review in 1864. He shared the position with James Russell Lowell, whose lectures at Harvard on European literature James gratefully remembered long after: 'He talked communicatively of style, and where else in all the place was any such talk to be heard?' (ELE, p.52). In 1864 the Northern forces were moving towards victory in the Civil War and Northern patriotic ardour was at its height. Norton and Lowell were determined to inject the carcase of the old Review with this new nationalist enthusiasm - both political and critical, as Norton's letters to contributors suggest:

. . . in asking you to [contribute] I do not feel that I am asking as for a contribution for the amusement of the readers of a magazine, - but rather for a patriotic work. We must use the advantages which the time gives us. There is an opportunity now to make the 'North American' one of the means of developing

the nation, of stimulating its better sense, of setting before it and holding up to it its own ideal, - at least of securing expression for its clearest thought and most accurate scholarship.²

The year after Norton's editorship began, the North American celebrated its semi-centenary and marked the event with an exposition of the review's continuing aim to improve literary standards. Although the war is seen as 'deepening the thoughts of men' and convincing them that 'education, in its largest and highest sense, is the only means by which our institutions can be securely maintained and successfully worked', literature in America has failed to keep pace with this new maturity:

It displays too frequently the want of simplicity and thoroughness. It is too often deficient not only in form and finish, the results of a high standard of taste, but in the more substantial qualities of thought and learning. It is defaced by the pretensions and worthless productions of an ignorance often unconscious of its own incapacity.

To remedy this situation, the North American intends to uphold 'a high standard of thought, of learning, of style, and by vigorous and independent criticism to improve, as far as lies within its power, the public taste' (NAR, April 1865, p.329).

James was among the reviewers enlisted by Norton to help in his 'civilising mission' (NN, p.329), and he directed the crusading spirit at mediocre American fiction. Time and again he begins his reviews for the North American with condescending generalisations about the current state of fiction: 'This is a fair specimen of a second-rate novel, a species of work which commands a certain degree of respect; for second-rate novels are the great literary feature of the day'; 'This is the age of conscientious poor books, as well as of unscrupulous clever ones; and we are often appalled at the quantity

of ponderous literary matter which is kept afloat in the market by the simple fact that those who have set it afloat are persons of a well-meaning sort' (NAR, January 1865; N&R, pp.33, 37).³ The tone of cultured sarcasm exactly reflects the Review's expressed intention of addressing itself to 'the limited, though still large class of the community, who are themselves the leaders and formers of popular opinion; to those who are not averse to serious thought on the most important topics of the times' (NAR, April 1865, p.329). Novel reviews other than those by James are rare in the North American, but in the edition for April 1866 an anonymous reviewer treats Herman, or Young Knighthood with a complex irony worthy of his colleague:

The critical reader, whose artistic perceptions are keen will be struck with the defects in it, which the reader whose moral sympathies are active will overlook and utterly disregard, in view of the prevailing spirit and intention of the work. It is a true product of New England, in which art is wholly subordinated to moral purpose. (NAR, April 1866, p.632)

The previous year, James had reviewed a novel of similar type in the Nation. Characteristically, he uses the particular case to generalise about a whole class of contemporary novels:

Books of this class never aim at anything so simple as merely to entertain. They frequently contain, as in the present case, an infusion of religious and historical information, and they in all cases embody a moral lesson. The latter fact is held to render them incompetent as novels; . . . for of a genuine novel the meaning and lesson are infinite; and here they are carefully narrowed down to a special precept. (Na, September 14 1865; N&R, p.78)

The categorical statement about the features of a 'genuine novel' is also typical of these early reviews; James's substitution of an

ill-defined idealism for his subject's narrow moralism accurately reflects the prevailing critical mood.

Norton's editorial confidence in his periodical's ability to improve standards of taste belies a deep private pessimism about the ultimate fate of American culture. Letters almost exactly contemporary with his enthusiastic hopes for the North American suggest his gloomy fear of falling standards: 'What will be the result of all the looseness and avoidance of thought, all the dislike of continual study, all the mental dissipation which seeks for constant stimulants and finds no lack of them, - it is hard enough to say'; 'I am sometimes inclined to think that simply to cultivate one's-self, is perhaps the best service an American can render in these days, when men are so ready to desert the highest paths, and to devote themselves body and soul to "getting on" in lower ways'.⁴ This is the voice of the professional intellectual, and James's disillusion with America took a different form, but it is significant that the mood among members of the Boston intellectual circle in which James moved during the years before 1872 was profoundly ambivalent concerning American culture. Like James, Norton sought stimulation from Europe in his friendships and correspondence with Ruskin, Leslie Stephen, Clough, Mrs. Gaskell, and it is the voice of Matthew Arnold which comes through strongly in his doubts about America. His commitment to culture in the face of materialist expansion and his description of Americans as 'still colonists and provincials in culture' echo Arnold's terminology in Essays in Criticism, and in the celebration of the North American's semi-centenary the editors stress the review's freedom from party bias - another Arnoldian principle.⁵ James gave Essays in Criticism an enthusiastic review (which Arnold himself enjoyed) in the North American in 1865⁶, and the following year another contributor, writing

on 'The Conditions of Art in America', bases his argument on Arnold:

Perhaps the best definition we have of the duty of the critical faculty is Mr. Arnold's, - 'to see the object as in itself it really is'. For judgment on this work or that work is nothing that does not help those who desire to see correctly. Criticism must help the people to see aright. (NAR, January 1866, pp.22-3)

Arnold's pedagogical critical crusade found a ready response among New England's directors of taste.

Like the North American Review, the weekly Nation begun by E.L. Godkin in 1865 held aloft the banner of critical standards and asserted its independence. An article on 'Critics and Criticism' in the first number contained statements of policy: 'One principle object of THE NATION is to promote and develop a higher standard of criticism'; and an advertisement for the paper in the second number assured readers, 'This journal will not be the organ of any party, sect, or body. It will, on the contrary, make an earnest effort to bring to the discussion of political and social questions a really critical spirit' (Na, July 6 1865, p.10; July 13 1865, p.63). And Arnold's Essays in Criticism was praised in the first number for its disinterestedness and openness to new ideas (Na, July 6 1865, p.25). All this critical energy was directed towards creating a great American literature, the lack of which was felt with a new acuteness in the flush of Northern democratic enthusiasm following the Civil War. But great literature is not created out of mere enthusiasm and will. Many of the critical articles in these periodicals reflect the very provinciality they intended to counter-act, and this is nowhere more apparent than in criticism of novels. A review of The Gayworthys in the Nation for July 1865 favourably notes the noble theory of life embodied in the novel and praises it for its qualities of genius, sound morality and pure religion: 'We

are a moral nation, and must always take the moral into consideration (Na, July 27 1865, pp.120-1). James reviewed the same novel in the October North American and used it as usual as an opportunity for generalisation:

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. (NAR, October 1865; N&R, p.92)

Like the Nation reviewer, James recognises real skill in the work, but this means that the critic must demand greater responsibility in the choice of method; a force 'sufficiently like genius' shouldn't be able 'with impunity to work in ignorance of principle' (N&R, p.97). James's critical application of his American moral consciousness is far subtler than the usual self-satisfied demand that American art reflect the moralising tendency of the nation.

A review of Grimm's Unüberwindliche Mächte in a later edition of the Nation illustrates another aspect of this critical narrowness. The reviewer praises the work for its 'truth' and its well-considered plot, and contrasts it with the 'highly-seasoned fiction of the French and English schools' with their 'strong doses of realism and psychology' (Na, November 21 1867, pp.432-3). He is content to glance without real discussion at the 'French and English schools' and share with his reader a moral satisfaction at the expense of European culture. The distorted evaluations resulting from such superficial received ideas about European realism could only undermine the standards Norton and Godkin sought to instil. The line between moral awareness and moralism can be a fine one, and James's sweeping condemnations of French immorality reflect the parochially

dogmatic American moral consciousness. But, as we shall see, such outbursts are modified always by the principle of critical disinterestedness advocated by James's first editors, 'that "free play of mind" over a subject' which, as James recalled much later in A Small Boy and Others, was to throw him 'into the critical arms of Matthew Arnold' (SBO, p.171).

Arnold was one of several major critics whose work James reviewed during his critical apprenticeship and I want to look at these articles now. James self-consciously used these reviews to define his own position and they contain the clearest exposition of his evolving critical principles. It was inevitable that James should be impressed by the high seriousness of Essays in Criticism, and in his review he responds primarily to Arnold's tone:

. . . it represents a spirit both sensitive and generous. We can best describe it, perhaps, by the word sympathetic. It exhibits frankly, and without detriment to its national character, a decided French influence. (NAR, July 1865; V&R, p.85)

In Arnold James found a kindred spirit. His own heterogeneous upbringing and wide experience of Europe had taught him the value of different cultural traditions, and his particular fondness for France, his avid reading of the Revue des Deux Mondes, and his interest in French critics were all reflected in Arnold's essays. James responded as much as his American contemporaries to the crusading spirit of the work, but in more general terms. In it, he finds endorsement for his own belief that 'one of the chief duties of criticism is to exalt the importance of the ideal' (V&R, p.89), and for his delight in general truths:

It has long seemed to us that, as a nation, the English are singularly incapable of large, of high, of general views. They are indifferent to pure truth, to la vérité vraie. Their views are almost exclusively

practical, and it is in the nature of practical views to be narrow. (V&R, p.92)

James extends Arnold's critical mission by applying these principles to the novel, to which Arnold remained largely indifferent, and in the generalising openings of so many of his early reviews he imitates both Arnold and the Revue des Deux Mondes.⁷ More specifically, reviews of, for example, Trollope's novels amply illustrate James's Arnoldian commitment to a not always defined Truth. The everyday details in which Trollope's realism deals are seen as an illustration of practicality replacing higher spiritual themes: The Belton Estate is dismissed as 'a stupid book' because it is 'without a single idea' and fails to fulfil one of the primary functions of a book, 'namely - to suggest thought' (Na, January 4 1866; N&R, p.130). On the other hand, James admires George Eliot's realism because of her 'union of the keenest observation with the ripest reflection' and her qualities as a thinker (AM, October 1866; V&R, p.25). In both cases, James's assessment is not simply one of rigid principle, but involves a personal response to a mind, to the sensibility implied by the work, just as his response to Essays in Criticism itself was to Arnold's tone. In spite of his dogmatic assertions about the 'genuine novel' and its adherence to truth, James was capable from a very early stage (sometimes more obviously in theory than in practice) of a critical flexibility based on his own, more nebulous, standards of literary excellence, standards which were to serve him, in only partially modified forms, throughout his career.

Throughout the early criticism an impressionistic personal response lies, sometimes uneasily, alongside more absolute criteria. In the review of Essays in Criticism, James stated the case for a purely objective criticism, but allowed at the same time for the

additional value of feeling:

The best critic is probably he who leaves his feelings out of account, and relies upon reason for success. If he actually possesses delicacy of feeling, his work will be delicate without detriment to its solidity.

(V&R, p.87)

Right standards can only be improved by right sensibility, and James echoes Arnold's Sainte-Beuvian belief that the critic should have 'the most free, flexible, and elastic spirit imaginable'.⁸ The relationship between sensibility and general principle becomes clearer in a review of Scherer's Nouvelles Études sur la Littérature Contemporaine which James wrote for the Nation later in 1865.

Commenting on Scherer's awareness of the lack of doctrines in his work, James says that a specific doctrine is inevitably replaced by consistency of another kind, that of the feelings 'which constitute a man's real substance' and which 'never change':

In default of doctrines in a work - or, as we should say, in default of a system, of a consistent argument - there is always, accordingly, a certain irrepressible moral substance.

Scherer's strength as a critic lies in the fact that the moral substance of his work is his love of liberty 'as the necessary condition of truth, of thorough examination, of impartiality' (Na, October 12 1865; N&R, p.100). This liberty clearly corresponds to Arnold's 'free play of mind', and Scherer is indeed seen as the embodiment of Arnold's ideal critic (N&R, p.102). The terms in which James praises Scherer are significant:

We find - and this is the highest praise, it seems to us, that we can give a critic - none but a moral unity: that is, the author is a liberal. It is hard to say, in reading M. Scherer's books, which is the most pleasing phenomenon, this intellectual eclecticism or this moral consistency. (N&R, p.101)

Critical consistency, then, is not a matter of abstract principles but of a particular moral sensibility brought to bear on works from the widest possible variety of sources, and capable of recognising merit whatever the cultural context. James is still well within the Arnoldian field, but in those few months his emphasis has changed. From the rather blind acceptance of some kind of external standard of truth as the principle by which the critic works, James has moved on to a recognition that the only absolute is the critic's intellectual consistency. This internal standard is inevitably a moral phenomenon:

But as a critic, quite as much as any other writer, must have what M. Scherer calls an inspiration of his own, must possess a unit of sincerity and consistency, he finds it in his conscience. It is on this basis that he preserves his individuality, or, if you like, his self-respect. It is from this moral sense, and, we may add, from their religious convictions, that writers like Scherer derive that steadfast and delicate spiritual force which animates, co-ordinates, and harmonizes the mass of brief opinions, of undeveloped assertions, of conjectures, of fancies, of sentiments, which are the substance of his work. (N&R, pp.102-3)

General principles derive thus from moral sensibility. The critic, no less than the artist, has a moral responsibility to his readers.

Some critics discussing James's early development have used this review to demonstrate the distance between the young and the mature James, emphasising the immaturity of rating Scherer above Sainte-Beuve.⁹ James certainly reversed his opinion of the two critics during the next ten years, but the reversal is due rather to an expansion of his concept of just what an eclectic critical and moral sensibility involves, than to a complete change in his critical stance. Sainte-Beuve replaced Scherer (and Arnold) as James's ideal critic partly because Scherer's later articles never

fulfilled his early potential, and partly because James began to realize that impartiality such as Sainte-Beuve's needn't imply amorality.¹⁰ What he never relinquished, once grasped at this early stage, is his emphasis on the superiority of the moral vision to any amount of dogma, and the seat of that vision in each artist or critic's particular sensibility.

But we prefer [Scherer] because his morality is positive without being obtrusive; and because, besides the distinction of beauty and ugliness, the aesthetic distinction of right and wrong, there constantly occurs in his pages the moral distinction between good and evil; because, in short, we salute in this fact that wisdom which, after having made the journey round the whole sphere of knowledge, returns at last with a melancholy joy to morality. (N&R, pp.105-6)

The American moral consciousness pokes rather obtrusively through this praise, but James's search in these reviews for a link between morality and sensibility pre-echoes 'The Art of Fiction': 'There is one point at which the moral sense and the artistic sense lie very near together; . . . the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer' (PP, p.406).

It is entirely consistent that James should distrust Taine's criticism with its principles of la race, le milieu and le moment. His first critical comment on Taine appears in that important letter to Perry of September 1867:

I had just been reading . . . Taine's Graindorge It seems to me a truly remarkable book in the way of writing and description, but to lack very much the deeper sort of observation. As a writer - a man with a language, a vocabulary and a style, I enjoy Taine more almost than I do any one; but his philosophy of things strikes me as essentially superficial and as if subsisting in the most undignified subservience to his passion for description. (Letters, I, 75)

This is the main theme of the series of reviews of Taine's works which James wrote between 1868 and 1876. A frank admiration for Taine's energy of thought is tempered always by a sense of its inadequacy to the problems with which it deals. Taine's achievement is seen as primarily literary. Reviewing translations of Voyages en Italie, James makes his doubts immediately clear:

M. Taine, in effect, studies man as a plant or as a machine. You obtain intimate knowledge of the plant by a study of the soil and climate in which it grows, and of the machine by taking it apart and inspecting its component pieces. M. Taine applies this process to the human mind, to history, art, and literature, with the most fruitful results. The question remains, indeed, with each reader as to whether, as the author claims, the description covers all the facts; as to whether his famous theory of la race, le milieu, le moment is an adequate explanation of the various complications of any human organism - his own (the reader's) in particular. (Na, May 7 1868; LRE, p.49)

James's essential Arnoldian objection is to the 'materialist school of thinkers' to which Taine belongs: 'To his perception man is extremely interesting as an object of study, but he is without sanctity or mystery of any sort' (LRE, p.49), and it embodies James's later idealist doubts about Zola's naturalist method.

James's critical opposition to Taine's method is most clearly put in his review of the English Literature. Because Taine approached English literature from the preconception of his theory, his work lacks the quality of 'wasteful, purposeless, passionate sympathy', with the general effect that it has 'a certain reduced, contracted, and limited air': 'He has made his subject as definite as his method' (AM, April 1872; LRE, pp.62-3). For James, the most successful parts of the work are those in which Taine 'plays fast and loose with his theory', those which are prompted by 'the independent personal

impression'. The desire to classify and place things makes Taine a 'fallible' critic and James finally praises the work as 'a great literary achievement' - as a philosophical effort 'it is decidedly a failure' (LRE, pp.64, 65, 67).

Taine's weaknesses as a critic are contrasted with Sainte-Beuve's strengths, the result of just that 'purposeless, passionate sympathy' Taine lacked. James realizes Taine's desire to make of literary criticism a science but finds Sainte-Beuve the better apostle of that cause, and the terms in which he explains his conclusion underline the essential consistency of James's critical theory throughout this period.

Now Sainte-Beuve is, to our sense, the better apostle of the two. In purpose the least doctrinal of critics, it was by his very horror of dogmas, moulds, and formulas, that he so effectively contributed to the science of literary interpretation. The truly devout patience with which he kept his final conclusion in abeyance until after an exhaustive survey of the facts, after perpetual returns and ever-deferred farewells to them, is his living testimony to the importance of the facts. Just as he could never reconcile himself to saying his last word on a book or author, so he never pretended to have devised a method which should be a key to truth. The truth for M. Taine lies stored up, as one may say, in great lumps and blocks, to be released and detached by a few lively hammer-blows; while for Sainte-Beuve it was a diffused and imponderable essence, as vague as the carbon in the air which nourishes vegetation, and, like it, to be disengaged by patient chemistry. His only method was fairly to dissolve his attention in the sea of circumstance surrounding the object of his study, and we cannot but think his frank provisional empiricism more truly scientific than M. Taine's premature philosophy. (LRE, pp. 63-4)

James's approval of Sainte-Beuve's avoidance of formulas echoes his

praise of Scherer's lack of method over six years earlier; references to 'the facts' are a re-statement of Arnold's exhortation to 'see the object as in itself it really is'; and Sainte-Beuve's idea of truth, as described and obviously endorsed by James, extends earlier, more mechanical descriptions.

Sainte-Beuve, rather than Arnold, became James's lasting critical model, though in a lot of his criticism James failed to live up to the Sainte-Beuvian ideal of disinterestedness. The concept of truth as 'a diffused and imponderable essence' was more congenial to the Paterian, relativist position towards which, as we shall see, James was moving, but as that phrase suggests, truth remained ultimately 'out there' and Arnoldian absolutes were never completely abandoned. James's critical outlook has the consistency he praised in Scherer and Sainte-Beuve but it contains a prescriptive element which militates against true disinterestedness and results from James's position as novelist first and critic very definitely second. The conflict between theory and practice which James implicitly recognised in Arnold's method is equally a feature of his own.

James does show a Sainte-Beuvian urbanity, and a critical maturity rare among his reviewing colleagues, in his emphasis on European critical traditions. A self-conscious eclecticism characterises these reviews: the 'breezes of the west' which James felt could make him a successful critic were those of assimilation.

We have exquisite qualities as a race, and it seems to me that we are ahead of the European races in the fact that more than either of them we can deal freely with forms of civilization not our own, can pick and choose and assimilate and in short (aesthetically etc.) claim our property wherever we find it. To have no national stamp has hitherto been a defect and a drawback, but I think it not unlikely that American writers may yet indicate that a vast intellectual

fusion and synthesis of the various National tendencies of the world is the condition of more important achievements than any we have seen. (Letters, I, 77)

Such sentiments clearly reflect the North American's editorial policy and the cultural breadth of the small intellectual circle surrounding Lowell and Norton,¹¹ and James's essays on French critics best illustrate this eclectic spirit. His enjoyment of Taine's English Literature and the Notes on England is partly a delight in watching the interaction of two cultures, with each of which James feels some affinity. 'The French possess that lively aesthetic conscience' while 'in English imaginations it is the moral leaven that works most strongly' (LRE, p.58). This opposition of French aesthetic awareness to English morality became a recurrent theme in James's major criticism; by thus schematising European qualities he made room for his own, American, role of creative and critical synthesis.

Though he registers his dislike of Taine's critical dogma, James puts Sainte-Beuvian principles into practice in these reviews in which the dominant tone is one of generous sympathy. James importantly supplements his objections with admiration of what Taine attempted and of his work as a monument to French literary ability. In his vituperative early reviews of poor novels James had rather crudely implemented the American, or Arnoldian, crusading spirit. In the late 60's and early 70's James's critical approach mellowed. More confident of exactly what his American role is to be, James feels able to emphasise the importance of a sympathetic sensibility. In a review of Dallas Galbraith by Mrs. Harding Davis, written for the Nation in 1868 and never republished, James made one of his clearest statements of critical principle and of the relative roles of subjective and absolute critical truth:

The day of dogmatic criticism is over, and with it the ancient infallibility and tyranny of the critic. . . . The critic is simply a reader like all the others - a reader who prints his impressions. . . . No writer pretends that he tells the whole truth; he knows that the whole truth is a synthesis of the great body of small partial truths. But if the whole truth is to be pure and incontrovertible, it is needful that these various contributions to it be thoroughly firm and uncompromising. (Na, October 22 1868, p.330)

The combination of firmness with generosity is nowhere better illustrated than in the series of essays on Gautier which James wrote between 1873 and 1875, the best of which he included in French Poets and Novelists. Two artists more unlike in temperament and preoccupations than James and Gautier it would be difficult to imagine, yet in praising Gautier's formal and descriptive brilliance, James was able to put aside his own critical dogmas about morality in art. The recurrent theme of these reviews is Gautier's apparent unawareness of moral responsibility: 'Gautier is almost grotesquely good' (NAR, October 1874; LRE, p.97). Because Gautier seemed to James to make no pretensions to a moral presentation of his subjects, he is worthy of wholehearted praise for the things he did attempt. Indeed, the lesson James draws from Gautier's example is 'that a man's supreme use in the world is to master his intellectual instrument and play it in perfection' (FPN, p.41). As in the articles on Taine, judgment starts from an appreciation of what the writer attempted, a Jamesian principle later stated most clearly in 'The Art of Fiction': 'We must grant the artist his subject, his idea, his donnée: our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it' (PP, pp.394-5).

But in none of his reviews of Gautier's work does James disguise the fact that his fondness for the poet is necessarily a

limited kind of response, different in kind from that inspired by a greater mind, an interesting pre-echo of Arnold's judgment in his essay on Wordsworth.¹² The resulting critical shift James considers to be a feature of good criticism. Gautier's formal brilliance is 'a completeness on his own scale' and James praises him 'with no desire to transfer Gautier to a higher pedestal than he has fairly earned' (FPN, p.40). He forestalls criticism of his indulgence of a limited talent: 'There is, perhaps, scant apparent logic in treating a closed career more tenderly than an open one; but we suspect that it belongs to the finer essence of good criticism to do so' (FPN, p.41). In his genial approach, James is in fact imitating a quality he admires in Gautier's own critical method:

Rigid critic he was none; it was not in his nature to bring himself to fix a standard. The things he liked he spoke well of; of the things he disliked, a little less well. His brother critics, who would have preferred to count on him to substantiate their severities, found him unpardonably 'genial'. We imagine that, in the long run, he held a course nearer the truth than theirs, and did better service. His irresistible need for the positive in art, for something describable - phraseable, as we may say - often led him to fancy merit where it was not, but more often, probably, to detect it where it lurked. (FPN, pp.64-5)

Again, however, the implication is that there is a higher mode of criticism than this, though it might learn from Gautier's 'geniality', and it is interesting in this connection to compare James's later dismissal of Baudelaire. Because the greater poet inevitably made greater claims on James's moral awareness he was subjected to more rigorous critical standards. The comparison illustrates clearly the point beyond which disinterestedness comes second to the critic's moral responsibility. That James misunderstood Baudelaire is not

the issue here. What is important is the shift of critical criteria and stricture according to the merit of the artist under scrutiny.

There is a moral firmness even in James's most generous criticism and implicit in these reviews is the final form of that morality, which was beginning to crystallise out of the earlier, more confused, moral speculation. James's fondness for Gautier stems partly from a sense of pity:

In one's admiration for him . . . there is something of compassion. He seems to be, in a manner, the un-retributed sport of Nature. He gives her all his attention, his love, and his zeal . . . and she . . . never drops into his conscience, by way of reward, a single vivifying germ; never by her grateful breath transforms him for a day from the poet who merely observes and describes into the poet who conceives and creates. . . . We do not really react upon natural impressions and assert our independence, until these impressions have been absorbed into our moral life and become a mysterious part of moral passion. (LRE, p.97)

Clearly underlying this judgment is James's definition of the morality of a work of art according to the artist's quality of mind, as stated in 'The Art of Fiction', which he had been groping towards in his essay on Scherer nine years before. Disinterested criticism involved, for James, assessing a work's greatness according to this criterion, and in this form he absorbed Arnold's crusade on behalf of Truth into the Sainte-Beuvian urbanity he so admired and, as he grew older, began to attain.

The Atlantic Monthly, 'that supremely sympathetic light miscellany' (AE, p.269), was the third periodical for which James wrote many of his early reviews, and which serialised his early fiction. It was begun in 1857 under Lowell's editorship, partly in reaction to the dry and heavy North American before the quarterly

received its idealistic facelift from Norton. Although aimed essentially at the same cultivated audience, the decision to print fiction gave the Atlantic a greater popular appeal and we find Norton, in a letter to Clough, regretting this element in the magazine: 'As you say there are too many "magazinish" stories in it, - but that is necessary that it may sell in the cars and elsewhere to readers who want merely amusement'.¹³ The Brahminical attitude to fiction as merely the gilding on the pill of scholarly criticism and liberal social thought was reflected in the comparative dearth of novel reviews, except those by James, in the North American. In contrast, the Atlantic was sub-edited from 1866 by William Dean Howells, then just beginning his career as a novelist. In his essay 'Mr. and Mrs. Fields' of 1915, James remembered Howells's influence with a nostalgic glow:

The new American novel - for that was preparing - had at the season I refer to scarce glimmered into view; but its first seeds were to be sown very exactly in Atlantic soil, where my super-excellent friend and confrère W.D. Howells soon began editorially to cultivate them. (AE, p.270)

Howells edited the review section of the Atlantic - sometimes writing all the reviews himself¹⁴ - and the generous sprinkling of novel notices in most issues reflects his interest in the form. It doesn't necessarily follow, of course, that the reviews are discerning. Those by Howells show a thoughtful consistency of principle, but little self-consciousness about the critical process itself; the standard of other reviews varies, but many show that bland, indiscriminating geniality (very different from the geniality of Gautier which James admired and emulated) which in 1868 the Nation condemned as fatal to standards of excellence and which James attacked in his review of Dallas Galbraith:

'It is just these vague random utterances and all this counterfeit criticism that makes the rational critic the more confident of his own duties' (Na, October 22 1868, p.330).¹⁵

The critical problem was partly one of inadequate terminology for dealing with the novel form. Meaningless epithets - 'effective', 'artful', 'cleverly told' - recur without any examination of what they mean in formal terms, so that a typically superficial review could dismiss the novel in question as, 'very readable . . . , artful in plot, effective in characterization, and brilliant in style' (AM, July 1859, p.131). 'Romance' and 'realism' are similarly thoughtlessly over-used, as the confused compromise of one 1872 review suggests, describing a novel as, 'studied in a sufficiently realistic spirit, and yet there is a glamour of romance over all which gives the book a character and charm of its own, and with which the realism does not discord' (AM, October 1872, p.487). The general feeling is that some degree of mimesis is of primary importance - 'Even in romance there must be some rest for the sole of the foot' (AM, May 1872, p.626) - and 'probable' and 'lifelike' are the commonest terms of unexamined praise. Implicit in this thoughtless style of criticism is the assumption that the novel is little more than light entertainment, a view which Howells, as he rose to become editor-in-chief of the Atlantic in 1871, and James, one of his chief contributors, were united against.

The reviewers' realist bias reflects Howells's editorial influence. In his own reviews we can trace his development from an early flirtation with romantic modes (though convinced always that psychological accuracy was of the first importance) to his eventual commitment to a simplistic realism of the everyday and his position as the 'father of American realism'. In a review of Reade and Boucicault's Foul Play in 1868, for example, Howells

admits to having been bewitched by its romantic plot (AM, August 1868, pp. 254-5), but a review of Hale's If, Yes and Perhaps in the same year asserts his characteristic emphasis on the importance of character over plot: 'the charm in his things is - as nearly as we can get at it - that the characters, in no matter what absurdity of attitude or situation they find themselves, always act in the most probable manner' (AM, November 1868, p.634). Similarly, Thackeray deserves unstinted praise in that he 'could give us real men and women, and could portray life so truly that we scarcely thought of asking about a plot' (AM, February 1870, p.247). Other reviewers separate plot and character in this mechanical way, emphasising the importance of the latter by making the review a series of character studies. Also in 1868, Howells praised Henry Ward Beecher's Norwood for its attempt to portray accurately New England village life (AM, June 1868, pp.761-4), and by 1870 he is making regular pleas for the fictional potential of the most ordinary existences. A series of stories by Bjornstjerne Bjornson teach the reader, according to Howells, that 'the lives of men and women, if they be honestly studied, can, without surprising incident or advantageous circumstance, be made as interesting in literature as are the smallest private affairs of the men and women in one's own neighbourhood' (AM, April 1870, p.512). Again Howells's view, and, incidentally, his moralism, is echoed by an anonymous reviewer demanding that such mimesis be put at the service of New England morality and that novels concentrate on 'real' love affairs instead of dramatic seductions: 'We should like, now, to have a little of the amusing insipidity, the admirable dulness, of real life depicted in fiction' (AM, June 1870, p.762).

C.P. Kelley and Peter Buitenhuis have emphasised the influence Howells's early interest in romance had on James.¹⁶ It is probably

true that Howells's enthusiasm encouraged James's experiments with the romantic mode in short stories like 'The Romance of Certain Old Clothes', but this was transient and James's criticism certainly shows no Howellsian influence. Indeed, any lasting influence was probably in the opposite direction, James's enthusiasm for Balzac, for example, helping to direct Howells towards realism. The unsophisticated nature of that realism points up the theoretical gulf between James and Howells which is evident from the end of the 60's and continues throughout their long friendship. As we have seen, New England intellectual idealism and Matthew Arnold had made James more receptive to George Eliot's moral realism than to Trollope; Howells's emphasis on the everyday, on the other hand, is much closer to the latter. In Their Wedding Journey, serialised in the Atlantic in 1871, this Trollopian interest in the ordinary was given its first creative expression, and the tale contains several asides in which Howells impresses his idea on the reader without, apparently, a trace of self-irony:

As in literature the true artist will shun the use even of real events if they are of an improbable character, so the sincere observer of man will not desire to look upon his heroic or occasional phases, but will seek him in his habitual moods of vacancy and tiresomeness. To me, at any rate, he is at such times very precious; and I never perceive him to be so much a man and a brother as when I feel the pressure of his vast, natural, unaffected dulness. Then I am able to enter confidently into his life and inhabit there, to think his shallow and feeble thoughts, to be moved by his dumb, stupid desires, to be dimly illumined by his stunted inspirations, to share his foolish prejudices, to practise his obtuse selfishness. Yes, it is a very amusing world, if you do not refuse to be amused. (AM, September 1871, p.347)

A few pages later, and again with limited self-awareness, Howells

himself diagnoses the tale's main weakness - it is horribly tedious:

That which [the wedding-journeyers] found the most difficult of management was the want of incident for the most part of the time; and I who write their history might also sink under it, but that I am supported by the fact that it is so typical in this respect. I even imagine that ideal reader for whom one writes as yawning over these barren details with the life-like weariness of an actual travelling companion of theirs. (AM, September 1871, p.350)

A letter reveals the seriousness underlying the banality: 'At last I am fairly launched upon the story of our last summer's travels, which I am giving the form of fiction so far as the characters are concerned. If I succeed in this - and I believe I shall - I see clear before me a path in literature which no one else has tried, and which I believe I can make most distinctly my own'.¹⁷ The untried path which Howells hoped to pioneer was the fictionalisation of personal experience (a concept of realism which in fact Tolstoy, for example, in his History of Yesterday was experimenting with at about this time). For James, the relationship between art and reality could never be so transparent; one of the tasks of the creative imagination was to subsume and remake fiction's personal sources.

Howells's experiment was directed towards producing a successful American novel of manners. Since the 1850's there had been controversy about whether such a thing was possible in a democracy, and the controversy was rekindled by post-Civil War enthusiasm for American culture.¹⁸ Howells's belief in the possibility is another measure of his distance not only from James, but from the Lowell-Norton circle which influenced James. In his essay 'A Great Public Character', for example, collected in My Study Windows (1871), Lowell suggests that American biography is provincial since America lacks a national centre of life and thought like

London, and he compares the novelist's complaint 'that our society wants that sharp contrast of character and costume which comes of caste'; and part of Norton's pessimism about American culture was his regret that equality must also, apparently, mean uniformity: 'One would desire to look forward to the time, but it is so distant as to be out of the range of vision, when all that is previous and delightful in the varieties of human development should have a new growth out of the rich monotonous level of human unity'.¹⁹ Very similar doubts underlie James's assessment of Their Wedding Journey, which he discussed in a letter to Grace Norton:

Poor Howells is certainly difficult to defend, if one takes a standpoint the least bit exalted; make any serious demands and it's all up with him. He presents, I confess, to my mind, a somewhat melancholy spectacle - in that his charming style and refined intentions are so poorly and meagerly served by our American atmosphere. There is no more inspiration in an American journey than that! (Letters, I, 264)

Howells's naive enthusiasm and the anaemic realism of his early novels inevitably compare unfavourably with the conservative critical and cultural sophistication of the Norton circle.²⁰ James, in attempting to bring this sophistication to novel criticism, presents a somewhat isolated voice among Atlantic reviewers.

Not completely isolated, however. During the early 70's two names stand out particularly as subtle commentators on the art of fiction, and in their Jamesian enthusiasm for European models and principle of compromise between real and ideal, 'the facts' and Truth, they underline the critical split between conservative eclecticism and the advocates of a new American realism. Both critics, George Parsons Lathrop and Thomas Sergeant Perry, were friends of James and members of that sizeable Cambridge circle of young, rich intellectuals who hoped to make a living in the world of letters.

Lathrop was an associate editor of the Atlantic from 1875 to 1877 and wrote several books, ranging from travel sketches to society novels. He married Hawthorne's daughter, edited her father's works and wrote a Study of Hawthorne (1876) which James used extensively when preparing his own critical biography.²¹ The year before taking up his post on the Atlantic Lathrop contributed two substantial articles, 'The Growth of the Novel' and 'The Novel and its Future', in which he argued for the supremacy of the 'dramatic' tradition, the moral realism of Scott, George Eliot, Thackeray and, supremely, Turgenev, which achieves 'a consummate and ideal reproduction of characters and events' (AM, June 1874, p.695²²). The introduction to Lathrop's first article is worth quoting in full since it makes clear the critical stance he shared with James:

Criticism has not kept pace with the novel, in its more recent manifestations. A remarkable indolence prevails, not only with the greater number of novel-readers, but also on the part of too many among those industrious journalists under whose inspection works of this class fall, in regard to the inquiry by what principles the variously modified forms of the novel now extant are to be judged, and relegated each to its proper place. A large proportion of the criticisms upon new novels contain only vague and fragmentary allusions to novelty of incident, verisimilitude of the picture, theories of life involved in the story, or the freshness and 'piquancy' - terms which these jaded reviewers apparently hold to be synonymous - of the whole, without an attempt to draw comprehensive conclusions; in short, these criticisms present whatever issues from the chance critic's chance taste, rather than a ray thrown out from the strong, central light of systematic meditation. (AM, June 1874, p.684)

Lathrop provides this 'systematic meditation' in his historical differentiation between dramatic and subjective novel traditions,

and in his attempt to define the relationship between realism and 'ultimate truth', and realism and morality:

The secret of dramatic effect is simply this, that in real life ultimate truth seldom finds a pure utterance. In drama, therefore, we have a situation presented as nearly as possible (subject to aesthetic laws) in the way in which it would present itself in the fact; the involved truths of the whole proceeding being illustrated by partial expressions of each individual . . . (p.689)

Like life itself, dramatic mimesis carries the potential for moral enlightenment by encouraging an extension of sympathy:

It is only through clear perceptions into the true quality of our common nature, excited by the artistically recounted history of certain beings possessed of that nature, that the foundations of morality are deepened and secured. (p.695)

Lathrop's realist commitment, like James's, is based on a neo-classical faith in the artist's ability to penetrate to the absolute truths underlying surface detail: 'if an author feels himself compelled constantly to institute the most vigorous investigations into life and character, he is apt always to find himself humbly brought back to nature' (p.693). By capturing 'nature' the novelist achieves that 'ideal' reproduction of character and event which was for Lathrop a characteristic of the greatest fiction.

In 'The Novel and its Future' Lathrop examines these principles in more detail, differentiating between realism, which apprehends 'in all particulars the connection between the familiar and the extraordinary, and the seen and the unseen of human nature', and 'literalism' which stops short at surface detail for its own sake (AM, September 1874, p.321). And he puts a very Jamesian emphasis on the novelist's quality of mind: 'From a stable and enduring quality

of view, springs style, including not only phraseology, but the character of an author's observation, likewise' (p.318).

In both articles Lathrop cites Turgenev as a supreme example of this 'quality of view'. T.S. Perry's article on Turgenev appeared in the Atlantic in May 1874, and James's own article on the Russian had appeared in the North American the month before that. The similarities of taste and criteria in these articles suggest that they had their source in enthusiastic discussions about the art of fiction. Like Lathrop, Perry dwells approvingly on Turgenev's dramatic objectivity but he regrets the paucity of critical vocabulary which means he has to be described simply as a 'realist'. There is a 'painstaking accuracy' but also a 'poetical idealization' about everything his pen touches (AM, May 1874, pp.569, 575), and his great strength is his moral, generalising method:

And what more need be asked of a novelist than that he draw men and women as they are, with their faults and virtues ever merging into one another, and that he put these people into such relations as arouse our sympathy for some of the most serious matters of human experience? To do this is the constant aim of all creative writers, who are ever aspiring to represent the infinite emotions of life. (AM, May 1874, p.575)

This echoes exactly the terms of James's own praise for Turgenev, for his constant search for subjects which will be 'morally interesting', and for the interaction of method and morality, 'moral meaning giving a sense to form and form giving relief to moral meaning' (FPN, pp.277, 282). In his review of Middlemarch in 1873, James praised a similar balance in George Eliot's method:

The author has commissioned herself to be real, her native tendency being that of an idealist, and the intellectual result is a very fertilizing mixture. The constant pressure of thought, of generalizing instinct, of brain, in a word, behind her observation,

gives the latter its great value and her whole manner its high superiority. (Galaxy, March 1873; HF, p.266)

It is of course fitting that James's admiration for the interaction of realism and idealism should occur in a review of George Eliot. The commitment to this kind of compromise which James shared with his contemporaries had been forcefully stated twenty years before by both George Eliot herself and by G.H. Lewes. In 1858, for example, Lewes rejected the conventional antithesis between realism and idealism, arguing that 'Art always aims at the representation of Reality, i.e. of Truth', so that realism is necessarily the basis of all art and its opposite 'is not Idealism, but Falsism'.²³ James possibly read some of Lewes's articles in the Westminster Review; he certainly gleaned their principles from George Eliot's novels, and again his American moral consciousness responded positively to an English respect for absolutes.

In an article of 1872, 'American Novels', Perry had used this belief in a generalised moral realism as ammunition against those critics who equated the possibility of a 'great American novel' with Howellsian detailism. Ruland reprints his article immediately after one by John W. deForest from the Nation for 1868, and in some ways deForest typifies the attitudes Perry was opposing. Like other advocates of Americanism in fiction he dismisses some of the best American novelists for being outside the realist conventions and subject-matter envisaged for a really American production. The American novel is to be 'the picture of the ordinary emotions and manners of American existence' and Cooper's stories of back-woodsmen and Indians therefore fail to qualify. Hawthorne is also rejected, though his genius is recognised, because his novels are characterised by 'graspings which catch little but the subjective of humanity' and 'such persons as Hawthorne creates belong to the

wide realm of art rather than to our nationality'.²⁴ Against such dogmatic realism, which would restrict the 'great' American novel to the trivial and the particular, Perry predictably argues that the novelist should be concerned first with human nature and only incidentally with its particularly American manifestations. His article is a plea for character-oriented fiction over the 'photographic accuracy' of extreme realism. The 'great American novel', should it ever appear, 'may be American, without a doubt, but it will not be ostentatiously so; that will not be its chief merit'.²⁵

That Perry found it necessary thus to plead for breadth of outlook in American fiction is partly a measure of the provincialism (in Arnoldian and Jamesian terms) of the cultural atmosphere. But it also suggests that the conservative, European preconceptions with which critics like Perry and James confronted the American scene were as rigid in their way as deForest's limited realism. In his article on the American novel Perry echoes Lowell and Norton's doubts about the effects of American democracy when he accuses American novelists of being afraid of fully introducing their characters: 'That this is the result of attempting to represent in this country, with its changing, uncertain classes, what in England is clear enough from its fixed social laws, is highly probable'; the American novelist has to draw his character 'as a man; he gets no aid from his surroundings'.²⁶ Doubts of this kind about America's suitability to the novelist of manners had a lot to do with James's eventual voluntary exile. As a critic, James was initially content to direct his energies to improving the principles and enlarging the reading experience of his audience; as an artist, he sought material suitable to his method and the environmental detail provided by the social fabric of Europe was an indispensable tool of trade. The socially picturesque provided

a necessary backdrop to moral drama.

James's most famous statement about America's inadequacy from the novelist's point of view came of course in his Hawthorne in 1879, after his move to Europe, but in the letters which James wrote to and from America in the period before 1875 we can trace the same attitude - in his constant stress on his search for the picturesque, for example, and in his conscious gathering of impressions.²⁷ The deeply conservative complexion of James's thought, and the influence of this on his sense of just what the 'picturesque' involved, are seen too in his travel sketch of Chester:

. . . conservatism here has all the charm, and leaves dissent and democracy and other vulgar variations nothing but their bald logic. Conservatism has the cathedral, the colleges, the castles, the gardens, the traditions, the associations, the fine names, the better manners, the poetry; Dissent has the dusky brick chapels in provincial by-streets, the names out of Dickens, the uncertain tenure of the h and the poor mens sibi conscia recti. Differences which in other countries are slight and varying, almost metaphysical, as one may say, are marked in England by a gulf. Nowhere else does the degree of one's respectability involve such solid consequences. (TS, pp.17-18)

In spite of the mildly critical tone, there is no doubt where James's sympathies lie. His sense of the 'vulgarity' of democracy - or any other movement threatening to simplify the diverse social textures of life - is a continuing theme throughout his career, and in his 1913 essay on Balzac he regrets the passing of the social stratifications Balzac was able to use: his 'ideals of differentiation, those inherent oppositions from type to type, in which drama most naturally resides, have well-nigh perished' (NN, p.119). It was largely Balzac's influence which led the young James to so uncompromising a search for the picturesque. His description in 1875 of Balzac's use of

state and church hierarchies throws light on his own method:

A monarchical society is unquestionably more picturesque, more available for the novelist than any other . . . ; and therefore Balzac was with glee, with gusto, with imagination, a monarchist. (FPN, p.109)

Balzac's political cynicism in the interests of his art was different only in degree from James's own.

It was inevitable that James, with his Arnoldian and Balzacian affinities, should find American culture finally inhospitable, and by 1874 he felt a deep kinship with Turgenev's discontent with Russia:

M. Turgénieff gives us a peculiar sense of being out of harmony with his native land - of his having what one may call a poet's quarrel with it. . . . American readers will peculiarly appreciate this state of mind; if they had a native novelist of a large pattern, it would probably be, in a degree, his own. (FPN, p.280)

But James was at the same time aware of the limitations implied by his inability to deal with the emergent American civilization, as a letter to Norton of 1871 suggests:

Looking about for myself, I conclude that the face of nature and civilization in this our country is to a certain point a very sufficient literary field. But it will yield its secrets only to a really grasping imagination. This I think Howells lacks. (Of course I don't!) To write well and worthily of American things one needs even more than elsewhere to be a master. But unfortunately one is less! (Letters, I, 252)

There is an element of self-defence in James's private comments about Howells at this period. Howells was, after all, the novelist who was at least attempting to grasp America as a subject for fiction, but James was of course right about the essentially minor nature of Howells's talent. In a review of A Foregone Conclusion in 1875 James applies his critical sliding scale, both to Howells and to America:

He reminds us how much our native-grown imaginative

effort is a matter of details, of fine shades, of pale colors, a making of small things do great service. Civilization with us is monotonous, and in the way of contrasts, of salient points, of chiaroscuro, we have to take what we can get. . . . All this refines and sharpens our perceptions, makes us in a literary way, on our own scale, very delicate, and stimulates greatly our sense of proportion and form. . . . It is true, in general, that the conditions here indicated give American writing a limited authority, but they often give it a great charm. (Na, January 7 1875; LRE, pp.214-5)

There is harsh criticism under the apparent charm of that generalisation. James had outgrown the Atlantic's 'fine shades' and 'pale colors' and sought the stimulation of major European talents.

James was always aware of his national responsibility, even as he rejected America as a home. Young Americans had, as he wrote to Norton, a 'commission to do the best' (Letters, I, 262), something he felt Howells lacked in remaining satisfied with America. For James, the commission involved bringing the valuable elements of the American consciousness to bear on mainstream literary developments. With an Arnoldian desire to be part of those developments, James moved to France, the centre of fictional experiment, taking with him the moral consciousness of which he had written to Perry eight years before.

Critical canons

James's first published review was of Nassau W. Senior's Essays on Fiction, which had first appeared in English periodicals from as early as 1821. With an aplomb belying his critical inexperience, James confesses himself disappointed:

We opened this work with the hope of finding a general survey of the nature and principles of the subject of which it professes to treat. Its title had led us to

anticipate some attempt to codify the vague and desultory canons, which cannot, indeed, be said to govern, but which in some measure define, this department of literature. We had long regretted the absence of any critical treatise upon fiction. (NAR, October 1864; N&R, p.1)

The disappointment isn't, of course, very deep; Senior's shortcomings leave the field open for James himself, and one might imagine from this first review that before long James would offer his own comprehensive theory of fiction. This he never did - the Prefaces, concerned to explain James's own method, are, like 'The Art of Fiction' 'necessarily wanting in completeness' (PP, p.375). There are various reasons why James never attempted a complete poetics of fiction. As we have seen, he very early developed a mistrust of critical dogmatism and emphasised an American eclectic ideal. To circumscribe so flexible a form as the novel with a rigid theory was alien to his essentially occasional, impressionistic critical spirit. Furthermore, James's ideas were in a constant state of development. Like Sainte-Beuve, he could 'never reconcile himself to saying his last word on a book or author', and he 'never pretended to have devised a method which should be a key to truth' (LRE, p.64). This is partly because his criticism developed alongside his creative talent and is to some extent an attempt to define his own fictional experiments; it is also due to the nature of the novel itself, the 'magnificence' of which James described in 'The Art of Fiction' as offering 'so few restrictions and such innumerable opportunities. The other arts, in comparison, appear confined and hampered' (PP, p.407).

From the beginning, James's critical principles reflect this feature of the form. Because he never provided a systematised theory, an understanding of his principles depends on wide comparative

reading of his reviews and essays. The early reviews are particularly receptive to this method, since the young James's eagerness to create a cultivated audience and to work out his own creative aesthetic could lead to the kind of dogmatic generalisation he so disliked in other critics. Nevertheless, the principles he prescriptively laid down for Miss Prescott, Mrs. A.M.C. Seemuller, and other forgotten New England novelists, are essentially open-ended. The shrillness of the early reviews has been greatly over-emphasised; there are clear lines of continuity between the early and the mature criticism.

As a member of Norton's reforming team, James was unafraid of harshly criticising poor work. The mediocrity of much novel-writing had become proverbial among reviewers on both sides of the Atlantic, but many were content to make the allusion to silly lady novelists without real critical examination. James not only makes the grounds of his objections clear, but divides the poor novels into various 'schools'. I want to look at these now, defining James's own principles through his objections to the practice of others.

In his review of Mrs. Seemuller's Emily Chester, James refers to a currently popular novel 'generally spoken of by its admirers as a "novel of temperament"', and pronounces Emily Chester an example of the same type. Such works are defined by their attempt to 'exalt the physical sensibilities into the place of monitors and directors, or at any rate to endow them with supreme force and sublety'. James opposes the 'physical sensibilities' to the 'soul', too often omitted by contemporary novelists:

There are two ways of so eliminating the spiritual principle. One is by effectually diluting it in the description of outward objects, as is the case with the picturesque school of writing; another is by diluting

it in the description of internal subjects. . . . In either case the temperament is the nearest approach we have to a soul.

The 'novel of temperament', then, is one in which characters are presented with the implicit belief that 'in proportion as a person is finely organized, in so far is he apt to be the slave of his instincts', and another name for this mode of treatment is 'psychological', further defined as making the action of the story rest on the 'physical' rather than on the 'moral' sense of the characters (NAR, January 1865; N&R, pp.42, 43, 41-2). Leaving aside for the moment James's particular use of terms like 'psychological' and 'moral sense', let us look at his definition of the 'picturesque school'.

Miss Prescott's Azarian is an example of the form. James makes his objections clear by discussing what the novel fails to do with its material. Having outlined the plot, he continues:

What is the central element of the above data? The element of feeling. What is the central element of the tale as it stands written? The element of words. The story contains, as it need contain, but few incidents. It is made of the stuff of a French étude. Its real interest lies in the history of two persons' moral intercourse. Instead of this, we are treated to an elaborate description of four persons' physical aspect and costume, and of certain aspects of inanimate nature. Of human nature there is not an unadulterated page in the book, - not a chapter of history.

A statement of what James believes fiction ought to be doing follows, and it accounts for his objections to both these popular schools:

'There is surely no principle of fictitious composition so true as this, - that an author's paramount charge is the cure of souls, to the subjection, and if need be to the exclusion, of the picturesque' (NAR, January 1865; N&R, pp.18, 19).

Bearing these definitions and objections in mind, we move on to the 'sentimental school'. A Miss Muloch is upbraided for her approach to her material:

. . . she gives us the impression of having always looked at men and women through a curtain of rose-colored gauze. This impediment to a clear and natural vision is nothing more, we conceive, than her excessive sentimentality. Such a defect may be but the exaggeration of a virtue, but it makes sad work in Miss Muloch's tales. It destroys their most vital property - their appearance of reality; it falsifies every fact and truth it touches; and, by reaction, it inevitably impugns the writer's sincerity. (Na, March 1 1866; N&R, pp.168-9)

A sentimental vision can falsify the 'facts' presented by the novelist. Clearly, objective accuracy is their most desirable attribute, and in a review written two years later James contrasts sentimental novels with 'objective' works:

Mrs. Davis's tales and those of her school appeal, we may say - to the conscience, to the sense of right and wrong, to the instincts of charity and patronage. She aims at instructing us, purifying us, stirring up our pity. Writers of the other school content themselves with exciting our curiosity. A good distinction to make, we should say, is that with the latter the emotion of sympathy is the chief agent, and with the former the feeling of pity.

James pretends to make no judgment between the two, but his review ends with an explicit condemnation of Mrs. Davis's novel. Asking what it needs in order to be truly interesting, he concludes: 'It needs that the author should abjure her ultra-sentimentalism, her moralism on a narrow basis, her hankering after the discovery of a ghastly moral contortion in every natural impulse. Quite as much as she, we believe that life is a very serious business. But it is because it is essentially and inalienably serious that we believe

it can afford not to be tricked out in the fantastic trappings of a spurious and repulsive solemnity. Art, too, is a very serious business' (Na, October 22 1868, p.331). The falsification of material detected in Miss Muloch's novel is here taken a step further. Again, the artist's first responsibility is to life, to reality, but here we meet another implied principle - that of a 'wide' morality in contrast with Mrs. Davis's 'moralism on a narrow basis', and we are reminded of objections that the 'novel of temperament' failed to deal with the 'moral' sense of its characters.

The 'sensation novel', as invented by Wilkie Collins and popularised by Miss Braddon, was a critical commonplace of the English reviews. Respectable periodicals tended to reject Miss Braddon's works with moral objections to her subject-matter and warnings about the possible effect on the uninformed reader. At the same time, they barely conceal a kind of admiration for her carefully calculated, and immediate, success.²⁸ James shows a similar ambivalence in his review of her novel Aurora Floyd. He frankly admires the author's 'pluck' and attributes her success to a careful diagnosis of the ordinary reader's wants:

People who read nothing but novels are very poor critics of human nature. Their foremost desire is for something new. Now, we all know that human nature is very nearly as old as the hills. But society is for ever renewing itself. To society, accordingly, and not to life, Miss Braddon turns, and produces, not stories of passion, but stories of action.

The rest of the review restricts itself to an ironic description of Miss Braddon's method and style, of her excess of detail and calculated use of unfamiliar material, her interpretation of 'the illegitimate world to the legitimate world', but objections to her novels are left implicit (Na, November 9 1865; N&R, pp.114, 115).

It should be clear by now, however, that for James to describe a novelist as turning to something other than life is sufficient criticism. As in the sentimental novel, the principle of fidelity to life is ignored. Indeed, in a comparison of the two schools, James prefers the sentimental, but the extent of his disapproval of any abrogation of authorial responsibility to life can be measured by his comment that this preference is 'simply to say that we prefer virtue to vice' (N&R, p.172). In terms of artistic criteria, there is nothing to choose between the two; subject-matter is a side-issue, a matter of personal preference.

We are gradually establishing that James demanded fidelity to an assumed and rarely defined idea of reality. This realism involves a primary concern for character, but character presented in a particular way, and we can begin to define it further by considering James's early objections to Trollope. In 1883 James was to write an appreciation of Trollope which, as we shall see, demonstrated his successful assimilation of Sainte-Beuvian sympathy. These early articles, in comparison, seem somewhat myopic, but Morris Roberts surely made too much of the contrast in his eagerness to condemn the early criticism.²⁹ The overt condescension of 1865, when James admitted to a partiality for Trollope 'of which we have yet been somewhat ashamed' (Na, July 13 1865; N&R, p.68), was merely converted to explanatory generosity in 1883: 'The power to shut one's eyes, one's ears (to say nothing of another sense), upon the scenery of a pitching Cunarder and open them upon the loves and sorrows of Lily Dale . . . is certainly a faculty which could take to itself wings. The imagination which Trollope possessed he had at least thoroughly at his command' (PP, p.99, my emphasis). And the later essay contains, of course, James's famous objection to the intrusive narrator. Trollope was too businesslike, too

lacking in artistic seriousness, ever to merit James's full approval.

The 1865 review was of Trollope's Miss Mackenzie. Noting that Trollope 'accomplishes his purpose of being true to common life', James asks whether he has at the same time succeeded in being true to nature, 'that is, whether in the midst of this multitude of real things, of uncompromisingly real circumstances, the persons put before us are equally real'. His characters James finds to be 'but the halves of men and women' and the reason for this failure lies in Trollope's mistaken priorities:

The accumulation of minute and felicitous circumstances which constitutes the modern novel sheds such a glamour of reality over the figures which sustain the action that we forbear to scrutinize them separately. The figures are the generals in the argument; the facts are the particulars. The persons should accordingly reflect life upon the details, and not borrow it from them. To do so is only to borrow the contagion of death.

The fault lies too in Trollope's deliberate choice of 'vulgar' illustrations, a choice determined by his lack of imagination. He is, nevertheless, an 'admirable observer'. James wishes only that his talent had been directed at great as well as small things; his merits, James admits, are many, but they are the merits of the photograph rather than of the novel proper, and as such lack 'the supreme virtue of possessing a character' (N&R, pp.70, 71, 72-4). Again, the emphasis is on a realist interest in detail subordinated always to the right presentation of characters true to 'nature', and in this review James attributes weaknesses to the writer's quality of perception. Mere observation is insufficient; the novelist must also possess imagination.

In 1868 James reviewed Trollope's nouvelle Linda Tressel and developed this criterion of the revealed mind behind a work. The book is second-rate; it smacks still of the vulgarity detected

in Miss Mackenzie, but it nevertheless achieves a degree of truth, and the source of that truth is in Trollope's moral consciousness:

. . . he repeats in literature the image projected by life upon his moral consciousness. The lines are somewhat blurred by being thus reproduced, and the colors somewhat deadened; they have nothing of ideal perfection or radiance; but they are true; human nature recognizes herself. (Na, June 18. 1868, p.494)

We might contrast here the falsifying vision of the sentimental school, and note the common terminology in James's attribution of Trollope's truth to his moral consciousness, and his criticism of Mrs. Davis's 'moralism on a narrow basis' (my emphasis). James's reservations are important: Trollope is capable of representing a kind of truth because he is an 'admirable observer'; lacking imagination, he is incapable of infusing the picture with 'ideal perfection'. James is implicitly defining the sources of that 'ideal realism' which he opposed, together with Lathrop and Perry, to detailism, and a reference to Trollopian realism in a review of 1870 makes his alignment even clearer:

We are forever complaining, most of us, of the dreary realism, the hard, sordid, pretentious accuracy, of the typical novel of the period, of the manner of Trollope We cry out for a little romance, a particle of poetry, a ray of the ideal. (Review of Disraeli's Lothair, AM, August 1870; LRE, p.306)

I want to draw several central interlocking themes out of these reviews, themes which are as important in the later criticism as they are in early James. Common to all the 'schools' to which James objects is a wrong treatment of character. Either the author's emphasis is wrong within the characters themselves, as in the school of temperament's elevation of the physical over the moral sense; or external elements take precedence over characterisation, be they background details, as with Trollope, or falsifying view-

points like Miss Muloch's sentimentalism or Mrs. Davis's narrow morality. Since, for James, the author's paramount charge is the 'cure of souls', it seems at first odd that he should so sweepingly condemn examples of 'psychological' writing. But he is of course using the term in a special sense: 'we use the word in what we have called its technical sense, the scrutiny, in fiction, of motive generally'; psychology in its general sense he defines as 'the observation of the moral and intellectual character' (N&R, p.42). What he objects to in the novels of temperament is assignment of motive to insufficient causes. His argument is obviously based on an a priori assumption about the springs of action and the duality of human nature, and it is important that we recognise this element in his criticism. Failure to understand and accept James's pre-suppositions leads to complete misunderstanding of the moral basis of his criticism. James was essentially classical in spirit - as his constant appeal to the court of nature implies.

In Emily Chester, this false assignment of motive is described as 'immoral'. Having criticised the depiction of characters as slaves of their instincts, James continues:

. . . if 'Emily Chester' is immoral, it is by the fact of the above false representation. It is not in making a woman prefer another man to her husband, nor even in making her detest a kind and virtuous husband. It is in showing her to be so disposed without an assignable reason; it is in making her irresponsible. But the absurdity of such a view of human nature nullifies its pernicious tendency. Beasts and idiots act from their instincts; educated men and women, even when they most violate principle, act from their reason, however perverted, and their affections, however, misplaced. (N&R, p.44)

The author's immorality lies in her falsification of the truth, not in her subject-matter, a falsification implicitly comparable

with the distorting rose-coloured gauze or the 'fantastic trappings of a spurious and repulsive solemnity' of the sentimental school. The idiosyncrasy of James's use of 'moral' as a critical criterion here becomes clear. To the ordinary reader (and the ordinary American critic), the 'sentimental' novels were emphatically moral, appealing as they did to 'the sense of right and wrong, to the instincts of charity and patronage' (Na, October 22 1868, p.331). For James, there was nothing really to choose between them and the scandalous 'sensation' novels of Miss Braddon; to falsify life in the interests of any external aim is bad art, an immoral abjuration of responsibility: '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' (N&R, p.17).

Like all novelists who plead a commitment to reality greater than that of their predecessors, James relies on the reader's sensibility to distinguish between a true and a false representation. He does, however, suggest qualities which will help the novelist achieve a true image. The first is factual accuracy born of objectivity, which Scott and Trollope possess, and which appeals to the reader's 'humanity, in the broadest sense' (Na, October 22 1868, p.331). But we have seen that James found mere accuracy insufficient. Reviewing The Belton Estate, James notes that 'Mr. Trollope is a good observer; but he is literally nothing else. He is apparently as incapable of disengaging an idea as of drawing an inference' (Na, January 4 1866; N&R, pp.130-1). Elsewhere, his limitation is diagnosed as a lack of imagination (N&R, p.72). Clearly, two ideas are involved here. James is demanding that factual accuracy should also arouse thought, something Trollope cannot do because he is incapable of generalisation - The Belton Estate is 'utterly

incompetent to the primary functions of a book, of whatever nature, namely - to suggest thought' (N&R, p.130). 'Imagination' suggests a slightly different quality, which James found in Scott's power of characterisation:

Before him no prose-writer had exhibited so vast and rich an imagination: it had not, indeed, been supposed that in prose the imaginative faculty was capable of such extended use. Since Shakespeare, no writer had created so immense a gallery of portraits, nor, on the whole, had any portraits been so lifelike. Men and women, for almost the first time out of poetry, were presented in their habits as they lived. (N&R, p.11)

James here, in his first review, significantly associates Scott, Shakespeare and, implicitly, Balzac (alluding to Balzac's similar praise of Scott in the 'Avant-Propos' to the Comédie Humaine), and the reference to Shakespeare is revealing. Imagination clearly involves the negative capability of entry into another consciousness so pre-eminently characteristic of Shakespeare. Characters thus created are allowed freedom; inferior novelists subordinate that freedom to other interests - be they moral or picturesque - so that the real stuff of morality, the human consciousness and its relationships, is bypassed. This is what James means when he says that the 'cure of souls' is the novelist's greatest charge; this is why he criticises Miss Prescott for 'fingering her puppets to death' (N&R, p.21); and this is why the quality of the author's consciousness is so vital to the production of a great novel.

Before going on to examine James's critical principles in more detail, we can now begin to see how they interact. The novelist's first commitment is to a moral reality which has its seat in the human consciousness, and it is therefore with this, above all, that the novel must deal. As life is inherently moral, so its right representation in art will be inherently moral; only

falsehood to life is immoral. The artist's responsibility is therefore great, and in order to reproduce life's complexity and seriousness he must have particular qualities: an ability to observe accurately the external details in which morality expresses itself, and the imaginative ability to enter into another consciousness. Characterisation, realism and imagination are different aspects of one organic moral activity.

By the prevalent American critical standards, James's morality was radical, but the priggish certainty of his pronouncements about human nature and his chilling demand that the novel 'suggest thought' indicate his limited emancipation from a narrowly conservative New England moralism. Later in his career, James would claim that the novelist's first obligation was to create intensity of illusion rather than to reflect a Jamesian concept of human complexity, but, as we shall see, even then he didn't wholly abandon his prescriptive belief in the need to take account of 'the chamber of the soul' ('Gustave Flaubert' (1893); ELE, p.158). There is an embryonic version of this latent conflict between freedom and prescription in the early reviews. James's apparent blueprint for novel-writing remains subjective and general, and theoretically leaves the field open for different realisations of Truth.

James's basic position was to become the orthodoxy of twentieth-century liberal humanist critics like Trilling and Leavis, for whom literature is pre-eminently a moral concern and the moral force of a work depends on the quality of the creating imagination, and it remained central to James's own criticism throughout his career. I have so far considered this position in very general terms - indeed, it remains necessarily somewhat nebulous in its appeals to 'life' and 'truth' - but I want now

to look at some of its early manifestations in a little more detail, emphasising those points at which James anticipates his mature self and the inconsistencies which arise from the uneasy mixture of disinterestedness and prescription.

In The Early Development of Henry James, C.P. Kelley argues that the early criticism shows a shift of emphasis from action to character as the most important element in a novel, using as her evidence the review of Miss Prescott's 'picturesque novel', Azarian, in which James states that 'the soul of a novel is its action' (N&R, p.25). Kelley concludes that 'James had failed to grasp the interdependence of character and action, the fact that action may illustrate character, and thus become secondary to it, a means rather than an end'.³⁰ But in spite of the apparently Aristotelian emphasis of that isolated comment, the full context and argument of the review suggest that James had grasped exactly that interdependence. It is in the same article that he argues that 'an author's paramount charge is the cure of souls' (N&R, p.19), and the apparent contradiction of the two definitions in fact underlines James's equation of action with human interest. The review as a whole praises Balzac's characterisation and in contrasting his integral use of descriptive detail with Miss Prescott's elaboration, James argues for the formal principles of appropriateness and relevance, and shows a mature grasp of the interaction of all the elements in a novel: 'All writing is narration; to describe is simply to narrate things in their order of place, instead of events in their order of time' (N&R, p.27).

In his second published review, then, James not only establishes his life-long commitment to the centrality of character in the novel - as he wrote in the preface to The Portrait of a Lady, 'I could think so little of any fable that it didn't need its agents

positively to launch it' (AN, p.44) - but anticipates his principles of organic composition. James objects to the way Miss Prescott 'tacks on, interpolates, piles up' (N&R, p.29), and we are reminded of his distinction in the preface to The Tragic Muse between representation achieved 'by the addition of items (a light that has for its attendant shadow a possible dryness)' and representation 'by the art of figuring synthetically' (AN, pp.87-8). Similarly, the distinction between description and 'expression' - 'to be real in writing is to express' (N&R, p.23) - anticipates the Prefaces' narrative principle, 'show not tell'. This juxtaposition of early and late comments is in some ways a distortion since it minimises the wealth of technical understanding behind late James, but its suggestion of a precocious technical awareness is accurate. James's recognition of the complete interdependence of elements in the novel is in startling contrast to the usual Atlantic reviewers' mechanical separation of plot, character and background.

James shows a similar analytic maturity in his concern to explore and define the relationship between the most successful characterisers and their creatures. In the review of Azarian, Balzac's characters are described as 'completed before the story begins' (N&R, p.25), and in the 1875 essay on Balzac James compares him with Turgenev as a creator of character:

If Balzac had a rival, the most dangerous rival would be Turgénieff. With the Russian novelist the person represented is equally definite - or meant to be definite; and the author's perception of idiosyncrasies is sometimes even more subtle. With Turgénieff as with Balzac the whole person springs into being at once; the character is never left shivering for its fleshly envelope, its face, its figure, its gestures, its tone, its costume, its name, its bundle of antecedents. But behind Balzac's figures we feel a certain heroic

pressure that drives them home to our credence - a contagious illusion on the author's own part. (FPN, pp.123-4)

The phrases 'heroic pressure' and 'contagious illusion' are typically Jamesian in their suggestive description of the elusive qualities which make a character 'credible'. James borrows from Taine another term to describe the relationship of author and character - 'love'. This love of author for character is most fully explored and defined in 'The Lesson of Balzac' of 1905: 'the joy in their communicated and exhibited movement, in their standing on their feet and going of themselves and acting out their characters' (LB, p.97); but I think James had already grasped the significance of Taine's 'Balzac aime sa Valérie' in 1875.³¹ In the essay on Balzac he relates it to Balzac's joy in the picturesque, his appreciation of the narrative potential offered by a 'consummate Parisienne' (FPN, p.143), but in the 1874 essay on Turgenev James had already used the term when speaking of the presentation of Kirsanov in Fathers and Sons:

In the elder Kirsanoff the author has imaged certain things he instinctively values - the hundred fading traditions of which the now vulgarized idea of the 'gentleman' is the epitome. He loves him, of course, as a romancer must, but he has done the most impartial justice to the ridiculous aspect of his position. (FPN, pp.297-8)

The generalising phrase 'as a romancer must', suggests that James is going beyond Turgenev's fondness for the old order to consider the good novelist's inevitable 'love' for the fully-created character, even to a sympathetic portrayal of their weakness.

James describes the same quality in George Eliot's depiction of Casaubon in slightly different terms: 'To depict hollow pretentiousness and mouldy egotism with so little of narrow sarcasm and so much of philosophic sympathy, is to be a rare moralist as

well as a rare story-teller' (Galaxy, March 1873; HF, p.265). James is here using the term 'moralist' justly and in its broad sense, to suggest the moral effect of enlarging the reader's sympathies - as he says in an 1871 review of Gustave Droz's Around a Spring, 'intelligent realism, in art, is sure to carry with it its own morality' (AM, August 1871, p.249). In the notorious early review of Our Mutual Friend, Dickens is found wanting according to this criterion:

It were, in our opinion, an offence against humanity to place Mr. Dickens among the great novelists. For . . . he has created nothing but figure. He has added nothing to our understanding of human character. He is master of but two alternatives: he reconciles us to what is commonplace, and he reconciles us to what is odd. . . . But what is the condition of the truly great novelist? For him there are no alternatives, for him there are no oddities, for him there is nothing outside of humanity. (Na, December 21 1865; V&R, pp.159-60)

James is making a formidable critical point about Dickens's brutal lack of sympathy in his presentation of the Veneerings, for example, a satirical method in complete contrast to James's own, but it is odd that he should extend his criticism to the character of Bradley Headstone, surely one of Dickens's subtlest portraits:

But when he introduces men and women whose interest is preconceived to lie not in the poverty, the weakness, the drollery of their natures, but in their complete and unconscious subjection to ordinary and healthy human emotions, all his humour, all his fancy, will avail him nothing if, out of the fullness of his sympathy, he is unable to prosecute those generalizations in which alone consists the real greatness of a work of art. (V&R, p.161)

James's initial critical insight is vitiated by preconception. His admiration for the generalising consciousness of George Eliot, or

the exhaustive characterisation of Balzac, blinds him to the understanding behind Dickens's understated portrait of Headstone's passion. James's implicit appeal to the court of nature, a general concept of humanity, his demand for a 'spark of the ideal', make him perceptive but grudging about Dickens's particularising method and lie behind his doubts about the value of Dickens reconciling us to the commonplace (V&R, p.159). In George Eliot, the same gift is approved because of her 'union of the keenest observation with the ripest reflection' (AM, October 1866; V&R, p.25).

As we have seen, James's doubts about Trollope sprang from just this demand for a generalising intelligence. The emphasis on quality of mind suggests that treatment, not subject, is what determines the moral quality of a work and in several early reviews James anticipates his principle from 'The Art of Fiction' that we 'must grant the artist his subject, his idea, his donnée' (PP, p.394). It is implicit in those reviews in which James claims that a 'moral' subject is in fact 'immorally', because narrowly, treated, and conversely in a review like that of Mrs. Davis's Waiting for the Verdict where James makes a case for dubious material:

The unfortunate people whom the author transfers into her stories are as good material for the story-teller's art as any other class of beings . . . They are worth reading about only so long as they are studied with a keen eye versed in the romance of human life.

(Na, November 21 1867, p.410)³²

The principle is of course importantly qualified in 'The Art of Fiction': James is eager to avoid the accusation 'of intimating that the idea, the subject, of a novel or a picture, does not matter. It matters, to my sense, in the highest degree, and if I might put up a prayer it would be that artists should select none but the richest' (PP, p.396). The qualification is also present

in the early criticism. Trollope is criticised for making Alice Vavasor rather than Lady Glencora Palliser the heroine of Can You Forgive Her?. (James could not of course know at that stage that Lady Glencora's story was far from finished.)

. . . by rights Lady Glencora is the heroine of the book. Her adventure is more important, more dramatic, more interesting than Alice Vavasor's [sic]. That it is more interesting is not a matter of opinion, but a matter of fact. A woman who forsakes her husband belongs more to the technical heroic than a woman who merely forsakes her lover. (Na, September 28 1865; N&R, p.89)

And again Turgenev is the occasion for James's most explicit statement of his belief in the variable moral potential of subjects:

. . . his object is constantly the same - that of finding an incident, a person, a situation, morally interesting. . . . He believes in the intrinsic value of 'subject' in art; he holds that there are trivial subjects and serious ones, that the latter are much the best, and that their superiority resides in their giving us absolutely a greater amount of information about the human mind. (FPN, p.277)

James of course shared Turgenev's view, as his objections to the French novel abundantly demonstrate. In his later criticism, James solved the contradiction between allowing the artist his choice of subject, yet demanding it be 'none but the richest', by relating it to the quality of the experiencing and creating mind: 'The question comes back thus, obviously, to the kind and degree of the artist's prime sensibility, which is the soil out of which his subject springs' (AN, p.45). But in the early criticism, James's prescriptive idealism sometimes leads him to betray his respect for the artist's chosen subject and to separate material and technique completely. The separation occurs, significantly, in reviews of French novels. George Sand's Le Dernier Amour, 'in spite of a

disagreeable subject, seemed to us as we read it the last word of narrative art' (Na, July 16 1868; LRE, p.126); and a scene in Feuillet's Camors, though 'unreal, unnatural, and morbid' in subject, is presented with a 'delicate . . . and almost poetical touch' (Na, July 30 1868; LRE, p.175). Such a distinction might seem at first wholly to comply with James's principle of judging treatment only, but in fact he finds it necessary to qualify his response to narrative technique by pointing out subjects of which he disapproves. James's hierarchy of subjects here lies very close to a rather narrower morality than we have so far seen.

I want to look more closely at this mechanical separation of matter from treatment. At the end of the review of Camors, James finds that the novel 'would repay perusal if only as a model of neat, compact, and elaborate dramatic writing' (LRE, p.178). In other words, the form of the work saves it from mediocrity, form implicitly conceived as something imported into the work, rather than growing organically out of the subject. As we shall see, James's criticism of French literature never completely abandoned this separation and in the early reviews formal achievement and moral depth become almost antithetical. In a note in the Nation written at the end of this early period, James expresses the hope that under the new Republic, 'the chiselled and gilded empty shell of French literary form' will find 'a living soul again' (Na, December 30 1875, p.419). Two years earlier, in his essay on the Parisian stage, reprinted in Transatlantic Sketches, James delights in the civilised attributes of the French:

Such art, such finish, such grace, such taste, such a marvellous exhibition of applied science, are the mark of a chosen people and these delightful talents imply the existence of every virtue.

The essay goes on, however, to show the moral emptiness under this

surface polish: French writers in fact show an 'inexpressible want of moral intelligence' (TS, pp.99, 107). It is not just that their work deals with nothing but adultery, however, but that it deals with it in a 'monstrously vicious and arid way'. There are now three elements present: subject, treatment and form. James has returned to his critical tenet of judging the morality of a work according to treatment, but form retains its features of amorality and separateness. James's view of Gautier as master of the 'pictorial and plastic' (FPN, p.50), and indifferent to morality, amply underlines this mechanical form/morality distinction, the source of which is surely James's self-conscious American eclecticism. We have already looked at the review of Taine's Notes sur l'Angleterre where James endorses Taine's distinction between the English moral imagination and the French 'aesthetic conscience' (LRE, p.58), and James intended to offer an artistic reconciliation of the two. The emphasis in the earliest reviews is on moral considerations - characterisation and the right kind of realism - but the relative absence of formal comment doesn't imply indifference. The whole basis of the notorious review of Whitman is an over-emphasis on traditional form and in 1867 a review of Morris's Life and Death of Jason refers to his 'comprehensive sense of form, of proportion, and of real completeness, without which the most brilliant efforts of the imagination are a mere agglomeration of ill-reconciled beauties' (NAR, October 1867; V&R, pp.65-6). We are prepared, therefore, for James's confession in 1874 to 'a conservative taste in literary matters - to a relish for brevity, for conciseness, for elegance, for perfection of form' (review of Hugo's Quatrevingt-treize, Na, April 9 1874; LRE, p.139).

In contrast with the formal perfection James recognised and imitated in the French novel, in Mérimée, Droz, Cherbuliez, the

English novel is described as a 'ponderous, shapeless, diffuse piece of machinery' (review of Howells's A Foregone Conclusion, LRE, p.215). James's review of Middlemarch is partly a plea for the formal awareness he failed to find in that novel, for 'an organized, moulded, balanced composition, gratifying the reader with a sense of design and construction', rather than 'a mere chain of episodes, broken into accidental lengths and unconscious of the influence of a plan' (HF, p.259). There is no doubt, however, that a broad morality took precedence over any amount of formal merit - James's admiration for George Eliot is patently of a different kind from his admiration for Gautier - and in the early reviews James never really demonstrates analytically what he means by form, though it has to do with the principle of organic relevance put forward in the Azarian review, and with the conciseness which James admired in Mérimée and Turgenev.³³

He does, however, formulate in general terms the relationship between form and the organising imagination, and the formal inadequacy of imitative realism. At the end of the review of Middlemarch, James makes a final objection to the novel's looseness: 'It sets a limit, we think, to the development of the old-fashioned English novel. Its diffuseness, on which we have touched, makes it too copious a dose of pure fiction. If we write novels so, how shall we write History?' (HF, p.267). In several reviews, James makes the Balzacian equation between the novelist and the historian - reviewing Far From the Madding Crowd, for example, he reminds Hardy that 'a novelist is after all but a historian, thoroughly possessed of certain facts, and bound in some way or other to impart them' (Na, December 24 1874; LRE, p.294). But as the Middlemarch review suggests, he importantly modifies the identification. In an 1867 review of minor historical novels,

James extends the discussion beyond historical novels in particular to a general consideration of the methods of the novelist and the historian:

Historians and story-tellers work each in a very different fashion. With the latter it is the subject, the cause, the impulse, the basis of fact that is given; over it spreads the unobstructed sky, with nothing to hinder the flight of fancy. With the former, it is the effect, the ultimate steps of the movement that are given; A vast fabric of impenetrable fact is stretched over his head. He works in the dark, with a contracted forehead and downcast eyes, on his hands and knees, as men work in coal-mines. But there is no sufficient reason that we can see why the novelist should not subject himself, as regards the treatment of his subject, to certain of the obligations of the historian; why he should not imprison his imagination, for the time, in a circle of incidents from which there is no arbitrary issue, and apply his ingenuity to the study of a problem to which there is but a single solution. (Na, August 15 1867; LRE, pp.278-9)³⁴

James makes it clear, however, that such discipline can really be of use only to writers with a powerful imagination, that when this 'divine faculty' is once 'strong and lusty, it is very well that it should hold itself responsible to certain uncompromising realities' (LRE, p.280). A necessary balance is envisaged between imagination and realistic discipline; Middlemarch, for James, is too exclusively historical in form: in spite of George Eliot's moral imagination it remains uncontrolled by the recreating imagination. 'Too copious a dose of pure fiction' is an obscure phrase, but it suggests that for fiction, Middlemarch has too much of actuality's formlessness. Realist accuracy and the recreating imagination should ideally exert a mutual formal control, and James's objections to Middlemarch anticipate his objections to Tolstoy's novels: 'what do such large

loose baggy monsters, with their queer elements of the accidental and the arbitrary, artistically mean?' (AN, p.84).

James's growing emphasis on the organising imagination is reflected in several letters of the period in which we see him struggling to come to terms with the inevitable limitation of the personal consciousness:

Wherever we go we carry with us this heavy burden of our personal consciousness and wherever we stop we open it out over our heads like a great baleful cotton umbrella, to obstruct the prospect and obscure the light of heaven. (Letters, I, 145)

And in learning to use that limitation, James adumbrates his later structural use of the individual point of view:

But what's the use of writing at all, unless imaginatively? Unless one's vision can lend something to a thing, there's small reason in proceeding to proclaim one has seen it. Mere looking every one can do for himself. (Letters, I, 399)

The nature of perception itself limits the possibility of realist accuracy, and imposes on the artist a necessary compromise between observation and imagination. James's attitude shifts from frustration that the individual consciousness should limit one's perception of truth, to the realisation that that very limitation can be turned to creative advantage - as he would put it much later to H.G. Wells, 'It is art that makes life' (HJ & HGW, p.267).

Once again, Turgenev illustrates James's ideal: 'Imagination guides his hand and modulates his touch, and makes the artist worthy of the observer' (FPN, p.279). His novels show a recreative use of observed reality which fuses French form with an Anglo-Saxon moral awareness, 'moral meaning giving a sense to form and form giving relief to moral meaning' (FPN, p.282). In the next chapter I shall look more closely at James's fashionable fondness for

Turgenev and at the way in which he uses Turgenev's economical and objective fine moral discrimination as a type of the necessary fusion between the antitheses of morality and form. James's phrasing here - 'giving a sense to', 'giving relief to' - derives from that schematic distinction but at the same time it anticipates the mature criticism's integration of form and morality as inseparable functions of the perceiving and creating imagination. James is discussing here Turgenev's Memoirs of a Sportsman which reviewers frequently compared with Uncle Tom's Cabin as a work of social didacticism. James uses it to generalise about moral purpose:

. . . the lesson is in the cumulative testimony of a multitude of fine touches - in an after-sense of sadness that sets wise readers thinking. It would be difficult to name a work that contains better instruction for those heated spirits who are fond of taking sides on the question of 'art for art'. (FPN, p.282)

The 'lesson', the moral effect, is not imposed but created by Turgenev's treatment of his material; morality and art are inseparable.

These observations from the 1874 essay on Turgenev help to gloss and are glossed by the review of La Tentation de Saint Antoine, published two months later, in which James criticises Flaubert for a lack of moral purpose which affects the form of the whole work:

He proceeds upon the assumption that these innumerable marvels of observation will hold together without the underlying moral unity of what is called a 'purpose', and that the reader will proceed eagerly from point to point, stopping just sufficiently short of complete hallucination to remember the author's cleverness. (Na, June 4 1874; LRE, p.147)

On a superficial reading, James is here advocating that external

moral purpose he had previously condemned for distorting the novelist's image of reality. In fact he is commenting on the way the artist's sensibility dictates form: the morally superficial discreteness, as James sees it, of Flaubert's vision inevitably mars the unity of the novel, and we are reminded both of James's early admiration for the moral sensibility which gave coherence to Scherer's criticism and of the preface to The Portrait of a Lady in which James describes the 'window' of form, pierced in the wall of the house of fiction 'by the need of the individual vision and by the pressure of the individual will' (AN, p.46). But James's critical insight is in turn marred by his limited interpretation of 'moral'. He is able to appreciate Turgenev's diffused morality because it coincides with his own preconceptions, but unable to understand Flaubert's moral exploration of less familiar territory. Prescriptive idealism, here closely allied to New England moralism, lurks behind the subtle emergent theory and James slips back into his schematic separation of the moral and the formalising imagination.

Later in the review of La Tentation James introduces the general objections to French realism which were to become the leitmotif of French Poets and Novelists:

It seems to us to throw a tolerably vivid light on the present condition of the French literary intellect. M. Flaubert and his contemporaries have pushed so far the education of the senses and the cultivation of the grotesque in literature and the arts that it has left them morally stranded and helpless. In the perception of the materially curious, in fantastic refinement of taste and marked ingenuity of expression, they seem to us now to have reached the limits of the possible. Behind M. Flaubert stands a whole society of aesthetic raffinés, demanding stronger and stronger spices in its intellectual diet. But we doubt whether he or any of his companions can permanently satisfy their public,

for the simple reason that the human mind, even in indifferent health, does after all need to be nourished, and thrives but scantily on a regimen of pigments and sauces. (LRE, p.150)

The passage epitomises the fine line in James's early criticism between objectivity and preaching, morality and moralism. The image of sauce and pigment neatly expresses James's conviction that the superficial details of realist method should be subservient always to the larger subject, the 'meat', of consciousness, of the moral areas of experience. The reference to the generation of raffinés introduces that other, narrower meaning of 'moral' in its implied equation between aesthetic experiment and decadence. The whole stance rests on the idealist belief that man is more than the sum of his sensuous experience so that 'realism', to deserve its name, should take account of this duality, and on a view of art as essentially ameliorative. The 'spark of the ideal' for which James longs in so many contemporary works becomes almost mandatory, and it is but a short step from this view of a comprehensive realism to overtly moralistic art. The nearness of the two, however, paradoxically serves to emphasise the chasm which actually separates them. James's prudish judgments belie the open-ended fertility of his principles. What he is in fact arguing for is the novel's unlimited potential, its capacity for reflecting the whole of experience. To limit the form either to factual, proveable detail or to aesthetic experiment is to limit not only the function of art, but the nature of life.

It is this central belief in the novel's responsibility to a complex reality which gives the early criticism its coherence. James's maturity and individuality lie not in his conclusions about particular works or authors, in which he differs little from contemporaries, but in the criteria on which such judgments

are based. From James's scattered generalisations, there emerges an image of the novel as ideally holding in balance complementary, even antithetical, qualities: the schematic thesis and antithesis of English and American morality, and the French 'aesthetic conscience', implicitly give way to a Jamesian synthesis capable of reflecting and moulding experiential complexity; the novelist is to be an imaginative observer and the novel a mutually controlling fusion of fancy and realist discipline. The balance - and thus the novel's truth - is threatened by the exaggeration of any one element. During the 70's James concentrated his critical attention on the moral limitations he saw in French realism; at the same time, in his life of Hawthorne, he suggested the formal and intellectual limitations of the American 'chilly and isolated moral responsibility' (H, p.50). The biography is an extended examination of the relationship between Hawthorne's strong, but unnourished, moral imagination and the sense of 'something cold and light and thin' in his tales (H, p.26), the ultimately sterile moral effect of his allegorical method. As James said in one of his earliest reviews: 'of a genuine novel the meaning and lesson are infinite' (N&R, p.78); his own morality, like Turgenev's, lay in the 'cumulative testimony of a multitude of fine touches', in that fine balance which constituted the 'picture of life'. This concept of the novel as a precarious and fertile synthesis constantly recurs in the later criticism, and it reflects James's self-consciously eclectic critical strategy, the 'vast intellectual fusion and synthesis of the various National tendencies of the world' (Letters, I, 77) which he described to Perry as the American role, and which after 1875 he applied from a European vantage point.

CHAPTER TWO: JAMES AND FRENCH REALISM

'Perfection, dirt, and ignorance are all mixed up together.'

'... if man, for them, is the simple sport of fate, with suffering for his main sign - either suffering or one particular satisfaction, always the same - their affirmation of all this is still, on the whole, the most complete affirmation that the novel at present offers us.'

James never fully came to terms with the aims and methods of the French realists. His Arnoldian moral realism was radically different from their objective documentation and it remained so in spite of particular technical debts and a very cautious assimilation of the French view of perfect 'doing' as the highest literary good. As a craftsman he responded to their technical excellence; as a moralist he emphasised a discrepancy between method and subject, and objected to an interest in facts for their own sake. His criticism of French realism is sometimes illuminating, sometimes distorted by a desire to categorise and contain its main features. His comments abound with sets of diagrammatic oppositions: the French are painters rather than analysts; they offer aesthetic awareness in contrast with Anglo-Saxon moral consciousness; they are interested in form not subject and propound a cynical, pessimistic - and therefore limited - view of human nature.

Such antitheses suggest both James's conservatism, offering an undefined ideal of general Truth in answer to disturbing detail, and his eclectic critical strategy. A desire to make an audience for his own novels always underlies James's criticism but it merges with broader critical aims both on behalf of the novel form and within particular contemporary controversies. As an American reviewer, James added his voice to the Brahminical plea for a

respectable American literature. During the 70's and 80's, after his move to Europe, he joined the critical battle for and against French realism, using his position as an American to forge a compromise from what was most valuable in the English and French arguments and offering eventually a much modified version of the French position. Such self-conscious eclecticism provided a theoretical underpinning for his own novels, but could result in a tendency to offer simplified generalisations in place of accurate insights - hence the set of labels applied during the 70's to almost all French novelists. During his involvement in the realist controversy, James became more confident in dealing with French realism and his position in relation to the English and French approaches changed slightly. In French Poets and Novelists (1878), a superficial narrow moralism obscures the broader concept of morality which is far more central to the volume, and James emerges as a very equivocal advocate of French literature to the English reading public; by Partial Portraits (1888), his tone is far more aggressively educative, though he reasserts his reservations about French attitudes to the novel and to life, as expressed through their novels. The change reflects James's shift of interest from the generation of Balzac to that of Flaubert, but his overall assessment of the French novel remained constant. In Notes on Novelists (1914), he is still arguing that Balzac's genius 'fails to take in whatever fine truth experience may have vouchsafed to us about the highest kinds of temper', and that 'there are whole sides of life to which [Flaubert's "gift"] was never addressed' (NN, pp.124, 76). James's technical innovations as a novelist - many of which he learnt from Balzac and Flaubert¹ - were paradoxically put at the service of a deeply conservative outlook derived ultimately from Arnold and Sainte-Beuve. His ideal realism saw solidity of specification and

le style indirect libre as means to the end of establishing and exploring the subtle consciousness which illustrates for James man's highest potential; consummate 'doing' is not to be contemplated merely aesthetically, but as the means of allowing the novelist the ultimate romantic licence of extending experience credibly - if life can't offer such cases then 'so much the worse for that life' (AN, p.222).

There is strong continuity from the often moralistic tone of James's early writing on the French novel to this complex post-realist late position. His relationship with French realism can perhaps best be described as a parabola. During the 80's he flirted most openly (though still with reservations) with a straightforward realist approach but his later criticism consolidates and extends the position of compromise he rather clumsily sought during the 70's. With the possible exception of the criticism of that middle period, James's own aims as a novelist meant that his work as a critic of the French is uneven. Subtle insights alternate with inappropriate observations even in the late criticism, so often acclaimed for its objectivity, but James's position as novelist-critic makes his criticism stimulating in its very partisanship.

James's objection in Hawthorne to America's lack of chiaroscuro and social organisation - 'No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church . . . no palaces, no castles, nor manors, nor old country-houses, nor parsonages, . . . no political society, no sporting class' (H, p.43) - is not so much the realist manifesto for which it has so often been taken as a revelation of an essentially romantic point of view which sees these things in a static way, as a shorthand method of depicting character, rather than as dynamic forces in a constant state of

flux.² When James moved to Europe in 1875 he sought in its institutions and its people this kind of literary picturesqueness. The France of the Third Republic, in spite of the inevitable fascination of Paris for an American, failed to satisfy James's Balzacian preconceptions and an essay of 1877, 'Occasional Paris', expresses his preference for the solidity of England:

. . . the stranger's imagination does not seem to see a majestic social order massing itself behind [the French] as it usually does in London. He goes so far as to suspect that what is behind them is not adapted for exhibition; whereas your Englishmen, whatever may be the defects of their personal character, or the irregularities of their conduct, are pressed upon from the rear by an immense body of private proprieties and comforts, of domestic conventions and theological observances. (PoPl, p.90)

And the physiognomies of the two races are compared in the generalised terms of a du Maurier or a Daumier cartoon: 'After living a while in England you observe the individual in Paris with quickened attention; and I think it must be said that at first he makes an indifferent figure. You are struck with the race being physically and personally a poorer one than that great family of largely-modelled, fresh-coloured people you have left upon the other side of the channel' (PoPl, pp.85-6). In spite of the role of unattached cosmopolitan which James adopts at the beginning of the essay, his emotional alignment throughout is with the English. They offer the stable social structure and recurrent social types required by the novelist of manners, without the more worrying features of France where, for example, one cannot help praising the French ouvrier's 'vivacity of perception' in acclaiming Zola's L'Assommoir but feel obliged to qualify it by the 'horrible uncleanness of the author's imagination' (PoPl, pp.86-7).

It is the art of Balzac and the minor 'Second Empire' novelists which satisfies James's concept of social realism as revealed in 'Occasional Paris'. His sympathies are unlikely to be won by the strict realism of the Flaubert school which seeks to undermine rather than uphold that picturesque aspect of social institutions which James emphasises. When James argued in his essay on Balzac in French Poets and Novelists, that a monarchical society 'is unquestionably more picturesque, more available for the novelist than any other . . . and therefore Balzac was with glee, with gusto, with imagination, a monarchist' (FPN, p.109), the passage is directed against so cynical a use of institutions which by rights demand an ideological commitment, but the exuberant rhythm of James's phrase reveals his own commitment to the picturesque. In spite of himself, and in spite of the argument of the whole essay, James recognises and responds to Balzac's Dickensian romanticism, and reveals his preference for a loose interpretation of 'realism'.

This identification with the France - and the methods - of Balzac and George Sand had its source in James's early reading in the Revue des Deux Mondes, and at the time of his move to France he was still using the Revue as a yardstick of taste:

The "Revue des Deux Mondes", the classic and time-honored medium of publication of novels of the first rank, is reduced in this sterile season to putting forth translations of American tales which are almost wholly without honor in their own country. ('Three French Books', Galaxy, August 1875, p.276)³

The 'novels of the first rank' were those of Feuillet, Cherbuliez and Droz, the fashionable novelists of the Second Empire. In that part of his essay 'The Minor French Novelists' which James chose not to republish in French Poets and Novelists, he found Erckmann-

Chatrian and Droz, rather than Flaubert and the Goncourts, worthy of the term genius: 'Of all the French romancers of the day they are the most simply delightful, and their exquisite sense of the decent, wholesome, human side of reality ought to balance a multitude of infectious researches in the opposite direction' (Galaxy, February 1876; LRE, p.63). But in the eyes of the Flaubert group, the Revue des Deux Mondes 'se met de parti pris en dehors du mouvement',⁴ - it had, after all, refused to publish Madame Bovary - and James was shocked to hear Zola describe Droz's manner as 'merde à la vanille' (Letters, II, 44).

James's feeling during 1876 that he would be 'an eternal outsider' in Paris was largely due to his sense of exclusion - critically rather than physically - from the Flaubert group (NB, p.26). One of the features he most disliked about the cénacle was its indifference to any writer beyond that immediate circle. He commented to Perry: 'Tu devrais entendre le ton que prennent ces messieurs (chez Flaubert) à l'égard de Cherbuliez et de Gustave Droz'; and to his mother: 'They are extremely narrow and it makes me rather scorn them that not a mother's son of them can read English' (Letters, II, 25, 20). But it was not merely the prejudice of a coterie which prompted the cénacle's judgments of the Second Empire novelists. They recognised the essential hollowness of their superficially brilliant art, an art which unthinkingly reflects a limited society, peopled with a meagre array of types, 'the blue-chinned corruptible, not to say corrupt, larbin and the smart soubrette' (NSB, p.53), uncritically adhering to a moral code which in its concern for convenience and convention is, as Zola saw, corrupt:

. . . j'estime que cette moralité est pleine d'immoralité;
rien n'est plus malsain, pour les coeurs et pour les

intelligences, que l'hypocrisie de certaines atténuations et que le jésuitisme des passions contenues par les convenances.⁵

James was initially seduced by this art of surface because of his fascination with a picturesque, traditional, convention-ridden society. Feuillet, Cherbuliez and Droz combined what James took to be social observation (not unlike his own attempt at 'realism' in The American) with the formal artistry which had always attracted him to the French. He praised Cherbuliez's first novel, Comte Kostia, for 'a turn of fancy in which spontaneity and culture went hand in hand with singular grace' and more particularly for the fact that 'the author has ventured to remember that it is not precisely amiss that a work of art should be lighted with a ray of idealism' (review of Meta Holdenis, NAR, October 1873, pp.461, 462).

For a time James used these novelists as tentative examples of the possible compromise between English idealism and French form, the role later filled more successfully by Turgenev. Their conventionalised version of life is acceptable; it shocks neither the moral sensibilities nor the social assumptions to which James wanted to cling and which the Goncourts, Zola, and even to some extent Balzac, undermined. James's response to these novelists epitomises his critical insecurity with French realism during the early 70's - Balzac is 'always corrupt' (FPN, p.97) yet Cherbuliez's fashionable tales of adultery are a rare example of idealism. This is partly James operating his critical sliding scale - Balzac's greatness means that his weaknesses receive far more critical attention than those of more minor talents - but it is also the conservative reaction to safer kinds of writing. Adultery as discussed by Feuillet and Cherbuliez is acceptable because it exists within clearly defined fictional conventions and their easy moralising panders to Jamesian squeamishness. Shocked into recognition

by the realists who defy and overturn such a framework, James takes conventional refuge in pleas for 'truth', for the 'wholesome, human side of reality' and in a concept of art as amiable and 'agreeable' ('Minor French Novelists', LRE, pp.163, 164). James's later preference for Turgenev and Daudet's modified realism over the less agreeable art of Flaubert and Zola has a similar source: it is partly a case of James going beyond realism in its French form; it is partly, too, a romantic stopping short of realism's method of disillusion, its 'process of rectification'.⁶

But by the end of 1875 - the time of his move to Europe - James's admiration for the fashionable novelists was beginning to wane. Cherbuliez's style is 'tricked out with artificial graces' and he and Droz have published works offering 'but a feeble, perverted echo of their original power' ('Cherbuliez on the Paris Salon', Na, June 29 1876, p.415; 'Three French Books', Galaxy, August 1875, p.276). By 1877 James is apparently objecting to those very conventions in which he had previously taken refuge. He refers, in a review of Feuillet's Les Amours de Philippe, to 'one of those magnanimous fibs in which, from Victor Hugo down, French romancers delight' (Na, November 15 1877; LRE, p.180), and is more explicitly critical in a slightly earlier note on Horace de Lagardie's article 'French Novels and French Life' from Macmillan's Magazine:

French fiction . . . rests upon a certain number of conventions, which authors and readers agree together, for mysterious reasons, to pretend to take au sérieux. We say the reasons are mysterious, but they are probably connected with the desire, so strong in the French mind, to have certain types and categories and general heads definitely established. . . . these . . . form part of the general romancer's stock, of which the novelist, with a propitiatory wink, as it were, invites the reader, for the sake of having a neat,

artistic, well-rounded tale, to assume the reality.

(Na, March 29 1877, p.194)

Lagardie had in fact contrasted Daudet's reflection in Fromont Jeune of some of the true aspects of Parisian life with the fantasies promulgated by the majority of novelists.⁷ James omits all reference to Daudet, allowing the reader to apply his generalisation to all contemporary French novels. The inference is intended. For James at this period the realists' novels seemed as restricted by their own conventions as those of lesser talents:

A little school that dislikes every other school, but is extremely active and industrious within its own circle, is an excellent engine for the production of limited perfection, and French literature abounds in books in which particular tendencies have been pushed to lengths which only a sort of artistic conspiracy of many minds could have reached, but which seem like mere blind alleys of thought (NYT, February 5 1876; PS, pp.55-6)

James himself sought Europe's clearly-defined social mores as the explanatory backdrop to moral drama, a means of expressing and defining character in the manner of Balzac or the Théâtre Français, where details of gesture and costume epitomise personalities and relationships.⁸ Both the fashionable novelists' deft manipulation of surface and the realists' aesthetic contemplation of misery were for James distortions of this subtle interaction of character and circumstance, the balance between morality and the picturesque. James soon learnt to appreciate the realists' 'close representation' ('Pierre Loti', ELE, p.164), though he remained critical of their limited subject-matter. His reduction of their method to mere convention here is the result of an emotional revulsion from their explicitness, a revulsion which he was already learning to rationalise more coherently.

Unable to espouse the work of either contemporary school of novelists, James continued to identify with the creative and critical precepts of the previous generation, at the same time seeking a means of coming to terms critically with the 'sons of Balzac'. At the time of his move to Europe he published in the Galaxy a series of articles on French literature which formed the basis for French Poets and Novelists. They are fascinating documents, showing a complex mixture - often a confusion - of critical criteria which amply refutes both those who would argue that James had dismissed the French novel before he left America and those who would make him already a Naturalist.⁹ They reflect, for example, the influence of three critical voices: those of Sainte-Beuve, Taine and the shrill moralism of much English and American periodical criticism, and the ill-assorted mixture suggests how difficult James found it to establish consistent criteria for his reactions to current French literature.

Sainte-Beuve's voice pervades the Galaxy essays and French Poets and Novelists itself, and continued to be most instrumental in defining James's critical position. James's choice of subject in the essays on Madame de Sabran and the Ampères emphasises his allegiance to 'the very genius of observation, discretion and taste', and though James fails in the other articles to maintain Sainte-Beuve's tone of urbane sympathy, the French critic's point of view is dominant.¹⁰ James and Sainte-Beuve shared idealist preconceptions about human nature and a belief in art's inclusive and essentially consolatory and ameliorative role. Such beliefs can result in Grundyesque criticism, as in both Sainte-Beuve's and James's strictures on Baudelaire where both are in fact objecting, albeit mistakenly, to an 'art for art' attitude which seems to deny the moral responsibility incurred by its choice of

subject:

His great quality was an inordinate cultivation of the sense of the picturesque, and his care was for how things looked, and whether some kind of imaginative amusement was not to be got out of them, much more than for what they meant and whither they led and what was their use in human life at large. (FPN, p.74)

James echoes Sainte-Beuve's rather less strident and more sympathetic doubts:

Et vous avez pris l'enfer, vous vous êtes fait diable; vous avez voulu arracher leurs secrets aux démons de la nuit. En faisant cela avec subtilité, avec raffinement, avec un talent curieux et un abandon quasi précieux d'expression, en perlant le détail, en pétrarquisant sur l'horrible, vous avez l'air de vous être joué; Cette tristesse particulière qui ressort de vos pages et où je reconnais le dernier symptôme d'une génération malade, dont les aînés nous sont très-connus, est aussi ce qui vous sera compté.¹¹

Sainte-Beuve urges Baudelaire to cultivate 'l'ange' as well as 'la brute'. He nowhere suggests, as does James, that ugliness is an unfit subject for art, or describes Baudelaire as 'staring very hard at a mass of things from which, more intelligently, we avert our heads' (FPN, p.83).

James and Sainte-Beuve bring the same general criteria to bear on the Goncourts, appreciating their powers of perception but objecting to the objects of those perceptions as limited distortions of reality:

'Soeur Philomène', as a piece of writing and of visual observation is 'a masterpiece; refinement of observation, an unerring scent for the curious and morbid, can hardly go further. . . . The sense of the picturesque has somehow killed the spiritual sense; the moral side of the work is dry and thin. ('Minor French Novelists', LRE, p.162)

And Sainte-Beuve, reviewing Idées et Sensations:

Ils ne craignent pas la crudité quand il le faut. Très-bien, passe encore! Mais ne la recherchent-ils point parfois? N'isolent-ils point comme à plaisir ce qui est extrême et pénible dans l'impression causée, ce qui est exclusivement vrai d'une vérité triste, nue, affreuse? Ne forcent-ils pas le réel en le découpant de la sorte? Ne lui donnent-ils pas un relief sans accompagnement ni contre-partie? (NL, X, 401)

Behind these objections lies the critical premise that James was to express best in 'The Art of Fiction': 'the essence of moral energy is to survey the whole field' (PP, p.406), but by 1884 he was prepared to allow the novelist to define the field itself, retaining his Sainte-Beuvian principles in the plea that it be 'none but the richest'. In 1888 his idealism is again apparent when he identifies himself with 'the optimists of the hour, the writers for whom the life of the soul is equally real and visible', but he appreciates the different achievement of Maupassant or Loti ('Pierre Loti', ELE, p.192). We see the early tension between objectivity and prescription in the two concepts of truth in a work of art which are present here. In 1876 James imported his own preconceptions about the nature of reality into his criticism of works with a quite different view, expecting them to conform. By the 80's he had learnt from the French that truth is a relative term dependent on the intensity of the illusion created, though he remains a moralist rather than an aesthete by relating the quality of the work to the quality of mind of the producer.

James's creative artist's response to Madame Bovary was in fact moving him tentatively towards his later position even in 1876. Sainte-Beuve expressed his doubts about the novel in exactly the terms he had used of the Goncourts:

Cependant, l'office de l'art est-il de ne vouloir pas

consoler, de ne vouloir admettre aucun élément de clémence et de douceur, sous couleur d'être plus vrai? La vérité d'ailleurs, à ne chercher qu'elle, elle n'est pas tout entière et nécessairement du côté du mal, du côté de la sottise et de la perversité humaine. (CL, XIII, 296)

James, however, in the essay in which he objected so strongly to the Goncourts' material, praises Madame Bovary in spite^{of} it being difficult to conceive of anything 'drearier, more sordid, more vulgar and desolate than the greater part of the subject-matter of this romance' (FPN, p.259). His praise is equivocal, but he finds it impossible to dismiss the novel as either distorted in its 'reality' or superficial in its emotional response:

The accumulation of detail is so immense, the vividness of portraiture of people, of places, of times and hours, is so poignant and convincing, that one is dragged into the very current and tissue of the story; the reader himself seems to have lived in it all, more than in any novel we can recall. At the end the intensity of illusion becomes horrible; overwhelmed with disgust and pity he closes the book. (FPN, pp.262-3)¹²

The critic's vocabulary is not yet keeping pace with the novelist's accurate powers of discrimination. In recognising the Goncourts' inferiority to Flaubert James is judging by the internal success of their novels, treatment not subject is his concern, and he diagnoses beautifully the uneasy discrepancy between the Goncourts' fastidious, mannered artistry and their material: 'there is something ineffably odd in seeing these elegant erudites bring their highly complex and artificial method - the fruit of culture, and leisure, and luxury - to bear upon the crudities and maladies of life, and pick out choice morsels of available misery upon their gold pen-points' (LRE, pp.158-9). But instead of pursuing this internal imbalance (as he did later in the essay of 1888 on their

Journal¹³) James resorts to the uncritical revulsion of cheap moralism.

James differs most obviously from Sainte-Beuve in tone. He is censorious and definitive where Sainte-Beuve gently suggests reasons for the weaknesses he detects. As we saw in the last chapter, James was learning to modify his critical approach in order to characterise more accurately each individual artist, but this is undermined by a tendency to reduce most French writers to sets of recurrent formulae so that, for example, both Baudelaire and the Goncourts are explained in terms of the picturesque/morality opposition, implicit in which is the discrepancy between method and matter so common in James's writing on French literature. Compromise, the search for a mean between various sets of posited antitheses, is a constant feature of James's critical method, underlying his examination of the inclusive fertility of the novel form in the later essays. Here, in the early criticism, he leaves room for himself as novelist by suggesting the limitations of others' approaches. I have already looked at the review of Taine's Notes sur l'Angleterre where James differentiates between the English imagination's 'moral leaven' and the French 'lively aesthetic conscience' (LRE, p.58). Though he rejected Taine's dogmatic theory, James was influenced by his formulaic method, which he described, in Sainte-Beuve's phrase, as showing 'an inordinate haste to conclude' (review of the English Literature, LRE, p.65).¹⁴ There is a similar eagerness to deal definitively with schools and methods in James's criticism of the 70's.

It is interesting that James should turn to Taine as he hovered on the brink of his most overtly realist period as both critic and artist. Taine's influence was transient, however - a matter of specific points and details of vocabulary rather than

the pervasive point of view James shared with Sainte-Beuve - and James responded to his psychological methods rather than to his sociological theory, a measure of the distance between James and his French contemporaries who sought to illustrate the 'prophet of Naturalism's' historical determinism. In French Poets and Novelists James uses Taine very closely in his essay on Balzac, slightly less so in the essay on George Sand.¹⁵ Sainte-Beuve was the empirical critic, the causeur who taught James to assess an author by response to a temperament; from Taine James learnt to explain a writer's work through the dominant aspects of that temperament, which then become leitmotifs around which the critical essay is organised. In Balzac's case he adopts Taine's concept of Balzac as shopkeeper; in George Sand's the importance of her life rather than her art. The method is somewhat crudely assimilated in French Poets and Novelists but it was later subtilised into the Jamesian 'case' where psychological and aesthetic motifs merge so that in Notes on Novelists, for example, the principle of unbounded energy is used to explain both Balzac and his works and George Sand's quality of style is extended from the works to the woman herself. Flaubert once complained to George Sand that 'du temps de Sainte-Beuve et de Taine, on est historien. Quand sera-t-on artiste, rien qu'artiste, mais bien artiste? Où connaissez-vous une critique? qui s'inquiète de l'oeuvre en soi, d'une façon intense?'.¹⁶ James took an overview of a writer's life and work rather than subjecting works to detailed analysis and he remained firmly within the critical tradition of Sainte-Beuve and Taine; it is in his novels, and the Prefaces which explain them, that he implicitly fulfils the Flaubertian critical ideal.

Taine's 'haste to conclude' was attractive to James at a time when his view of French realism was still insecure. As I

have suggested, that insecurity was the result of James's mixed response of aesthetic appreciation and emotional revulsion, an ambivalent reaction to French culture in general which he never lost. The disturbing actuality of realist subject-matter presented James's theories of freedom of subject and individual point of view, which he had been developing during his critical apprenticeship, with a challenge they were initially slow to meet. In the criticism of the 70's the coherent moral realism with which James eventually circumvented the French lions in his path jostles with a tendency to resort to unthinking idées reçues about French dirtiness and pessimism. Much critical capital has been made of the 'prudish distaste' with which James dealt with French contemporaries ever since William Dean Howells, in his review of French Poets and Novelists, recognised James's unease, his 'not altogether pleasant jocularity in the treatment of those dubious relations between men and women which the themes selected naturally involve'.¹⁷ This was a time when Balzac's reputation was not yet firmly established in England, in spite of G.H. Lewes's efforts in the Westminster Review, when George Sand was widely considered socially and morally subversive, and when George Saintsbury, one of the most discerning English advocates of French literature, felt obliged to establish or discuss the morality of his subjects and in 1888 cited Droz, Cherbuliez and Feuillet alongside Flaubert as the 'chief French novelists of the century'.¹⁸ James indulged his own squeamishness by pandering to his readers' assumptions about corrupt French novels, adopting a condescending tone which invites the reader's dismissive collusion. He compromises his critical standards when, for example, reviewing Edmond de Goncourt's La Fille Elisa, he sums up the subject of the novel and that of Zola's L'Assommoir with cheap sarcasm: 'the adventures of M. de Goncourt's heroine

(a prostitute who murders a soldier) may after all be as widely disseminated as those of the fair protagonist of "L'Assommoir", the washerwoman who dies of drink' (Na, May 10 1877; LRE, p.164). The tone says more about the Nation and its readership than about James's view of Naturalism (about the same time he had written to Perry of L'Assommoir, 'it is worth it if your stomach can stand it' [Harlow, p.295]), but when James dismisses Edmond de Goncourt as 'intolerably unclean' (LRE, p.165) he has effectively crossed the line from Sainte-Beuvian conservatism to Mrs. Grundy.

But it is uninteresting and unfruitful to dwell on James's prudishness, except to note it as one occasionally distorting aspect of that far broader and more important moralism which is present in James's critical approach from the beginning and was only slightly modified by his experience of the French novel. In the criticism of the 70's prudery is accompanied always by attempts to expand critical assumptions about what morality in a work of art involves: in the essay on Flaubert James states that, 'Every out-and-out realist who provokes serious meditation may claim that he is a moralist' (FPN, p.256); and even the review of La Fille Elisa contains an endorsement of Edmond de Goncourt's defiant preface: 'it is an unwarrantable pretension on the part of certain critics to forbid the school of novelists to which he belongs . . . to write anything but what may be read by young ladies in railway trains' (LRE, p.165). In French Poets and Novelists (in which James reprinted hardly any of the narrow moralism of some of his Nation reviews) the problem is partly one of terminology. 'Moral' is made to do too much work. It has to cover an area of purely aesthetic comment, as in the Galaxy essay 'The London Theatres': 'The only immorality I know on the stage is the production of an ill-made play' (Galaxy, May 1877; SA, p.108);

to describe the quality lacking in, for example, Baudelaire's verse where its association with epithets like 'unclean' and 'ignoble' implies a narrowness James did not intend (FPN, pp.80-3); and it is used as a label for the area of consciousness which most interested James and which, rightly or wrongly, he found lacking in many of the French novelists throughout his career.

For James the supreme concern of the novel was moral realism, as it has been defined by Lionel Trilling: 'not the awareness of morality itself but of the contradictions, paradoxes and dangers of living the moral life'.¹⁹ In the essay on Charles de Bernard James makes an explicit distinction between morality and narrow moralism:

. . . the reason why this clever man remains so persistently second-rate is, to our sense, because he had no morality. By this of course we do not mean that he did not choose to write didactic tales, winding up with a goody lecture and a distribution of prizes and punishments. We mean that he had no moral emotion, no preferences, no instincts - no moral imagination, in a word. (FPN, p.250)

'Moral imagination': the 'quality of the mind of the producer' which James looked for in the way writers developed their chosen subjects. Mere realism was insufficient and we can see clearly here the relevance of James's objections to the way the French realists seemed to him to stop short at the external, 'picturesque' aspects of experience. Mere documents humains are but the beginning of the novel's more important function which is to explore reactions and responses to physical events, having noted facts like money and sex, 'to make us forget that anything so odious exists' ('Honoré de Balzac, 1902', NN, p.95), Art evaluates as well as merely documenting experience and absolute objectivity is as wrong as didacticism. Morality is thus inextricably linked for James with

his presuppositions about the novel's function. His American idealism remained intact, and ultimately point of view became his means of solving the problem of combining breadth, sympathy and judgment.

In 1883 James described French Poets and Novelists to Grace Norton as 'full of faults and errors'.²⁰ Like many critics since he was too harsh. The volume suffers occasionally from a strident prescriptive tone, the result of James's self-conscious adoption of the roles of creative artist and eclectic American critic. He is keen to assert his individuality by seeming to have fully assimilated his French subjects, but this makes his conclusions forthright and challenging in a way the gentler - even, sometimes, whimsical - tolerance of Notes on Novelists can never be. In the later criticism, however, he achieves a more complete amalgamation of his roles as creative artist and as 'the inquirer, the interpreter, the taker of notes, the active, restless commentator' ('S-B', p.306). As I examine James's relationship with individual novelists, I shall be considering his developing critical method, his increasingly complex view of morality and the way in which he came to terms with his immediate contemporaries. In 1899 James acknowledged that those who care for 'the things of the mind . . . have all owed so much to the France of the past fifty years' ('The Present Literary Situation in France', NAR, October 1899, p.489). Throughout his criticism of the French novel James was both using and paying tribute to his subjects, both acknowledging debts and asserting his independence as he sought ways beyond and away from the sons of Balzac.

French Poets and Novelists: Balzac, Sand and Turgenev

For George Sand in her introduction to the 1855 edition

of Balzac's Scènes de la Vie Privée, Balzac 'avait presque trouvé' . . . la solution d'un problème presque inconnu avant lui, la réalité complète dans la complète fiction'.²¹ James shares with all other nineteenth-century realists a complete debt to the technical revelation of the Comédie Humaine, and from his earliest reviews Balzac's method is used as a critical yardstick.²² James was among the first critics to describe Balzac's all-important love of reality, and like many commentators after him he emphasises 'la réalité complète', Balzac's overwhelming wealth of detail, at the expense of 'la complète fiction', his Dickensian romanticism. The balance is redressed somewhat in the late essays, but in French Poets and Novelists James allows his identification of Balzac as the epitome of realist method to distort his judgment of those exuberant and exaggerated aspects of his art which seem anomalous in one for whom 'the real . . . had an authority that it has never had for any other' (FPN, p.148).

Let me say immediately that this 1875 essay is nevertheless fine criticism. James's prose reflects the energy which for him characterises Balzac's genius, making the article infectiously exciting. Vividly active verbs and accumulations of epithet and detail create the atmosphere of breathless industry in which the Comédie Humaine was written:

Portraits shape themselves under his pen as if in obedience to an irresistible force; while the effort with most writers is to collect the material - to secure the model - the effort with Balzac is to disintegrate his visions, to accept only one candidate in the dozen. And it is not only that his figures are so definite, but that they are so plausible, so real, so characteristic, so recognisable. The fertility of his imagination in this respect was something marvellous. When we think of the many hundred complete human creatures (he calls the number at least two thousand)

whom he sets in motion, with their sharp differences, their histories, their money-matters, their allotted places in his great machine, we give up the attempt to gauge such a lusty energy of fancy. (FPN, pp.124-5)

Typically here, James's enthusiasm is for Balzac's characterisation, his ability to project himself completely into his characters so that they are set free in the tale, hampered by no moral scheme, and throughout the essay James expresses his wondering admiration for Balzac's dense web, his 'great edifice' which 'becomes an organic whole; it moves together; it has a pervasive life; the blood circulates through it; its parts are connected by sinuous arteries' (FPN, pp.96, 100, 102). But James is not blinded by his enthusiasm. Indeed, his assimilation of Balzac's general lesson - that constant attention to detail is the means to successful presentation of character as well as social milieu - made him particularly sensitive to the details of that method as practised by Balzac himself. James is good, for example, on the oddly claustrophobic effect of a fictive world which is so entirely self-contained and exhaustively explained. He attributes this to Balzac's undivided interest in facts and illustrates it by a revealing comparison with Shakespeare:

. . . Shakespeare's characters stand out in the open air of the universe, while Balzac's are enclosed in a peculiar artificial atmosphere, musty in quality and limited in amount, which persuades itself with a sublime sincerity that it is a very sufficient infinite. (FPN, p.150)

Perhaps the most important insight of the essay is James's constant awareness of Balzac's instinctive preference for the 'picturesque' as material for fiction: 'He believed . . . that human life was infinitely dramatic and picturesque, and that he possessed an incomparable analytic perception of the fact. His other convictions

were all derived from this and humbly danced attendance upon it' (FPN, p.109). James's successful characterisation of Balzac's important qualities makes this study one of the best he wrote, in spite of the prescriptive judgments which intrude upon its accuracy.

James's perception of the nature of the picturesque in Balzac is problematic. He is clearly responding to Balzac's subordination of facts to his own idiosyncratic vision, to the amount of work a character like Vautrin is made to do, a survivor from the romantic novel of Dumas and Hugo, yet he seems to see no discrepancy between his emphasis on Balzac as realist and these romantic techniques. He registers a certain unease in his complaint that Balzac's aristocrats are far less credible than his other portraits, but he has clearly taken at face value Balzac's claim to 'faire concurrence à l'État-Civil'.²³ The portraits of aristocrats are censured according to mimetic criteria rather than recognised as exaggerated satirical types, as they are in Notes on Novelists, where exactly the incident to which James objected in French Poets and Novelists is praised as an example of Balzac's supreme power of 'doing': in 1875 Madame d'Espard and Madame de Bargeton of Les Illusions Perdues 'really seem at times to be the creatures of the dreams of an ambitious hairdresser who should have been plying his curling-irons all day and reading fashionable novels all the evening' (FPN, p.145); in 1902 their rejection of Lucien de Rubempré is 'either a magnificent lurid document or the baseless fabric of a vision. The great wonder is that, as I rejoice to put it, we can never really discover which . . . all we can do is to say that the true itself can't be more than done and that if the false in this way equals it we must give up looking for the difference' (NN, p.111). In the early essay Balzac is classed as a realist and therefore judged as a realist; James's insights into

the nature of his art are accurate but his judgments of it are distorted by preconceptions. We have already seen how James's own conservatism sought a Balzacian, or at least a literary, version of European society, equating that kind of picturesqueness with actuality, and if his claim in the preface to The American is true - 'I must decidedly have supposed, all the while, that I was acutely observing' (AN, p.26) - then that novel clearly illustrates the confusion which led James to confound Balzac the romantic with Balzac the realist.

It is interesting to compare James's assessment of Balzac with Zola's view in Les Romanciers Naturalistes. Zola, advocating that more extreme form of realism defined by the art of Flaubert, emphasises in contrast Balzac's exaggeration: 'jamais il ne se débarassa tout à fait de son amour des aventures extraordinaires, ce qui donne à une bonne moitié de ses oeuvres l'air d'un rêve énorme fait tout haut par un homme éveillé'; 'Ce qui tiraille presque toujours les romans de Balzac, c'est le grossissement de ses héros'.²⁴ James, seeking to modify realism's more extreme manifestations, uses Balzac as the realist element in the implicit real/ideal opposition of French Poets and Novelists, in which George Sand represents the ideal and Turgenev the solution of compromise. When James criticises Balzac's cynicism, his confusion of moral and aesthetic criteria in choosing the human actions and social systems which offered the most picturesque fictional possibilities, he is accusing him of that imbalance between external and internal experience which, according to the other articles in the Galaxy series, is also a feature of the novels of Flaubert, Daudet and the Goncourts - of French realism in general, in fact.

A magnificent action with him is not an action which is remarkable for its high motive, but an action with

a great force of will or of desire behind it, which throws it into striking and monumental relief. (FPN, p. 117)

Of what is to be properly called religious feeling we do not remember a suggestion in all his many pages; on the other hand, the reader constantly encounters the handsomest compliments to the Catholic Church as a social régime. A hierarchy is as much more picturesque than a 'congregational society' as a mountain is than a plain. (FPN, pp.109-10)

The difference between this and James's judgment that in the work of the Goncourts the 'sense of the picturesque has somehow killed the spiritual sense' (LRE, p.162), is a matter of tone only; in both cases James is objecting to a method which reduces human beings to the status of things in the interests of accurate detail and dramatic success. Balzac is 'always corrupt', as James seeks to prove throughout the essay, because of his preference for the picturesque over everything else, his emphasis on the physical details and material trappings of existence, which makes the 'moral, the intellectual atmosphere of his genius . . . extraordinarily gross and turbid' (FPN, pp.97, 113).

In George Sand James found the opposite emphasis: 'In saying that George Sand lacks truth the critic more particularly means that she lacks exactitude - lacks the method of truth. Of a certain general truthfulness she is full to overflowing; we feel that to her mind nothing human is alien' (FPN, p.234). In Balzac's 'gross and turbid' genius, on the other hand, 'the flower of truth does not bloom' in spite of his exactitude. George Sand's 'great mind, curious about all things, open to all things, nobly accessible to experience' (FPN, p.216) enables her to deal with the subtle emotions and complex passions which Balzac ignored as not susceptible to graphic or dramatic presentation. In one of his earliest reviews, James recommended George Sand's ability to

convey passion and passionate conviction, the strength of ideas (review of Felix Holt, N&R, pp.203-4), and in 1868 this is made the basis of an important comparison between her art and that of Balzac:

The writer who has amply illustrated the passion of love has, by implication, thrown a great deal of light on the rest of our nature. In the same way the writer who has signally failed to achieve an adequate conception of this vast object, must be said to remain an incomplete and partial witness. This is the case with Balzac, in so many respects Madame Sand's superior, and who is never to be considered slighted by any praise bestowed upon his comrade. Balzac's merits form a very long story, and he is not to be dealt with in a parenthesis. An intelligent reader of both authors will, at times, be harassed with the feeling that it behooves him to choose between them and take up his stand with the one against the other. But, in fact, they are not mutually inimical, and the wise reader, we think, will take refuge in the reflection that choosing is an idle business, inasmuch as we possess them both. Balzac, we may say, if the distinction is not too technical, is a novelist, and George Sand a romancer. There is no reason why they should not subsist in harmony. (review of Mlle. Merquem, Na, July 16 1868; LRE, p.127)

I have quoted this passage at length to illustrate just how integral was James's eclecticism from the beginning, in spite of those critics who would claim that his sympathies were primarily with one particular method.²⁵ The schematic separation of novel and romance in this early review gives way to a search for means of fusing the two in the criticism of the 70's.

James always made a clear distinction between the specific ideas which George Sand embodied didactically in her novels and the 'general truthfulness' which involved a receptiveness to the

power of ideas but was much more a matter of tone and characterisation. In his obituary notice for the New York Tribune in 1876, James disagreed with Renan's famous description of George Sand as 'la harpe éolienne de notre temps', playing down her reflection of various Romantic ideologies - to which Renan obviously referred - in order to argue that a writer with so little care for factual accuracy can hardly be described as the echo of the age. Her novels lack 'three or four qualities which the realistic novel . . . has taught us to consider indispensable. They are not exact or probable; they contain few living figures; they produce a limited amount of illusion' (NYT, July 22 1876; LRE, pp.132-3, 135). Both James and Renan were right. As James predicted, George Sand is no longer read except as a romantic curiosity, yet her present reputation rests on the way she reflected in fiction the various preoccupations of French romanticism. Didacticism was always abhorrent to James for potentially distorting a novelist's vision. He objects to it in George Sand's novels, finding her 'philosophical and didactic pretensions' 'somewhat vain' (review of Mlle. Merquem, LRE, p.123), but his criticism is muted by the recognition that in her case it is an inextricable part of the temperament he found so attractive, the great mind open to all kinds of experience.

In terms of technique, it is surely George Sand's internalised treatment of character, her detailed analysis of emotional states and the central importance of emotional confrontations in her novels, which made her so attractive to James. One thinks, for example, of Jacques where the epistolary method effectively sets up several points of view to examine the central relationship and where suspense is generated around the nature and effects of Jacques's personality; or of the fluent ease of George Sand's analysis of Consuelo's developing reactions to her relationship

with Comte Albert. In George Sand's novels, individuals are untrammelled by society - a view more sympathetic to James than the realist emphasis on society's pressures. Her characters, like her thoughts, seem 'as free as the air of heaven', and though they are shadowy they move to a 'persuasive music' which secures our credence (LRE, pp.125, 135). It is this quality of tone to which James responded with an irrational delight which made George Sand still dear to him even after he recognised her limitations as a novelist. He sums it up loosely when he refers to her 'style', a term he uses only partly to describe her fluency and much more to capture a temperament sensitive and generous towards human nature, idealistic about love and as prepared to make her ideas serve her novels as her novels serve her ideas. James championed George Sand in the face of English moralism because her treatment of adultery and illicit passion depends on other motives than the purely physical. She therefore satisfies his sense of there being more to life than most French novelists seemed to him to imply, and spares him the physicality which offended his fastidious taste.

James's two concepts of fictional truth play through his antithetical use of George Sand and Balzac. In the obituary notice, George Sand's novels were judged and found wanting according to realist criteria of accuracy and intensity of illusion, yet they are not dismissed - the effect of the whole article is to prove that good novels can be written according to different criteria; in French Poets and Novelists Balzac's moral turbidness is compared unfavourably with the 'great consciences and great minds' of Thackeray, George Eliot, George Sand and Turgenev, in whose work the 'flower of truth' blooms (FPN, p.113). The two truths involved are epitomised in each writer's treatment of love. In the comparison between Balzac and George Sand from the review of Mlle. Merquem,

James claims not that Balzac has failed to deal with love at all, but that he has failed to achieve an 'adequate conception' of it. In view of Balzac's presentation of Madame Hulot in La Cousine Bette, or of Eugénie Grandet, we might wonder what James meant, and in French Poets and Novelists he acknowledges that Balzac 'has described ardent love in a thousand forms' (FPN, p.133). But the distinction is between an art which is prepared to analyse mental and emotional states - often according to a preconceived belief in what they involve - and one which commits itself only to feelings which can be inferred from external appearance and action. The former, George Sand's method, perpetuates romantic conventions based on a generalised picture of human nature which the reader must in essence share in order to accept the fiction as 'true'. The realist seeks to prove the 'truth' of his fiction by constant demonstration. When James describes George Sand's 'general truthfulness' he is referring to her confidently sensitive tone which handles all her characters with 'equal sympathy and power' (LRE, p.125), and thus convinces us of their validity, but he is also merely registering his a priori agreement with her general point of view. This point of view didn't change, of course. James continued to demand that the novel deal with areas of experience equivalent to George Sand's 'passion of love' and Balzac remained 'an incomplete and partial witness', but the two kinds of truth are beginning to merge in the criticism of the 70's as James begins increasingly to demand that George Sand's material be demonstrated and lent intensity of illusion through the kind of detailed external observation she eschewed. In the obituary notice, for example, James comments on her 'limited amount of illusion' (LRE, p.135); in French Poets and Novelists we are told that she is like all her sex who 'do not value the truth for its own sake, but only for some personal use

they make of it' (FPN, p.198); and this basic observation informs all James's late writing on George Sand so that in 1899, for example, he comments on her 'want of plastic intensity', arguing that 'the sense of fluidity is fundamentally fatal to the sense of particular truth' (NN, p.152). The article on George Sand in French Poets and Novelists stands at a watershed in James's appreciation of her. The year before, just after the publication of the obituary notice, he had written to William James: 'All desire is dead within me to produce something on George Sand' (Letters, II, 59), and in both the obituary and French Poets and Novelists James admits to finding her novels less and less easy to re-read: 'George Sand invites reperusal less than any mind of equal eminence' (FPN, pp.230-1). During the 70's, however, James continued to use her art as one possible theoretical position with which to modify realism. Then, as he increasingly realised the possibilities of getting both kinds of truth into the same novel, she drops out of his criticism as an example to be followed, and the 1877 article ends with a plea for particular truth:

George Sand's optimism, her idealism, are very beautiful, and the source of that impression of largeness, luminosity and liberality which she makes upon us. 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-colour seem an act of violence. (FPN, p.236)

James leads up to that closing passage with an explanation of why George Sand is not a moralist, and this in spite of her 'general truthfulness':

She was contemplative; but she was not, in the deepest sense, observant. She was a very high order of sentimentalist, but she was not a moralist. She perceived a thousand things, but she rarely in strictness judged (FPN, pp.234-5)

Morality is here linked with accurate observation so that George Sand's shadowy characterisation ('she could not bear not to represent them as better than they were' [FPN, p.235]²⁶) is seen as typical of an 'optimistic' art which avoids judgment. This group of ideas, in which morality is connected with observation and truthful but sympathetic characterisation, is already familiar from James's early criticism, but at least two concepts of morality are still simultaneously present in the opposition of George Sand and Balzac. Since Balzac's great strengths are 'solidity of specification' and a power of portraiture which 'easily distances all competition' (FPN, p.123), one might have expected him to be granted the title of moralist which George Sand fails to achieve. We have already seen, however, that Balzac's imagination was for James 'gross and turbid', a result of his having 'no natural sense of morality'. In this he is contrasted with, among others, George Sand, with novelists who 'care for moral questions; they are haunted by a moral ideal' (FPN, pp.113-4). But George Sand's idealism doesn't make her any more of a moralist than Balzac. There is an element of narrow moralism in James's criticism of both writers, of course. George Sand will live as a romancer rather than as a moralist because she lacked a sense of 'certain differences - the difference between the pure and the impure - the things that are possible for people of a certain delicacy and the things that are not' (LRE, pp.134-5) and James's description of Balzac as 'always corrupt' is typical of that mixture of reasoned criticism and squeamishness which characterises the early judgments of the realists. But over and above the surface moralism James is overworking the term 'moralist' in his search for a satisfactory compromise between real and ideal. In the contrast between Balzac's 'great temperament' and the 'great consciences and great minds' of Thackeray, George Eliot,

Sand and Turgenev, James is in effect using quality of mind as a criterion of critical judgment. So often in the early criticism James is searching for adequate terms to express his observations and ideals. Here, we see the basic real/ideal antithesis, clumsily formulated in ambiguous moral terms, side by side with the emergent theory which will later clarify it:

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 that intelligence is fine will the novel, the picture, the statue partake of the substance of beauty and truth. ('The Art of Fiction', PP, p.406)

James had been familiar with Turgenev's work for a long time before he wrote on him critically, and in view of his later enthusiasm it is perhaps odd that Turgenev's name should not have appeared earlier, along with those of Scott, Balzac, George Eliot and George Sand, as an example for other novelists to follow.²⁷ I suspect this is so because Turgenev attained his full significance for James only during the early 70's, when the pressure of writing a full-length novel was forcing him to define his objections to the methods of his French contemporaries more closely. Both Turgenev's method - an idiosyncratic, perhaps emasculated, realism - and his situation as a voluntary expatriate with an equivocal attitude to his native country were sympathetic to James and helped him to formulate a mode of compromise between real and ideal, form and morality, painters and analysts.

The article on Turgenev in French Poets and Novelists is organised around this concept of compromise, though in the more positive form of 'universal appreciation': 'He seems to us to care

for more things in life, to be solicited on more sides, than any novelist save George Eliot' (FPN, pp.275-6). Turgenev's view of life is 'more general, more impartial, more unreservedly intelligent, than that of any novelist we know' and combines the French sensuous appreciation with 'an apprehension of man's religious impulses . . . never dreamed of in the philosophy of Balzac and Flaubert' (FPN, pp.275, 279). There are constant references to his 'commingled realism and idealism'; to the fact that though he pays tribute to 'the magic of sense he leaves us also eloquently reminded that the soul in the long run claims her own'; and in summing up James concludes that 'no romancer . . . has mingled so much ideal beauty with so much unsparing reality' (FPN, pp.285, 307, 318). The theme is still present, though less central, in the two later articles on Turgenev. In Partial Portraits James uses the framework of reminiscence to consider Turgenev's sympathy with French theory but ultimate freedom from its rigidities, and he talks of being struck afresh with the combination of beauty and reality in his tales, with the fact that he was both observer and poet (PP, p.317). Again, in the essay on Turgenev and Tolstoy which appeared in the Library of the World's Best Literature in 1897 as 'Ivan Turgénieff', the emphasis is on Turgenev as a 'case' demonstrating the inextricability of subject and form, and James talks of the element of poetry which is constant in his work and yet through which reality stares 'without the loss of a wrinkle' (HF, p.174).

What was it that made Turgenev so attractive to James? A complete answer is impossible, but the attraction has, I think, both a positive and a negative aspect. James Joyce once wrote to Stanislaus of Turgenev, 'I think many admire him because he is "gentlemanly"',²⁸ and it is surely the refined, acceptable face of realism which drew James to the Russian. We saw earlier that

James's conservatism encouraged him to take refuge from the disturbing art of the realists in the conventions of the Second Empire novelists. His fondness for Turgenev has something of the same defensive quality. James was attracted by an art which seemed to offer a searching criticism of society, but without confronting its physical manifestations or attributing them to absolute human weakness. He preferred this intellectual analysis in which reader and author are protected by 'taste' and irony, to the shock strategies of realism which break down those protective stances. There is a safeness about Turgenev's novels which attracted James but which can sometimes mean that we leave them vaguely disappointed, in spite of their psychological penetration and deeply moving details (Elena's letter at the end of On the Eve, our last glimpse of Lavretsky in Nest of Noblemen). Everything seems to be held at arm's length and fully accounted for; recurrent types and the rather too transparent principle of contrast between characters give the overall sense of a predetermined moral drama.²⁹ Turgenev's habit of explaining his characters' destinies in an epilogue is typical. This tying up of ends can be powerfully elegiac as in Nest of Noblemen; it can also suggest a neatly completed parable, and the gratuitous prolongation of irony undermines the freedom of both characters and reader. A mixture of personal revulsion from explicit physicality and the critical realisation that explicitness has a very limited effect made James ready to admire, even over-estimate, Turgenev's distancing technique of comparative understatement. He was also, of course, eager to espouse a novelist whose concerns were largely moral and psychological.

Turgenev practised Trilling's moral realism in his capacity, as Isaiah Berlin has described it, 'for rendering the very multiplicity of inter-penetrating human perspectives that shade

imperceptibly into each other, nuances of character and behaviour, motives and attitudes, undistorted by moral passion'.³⁰ The positive side of James's attraction was to Turgenev as creator of character, to his penetrating analysis of mental and moral states, a 'general truthfulness' served and created by particular accuracy. I have already dealt in the last chapter with the main emphases, including characterisation, in James's article of 1874 and specific parallels of technique and character types have been fairly fully discussed by other critics.³¹ I want to concentrate here on the way in which, in his novels and in discussion, Turgenev clarified for James the problem of morality which dogs French Poets and Novelists. The discussion will inevitably take us beyond that volume into the criticism of the 80's and Partial Portraits.

At the end of the article in French Poets and Novelists, after his sensitive discussion of Turgenev's novels, James suddenly and incongruously objects to his pessimism:

. . . we hold to the good old belief that the presumption, in life, is in favour 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. (FPN, p.317)

James has in fact just made a valid critical distinction between 'spontaneous' and 'wanton' melancholy in Turgenev. In the former, 'the problem, the question, the idea' in a sad story strikes him; in the latter 'it is simply the picture'. But the prescriptive tone belies the seriousness of the observation he is making and effectively subjects Turgenev to James's indiscriminating prejudice against realism as 'pessimistic'. James's observation that Turgenev's weakness is 'a tendency to the abuse of irony' (FPN, p.319) is right, but because such abuse results in manipulative art, not because of any presumptions in favour of cheerfulness. Personal

predilections and literary criteria jostle clumsily here resulting in critical confusions which James's contact with the French realists, refracted through Turgenev himself, helped to solve. James gradually lost his prescriptive tone as he acknowledged the possibility of different realities - 'may not people differ infinitely as to what constitutes life' ('Alphonse Daudet', PP, p.228) - but avoided the amorality of complete relativism by holding on to one of Turgenev's earliest lessons: 'He believes the intrinsic value of "subject" in art; he holds that there are trivial subjects and serious ones, that the latter are much the best' (FPN, p.277). Had he remembered that, James might have resolved rather more neatly his distinction between spontaneous and wanton melancholy.

The intrinsic value of subject is a theme which recurs in James's criticism of Turgenev until the extended testimony to Turgenev's example in the preface to The Portrait of a Lady:

It was impossible after that not to read, for one's uses, high lucidity into the tormented and disfigured and bemuddled question of the objective value, and even quite into that of the critical appreciation, of 'subject' in the novel.

One had from an early time, for that matter, the instinct of the right estimate of such values and of its reducing to the inane the dull dispute over the 'immoral' subject and the moral. Recognising 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? - I had found small edification, mostly, in a critical pretension that had neglected from the first all delimitation of ground and all definition of terms. . . . There is, I think, no more nutritive or suggestive truth in this connexion 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. (AN, pp.44-5)

The ground has shifted slightly since French Poets and Novelists in that now the value of subject is divided between the subject itself and the quality of the mind employing it. James learnt thus to avoid both the moralistic preconception that certain subjects are intrinsically 'immoral', and the French emphasis on execution alone. James's discussions with Turgenev helped him to formalise his search for compromise. 'Valid', 'genuine', 'sincere', are terms of moral as well as aesthetic evaluation, and the 'critical pretension' that neglects to delimit and define terms could refer equally to a moralistic or an 'art for art' point of view.

James's preference for Turgenev as a man over the Flaubert cénacle, expressed in letters home during 1876, is well known: 'I can't stand, or understand, his consorting so with the little rabble of Flaubert's satellites, fellows not worthy to unlace his shoe-ties'; 'Tourguéneff is worth the whole heap of them, and yet he himself swallows them down in a manner that excites my extreme wonder' (Letters, II, 29, 52). In discussion with Turgenev, he found that he was similarly critical of the realists, though less virulently so than James, and there is a revealing letter of 1877 from Turgenev to James, discussing Zola's L'Assommoir: 'L'"Assommoir" n'est pas non plus une oeuvre immorale - mais diablement sale. - Malgré tout le talent que Zola y déploie - ce livre ne pourra avoir aucun succès, hors de France'.³² Turgenev seems to be replying to a comment of James's describing the novel as immoral and helping to define for him the difference between immorality and dirt, but the reply reveals that Turgenev's response to the French, though more clearly defined than James's, is similarly mixed. Turgenev and James had reading background as well as the cosmopolitan outlook of expatriates in common. Turgenev read widely in English and, significantly, had at one time shared James's enthusiasm for

George Sand. James is wrong when he claims in Partial Portraits that Turgenev never read her novels (PP, p.301); this was true when James knew him, but Turgenev had once recognised her as his 'master' and said he owed to her 'that incomplete truth which has found, and will always find, followers, at an age when the whole truth is still out of reach'.³³ The modified realism and sceptical attitude towards Naturalism which James and Turgenev share must owe something to their common admiration for 'the head and front of the old romantic tradition' (PP, p.301).

We can see just how far Turgenev influenced James's judgments of the realists by comparing comments from the criticism of the 80's with Turgenev's views. There are particularly important parallels between their opinions of Zola and the Goncourts. Turgenev wrote to Flaubert in 1879: 'No, Nana is not having any success, and yet two really charming chapters appeared a few days ago. But viewed as a whole it's dull and, what Zola would mind more, it's not the least simple and fearfully tendenz'; four years earlier he had written to the Russian satirist Saltykov of Zola and Edmond de Goncourt: 'It is not talent that they lack, especially Zola; but they are not on the right track, and their imagination runs away with them. Their work reeks of the lamp. There lies its defect'.³⁴ We might compare James on Nana as 'inconceivably and inordinately dull' and on its 'extraordinary absence of humour, the dryness, the solemnity, the air of tension and effort' (Parisian, February 26 1880; HF, pp.274, 279); and on the Goncourts' Journal as 'a proof the more of their concentration, of their having drawn breath only in the world of subject and form' (ELE, p.204).³⁵ James's often-repeated dislike of the French tendency to construct systems and formulae is echoed in the definitions Turgenev drew up late in life, describing the Latin races as hommes de la loi

compared with the Russians, hommes de l'humanité.³⁶

This emphasis on cloistered 'cleverness' at the expense of a broader sense of life, on palpable design in the interests of making a technical point, is the substance of the distinction James makes between Turgenev and the French in the Partial Portraits essay. James's approach to the question of art and morality is far clearer than in French Poets and Novelists and shows understanding of the French writers' aims. But James's tone suggests objective distance rather than commitment: 'It would have been late in the day to propose among them any discussion of the relation of art to morality' (PP, p.302). He does justice to Turgenev's sympathy with the French position - 'he could not quite see what was meant by the talk about novels being moral or the reverse', (PP, p.303) - but shows him finally to be beyond their narrow concern with technique; he is not 'bound by mere neatness of formula' and his tales themselves are called as witness to what he thought of the relationship between art and life:

The immense variety of life was ever present to his mind, and he would never have argued the question I have just hinted at [i.e. of the art/morality relationship] in the interest of particular liberties - the liberties that were apparently the dearest to his French confrères. It was this air he carried about with him of feeling all the variety of life, of knowing strange and far-off things, of having an horizon in which the Parisian horizon - so familiar, so wanting in mystery, so perpetually exploité - easily lost itself, that distinguished him from these companions. (PP, pp.303-4)

Turgenev's quality of mind, his ability to 'survey the whole field', means that he transcends the narrow basis of French discussions to affirm the vital responsibility of art to life.

James possibly overestimated Turgenev, but did he misjudge

him completely, as some critics have claimed, by reading his own aims into the Russian's work and concentrating on moral rather than political interests?³⁷ On the contrary, similarities of artistic and philosophical outlook made James particularly sensitive to Turgenev's aims and methods even before the two had met and James had heard Turgenev explain how he began with a group of figures and a potential relationship. In French Poets and Novelists James had detected that, 'he has no recognition of unembodied ideas; an idea, with him, is such and such an individual' (FPN, p.285), and Turgenev's notebooks confirm the inference.³⁸ Belinsky had convinced Turgenev of art's necessary social commitment, yet as André Mazon has said, 'Tourguénev . . . n'est sociologue que par persuasion'.³⁹ His commitment to life was based on a far broader interpretation of social art than that of the doctrinaire critics who attacked the detachment of Fathers and Children and his novels are most rewardingly approached, as James saw, by way of their objective, sensitive and economic depiction of character. The test case comes with Bazarov in Fathers and Children. Turgenev was disappointed and disillusioned by his countrymen's hostile or, if positive, unsubtle, response to his character; James gets Turgenev right by concentrating on what nihilism means in human terms, responding to the 'very noticeable stroke of art' in Bazarov's 'ever-growing discontentment - a chronic moral irritation, provoked not by the pangs of an old-fashioned conscience, but, naturally enough, by the absence of the agreeable in a world that he has subjected to such exhaustive disintegration' (FPN, p.300).⁴⁰ James understood Turgenev's love for his characters which transcended polemic and meant that he 'felt and understood the opposite sides of life' (FP, p.296); as a fellow liberal he too 'saw tendencies, political attitudes, as functions of human

beings, not human beings as functions of social tendencies',⁴¹ one very strong reason for his objection to what he saw as the imbalance between character and facts in French realism. At the end of the French Poets and Novelists essay there is a fine passage, free from dogmatic prescription, in which James sums up Turgenev's 'philosophy':

But the world as it stands is no illusion, no phantasm, no evil dream of a night; we wake up to it again for ever and ever; we can neither forget it nor deny it nor dispense with it. We can welcome experience as it comes, and give it what it demands, in exchange for something which it is idle to pause to call much or little so long as it contributes to swell the volume of consciousness. In this there is mingled pain and delight, but over the mysterious mixture there hovers a visible rule, that bids us learn to will and seek to understand. (FPN, p.319)

That describes The Portrait of a Lady or The Princess Casamassima quite as accurately as On the Eve or Nest of Noblemen.

In James's novels up to and including The Portrait of a Lady, a Turgenevan moral drama takes place against a fairly static social background, 'picturesque' in a Balzacian sense. James never of course attempted to emulate Balzac's wealth of social and political detail, even in The Princess, but the international theme demands a stable hierarchy, derived as much from literary convention as from actuality, which is easily contrasted with American formlessness. In The Portrait, for example, Isabel confronts her destiny both as an individual and as an American against the 'picturesque' antithesis of carefully defined sets of social assumptions, but she is in no sense their victim, retaining the ultimate power of moral choice. The moral compromise achieved by Isabel is exactly analogous to the critical compromise

between Europe and America, real and ideal, which James was forging, and the schematisation to which writers are occasionally subjected in French Poets and Novelists is present in the novels, though largely mitigated by the complex actuality of character.

In spite of the schematic overlay, however, the insights in the essays on Balzac, George Sand and Turgenev from French Poets and Novelists are essentially those of all James's later writing on these novelists. Emphases differ somewhat - we have seen that James understood Balzac's romantic characteristics far more fully in Notes on Novelists than in the early criticism, and George Sand is treated with fond nostalgia in the late criticism rather than as an important novelistic force - but a basic continuity indicates the way in which a particular author tended to epitomise for James a particular set of critical problems, and helps to define the difference in approach between the early and late versions. Balzac's energetic charlatanism reappears in the late essays, subtilised and with a more purely theoretical slant: James's bemused admiration of Balzac's ability to produce novels in such quantities becomes a discussion of the amount of experience needed to fuel art and thus of the power of the imagination (NN, pp. 102-3; LB, pp. 76-7). The unease James felt in French Poets and Novelists at the coexistence of realism and extravagant creation is more clearly defined, and the conflict seen as a reason for Balzac's failure to achieve full classic status:

. . . the reporter, however philosophic, has one law, and the originator, however substantially fed, has another; so that the two laws can with no sort of harmony and congruity make, for the finer sense, a common household. (NN, p.91)

George Sand, approached in French Poets and Novelists by way of her

Histoire de ma Vie and her cavalier attitude towards factual accuracy, becomes in the late essays an example of a different kind of relationship between life and art from that provided by Balzac. The transparency of the relationship between personal experience and art in many of her novels fascinated and worried James, presenting him with the particular moral problem of liking a woman who led such a dubious life, and the general Aspern Papers problem of how much a writer's personal life should be made available to the public. Sand startlingly combined the two by herself presenting her public with the facts of her life. In the late essays James neatly rationalises his reaction by making a virtue of the personality itself. The quality of 'style' which James emphasised in the early essays is extended from the works to George Sand herself and thus the literary manifestation of the personality which James finds so attractive becomes also the means by which that personality is justified to the world:

Of the action of that perfect, that only real preservative in face of other perils George Sand is a wondrous example; but her letters alone suffice to show it, and the style of her letters is no more than the breath of her nature, her so remarkable one, in which expression and aspiration were much the same function. That is what it is really to have style - when you set about performing the act of life.

(NN, p.173)

Balzac was of course a continuous and vital example and influence for James; his return also to George Sand at the end of his career reveals his lasting sympathy with that earlier generation of French novelists, an emotional relationship never really achieved with the work of his contemporaries.

Turgenev is in the later criticism the 'novelists' novelist' (HF, p.170). The realisation in French Poets and Novelists of

'moral meaning giving a sense to form and form giving relief to moral meaning' (FPN, p.282) has become one of the main lessons to be learned from Turgenev's 'case': he is the type of those 'made to bring home to us the happy truth of the unity, in a generous talent, of material and form - of their being inevitable faces of the same medal' (HF, p.171). And Turgenev is contrasted with Tolstoy as an example for other novelists to follow; Tolstoy's 'own case is prodigious, but his example for others dire: disciples not elephantine he can only mislead and betray' (HF, p.171). The emphasis on novelists as practical examples is characteristic. The 'haste to conclude' and tendency to pigeonhole writers in the early criticism reappear later in the more complex form of the Jamesian 'case'; both critical approaches are those of the novelist rather than the professional critic, the novelist seeking his own ideal method and defining for fellow novelists the nature of their chosen form.

Partial Portraits: Daudet and Maupassant

The leitmotif of French Poets and Novelists was James's search for a compromise between his various antithetical constructs, explored mainly in terms of morality. In Partial Portraits it is the concept of a novel as 'a personal, a direct impression of life' ('The Art of Fiction', PP, p.384). Most fully discussed in the 1888 essay on Maupassant, this idea is present in 1883 when, in his essay on Daudet, James defines the aim of the novel as 'to represent life' and points out the scope provided by such a definition: 'For, after all, may not people differ infinitely as to what constitutes life' (PP, pp.227-8). Philip Grover has traced this element of James's theory back to the 'L'art pour L'Art' movement which had its source in Gautier's preface to Mlle. de Maupin,

and it is certainly true that James had much in common at this period with such an inheritor of the Flaubertian mantle as Maupassant.⁴² The whole of Partial Portraits, like James's specific answer to Walter Besant in 'The Art of Fiction', is intended to raise Anglo-Saxon critical awareness by insisting on the novelist's freedom from critical prescription - a characteristically French emphasis. But any change in James's critical position is far less radical than has been suggested by critics eager to prove the decisive influence of the French novelists. James's technical debt to the French is important and fully documented, and the strident moralism has largely disappeared from Partial Portraits, but the 'personal impression of life' is qualified by Arnoldian principles familiar from James's earliest criticism. Recognising always that James's contact with the French - and with Turgenev - clarified many of his ideas, we can best define the characteristics of his particular, eclectic, theory by examining the differences rather than the similarities between it and French realist tenets.

The essays on Daudet and Maupassant illustrate these differences clearly. James approaches the work of both novelists as a manifestation of their particular temperaments. Daudet's style 'is impregnated with southern sunshine, and his talent has the sweetness of a fruit that has grown in the warm, open air. He has the advantage of being a Provençal converted, as it were - of having a southern temperament and a northern reason' (PP, p.211); Maupassant's conviction is clear:

. . . that the first duty of the artist, and the thing that makes him most useful to his fellow-men, is to master his instrument, whatever it may happen to be.

His own is that of the senses, and it is through them alone, or almost alone, that life appeals to him; it is almost alone by their help that he describes it, that he produces brilliant works. (PP, pp.249-50)

In ascribing Daudet's method to his Parisianised Southern background, James owes at least as much to Sainte-Beuve's 'critique naturelle' as to Gautier and Flaubert, and though the reference to mastering one's intellectual instrument recalls James's essay on Gautier of 1873 (FPN, p.41), the critical influences here, as there, are Arnold and Sainte-Beuve rather than Gautier himself.⁴³ James agrees with Maupassant that all the critic has the right to demand of the novelist is to '"Make me something fine in the form that shall suit you best"' (PP, p.245), but he is at the same time always very much aware of the critic's responsibility for evaluation, and his criteria in both essays are the breadth and quality of the temperament and viewpoint under consideration. He is also, of course, using both writers to fight the case for his own creative point of view and the critical approach which results is very different from the descriptive relativism envisaged by Maupassant in the preface to Pierre et Jean:

Il faut que, sans parti pris, sans opinions préconçues, sans idées d'école, sans attaches avec aucune famille d'artistes, il comprenne, distingue et explique toutes les tendances les plus opposées, les tempéraments les plus contraires, et admette les recherches d'art les plus diverses.⁴⁴

Such a completely objective approach would never have conceived of Maupassant as the 'lion in the path' which James feels the need to circumvent, nor have used Daudet primarily as a powerful example in an argument against more extreme forms of Naturalism.

James's admiration for Daudet is similar in kind to his elevation of Turgenev as an example of modified, and therefore acceptable, realism. Daudet lacks Turgenev's sensitivity to the psychological and spiritual logic of his characters' experiences - 'Alphonse Daudet's insight fails him when he begins to take the soul

into account' - but he shares with him that quality of imagination which 'sees an object in all its intermingled relations - on its sentimental, its pathetic, its comical, its pictorial side', modifying 'the hardness of consistent realism' (PP, pp.238, 208). In other words, Daudet offers another form of the compromise James found so congenial in Turgenev. Writing to Daudet in 1884 to thank him for a copy of Sapho, James describes the novel as further proof of 'tout ce que le roman peut accomplir comme révélation de la vie et du drôle de mélange que nous sommes' (Lubbock, I, 109). James found Daudet's appreciation of the 'odd mixture' which constitutes human experience particularly sympathetic; his genially ironic point of view, in which 'the smile is full of feeling' (PP, p.218), satisfied James's conservative idealism, in contrast with the dogmatic and humourless pessimism of the stricter realists, epitomised by Zola.⁴⁵ As with Turgenev, James overestimates Daudet's derivative art at the expense of more original talents because it approximates more closely to his own view of reality. In spite of his commitment to Naturalism, Daudet's art is Balzacian rather than Flaubertian; closely observed studies of particular social groups - a dissolute aristocracy in Les Rois en Exil; the mill-owning class in Fromont Jeune; politics and the law in Numa Roumestan - are structured by Balzacian plots and contrasts - the sexual intrigues in Fromont Jeune, the North/South contrast in Numa Roumestan and that between the king and queen in Les Rois en Exil. James, significantly, praises Daudet as the modern novelist of manners in terms recalling his admiration for Balzac:

The appearance of things is constantly more complicated as the world grows older, and it needs a more and more patient art, a closer notation, to divide it into its parts. Of this art Alphonse Daudet has a wonderfully large allowance, and that is why I say that he is

peculiarly modern. It is very true that his manner is not the manner of patience . . . Daudet proceeds by quick, instantaneous vision . . . What he mainly sees is the great surface of life and the parts that lie near the surface. But life is, immensely, a matter of surface, and if our emotions in general are interesting, the form of those emotions has the merit of being the most definite thing about them. (PP, pp.207-8)

And elsewhere Daudet's novels are described as 'historical' in the Balzacian sense of detailed accuracy (LRE, p.188; PP, p.231). The criteria here appear to be those of the strict realist but James is eager to show throughout his articles on Daudet that this is not incompatible with 'the inveterate poetical touch' (PP, p.207) which he had emphasised in Turgenev's art.

What does James mean by the 'poetical touch'? A passage from the 1882 review of Ernest Daudet's Mon Frère et Moi is suggestive:

His taste is for oddities and exceptions, for touching dénoûments, for situations slightly factitious, for characters surprisingly genial. There is nothing uncompromising, nothing of a depressing integrity, in his love of the real. (LRE, p.185; my emphasis)

Daudet's freedom from what were for James the restrictions of strict realism is what makes him so attractive. Again we see the compromise at work: Daudet combines 'a sense of the real with a sense of the beautiful' (PP, p.208) by mixing observation with imagination and even romantic exaggeration, so that in the depiction, for example, of the Delobelle family from Fromont Jeune, the Dickensian touches of the garret, the imitation birds Désirée and her mother make and the Micawber-like figure of M. Delobelle are preferable to James's idealising sense to a Zolaesque accuracy about Parisian home labour conditions. Ugliness of subject need not mean ugliness of execution; beauty inheres in the artist's point of view.⁴⁶

James's phrase about the 'depressing integrity' of uncompromising

realism suggests how far point of view was for him an escape from, as much as an endorsement of, the French position as he understood it. Daudet's Balzacian love of the picturesque, described by James in 1882 as 'fancy', allows for a more suggestive art than Zola's 'superior sense of reality': 'the things he sees, - the various, fleeting, lurking, delicate, nameless human things!' (LRE, pp.188-9). In order to deal with the reality of consciousness, James saw that the novelist must be prepared to use external observation in 'picturesque' juxtapositions which direct our gaze towards their inherent moral, as well as social, drama. The point is well illustrated by comparing James's comments on Les Rois en Exil with Zola's. Zola's definition of the novel's theme is pre-eminently social: 'l'ébranlement des monarchies . . . la déchéance de la royauté devant le flot montant du peuple'; James emphasises the moral contrast between the king and queen:

But the amiable depravity of Christian, in whom conviction, resolution, ambition, are hopelessly dead, . . .; the proud, serious, concentrated nature of Frederica, who believes ardently in her royal function . . .; both of these conceptions do M. Daudet the utmost honour, and prove that he is capable of handling great situations - situations which have a depth of their own, and do not depend for their interest on amusing incidents. (PP, p.235)⁴⁷

Daudet doesn't take this kind of moral perception far enough for James: in the letter thanking for Sapho, for example, James comments that 'le drame ne se passe peut-être pas assez dans l'âme et dans la conscience de Jean', and adds, 'il n'y a rien de plus réel, de plus positif, de plus à peindre, qu'un caractère; c'est là qu'on trouve bien la couleur et la forme' (Lubbock, I, 109); and in his last essay on Daudet, James admits to liking him 'best of all the novelists who have not the greater imagination, the imagination of

the moralist' (Literature, December 25 1897, p.307). But Daudet's depiction of social change in terms of particular individuals, the fact that he is 'equally acquainted with pleasure and with pain' (PP, p.205) and his selection and handling of rich subjects testify to a quality of mind broad enough to merit approval.

James's criteria and the details of his arguments in the Partial Portraits essay on Daudet seriously qualify his last paragraph in which all prescription seems to have been abandoned: 'Determinations of rank are a delicate matter, and it is sufficient priority for an author that one likes him immensely' (PP, pp.238-9). 'Liking', as James no doubt realises, begs the question, and is far from the French ideal of the critic who 'doit absorber assez complètement sa personnalité pour qu'il puisse découvrir et vanter les livres même qu'il n'aime pas comme homme et qu'il doit comprendre comme juge'.⁴⁸ James's inflated assessment of Daudet is based on a mixture of personal and ideological sympathy making Daudet a 'case' for modified realism, and the essay contains several evaluative comparisons between Daudet and other realists. The Sainte-Beuvian response to a temperament points up the continuity between these less obviously prescriptive essays of the middle period and French Poets and Novelists. James trusts the absoluteness of his taste as a fellow novelist, and having referred the nature of Daudet's work back to the nature of its producer, he elevates quality of mind into the main criterion of moral, aesthetic and evaluative judgment.⁴⁹

The essay on Maupassant was written five years later than that on Daudet and in its admiration for an uncongenial talent and its conclusion - 'Let us then leave this magnificent art of the novelist to itself and to its perfect freedom, in the faith that one example is as good as another' (PP, p.287) - seems to be a further step towards the French critical position. In fact, it

demonstrates just how far James's criticism retained 'English' characteristics. James opens his essay by welcoming Maupassant's contention, in the preface to Pierre et Jean, that 'any form of the novel is simply a vision of the world from the standpoint of a person constituted after a certain fashion, and that it is therefore absurd to say that there is, for the novelist's use, only one reality of things', seeing it as an indication of 'the vanity of certain dogmatisms' (PP, p.246). The rest of the essay, in which James seeks to circumvent Maupassant's association of 'a conscience and a high standard with a temper long synonymous, in our eyes, with an absence of scruples' (p.255), replaces the narrow English moralism which would condemn Maupassant for his subject-matter with evaluative criteria which praise Maupassant for his particular achievement but find that achievement necessarily limited. Point of view for James incurs responsibility and is itself subject to evaluation; by adding a moral dimension to Maupassant's aesthetic criteria, James neatly proves his recurrent and unshakeable moral touchstone: 'our fiction will always be decent enough if it be sufficiently general' (p.287).

Essentially, James argues that Maupassant's limited point of view, 'that of the senses' (p.250), results in an art which treads a fine line between intensity of illusion and distortion. James's preferences among Maupassant's tales make clear the way in which moral and aesthetic criteria merge; his dislike of Maupassant's hard cynicism is not merely temperamental, but includes the recognition that cynicism precludes the kind of negative capability on which extended fictional truth depends: 'Is it because of the inadequacy of these indications when applied to the long stretch that M. de Maupassant's novels strike us as less complete, in proportion to the talent expended upon them, than his contes and

nouvelles?' (p.277). James enjoys, for example, La Maison Tellier for its suggestion of another side to existence which can be appreciated by and interact with the depravity of the brothel (p.269), and he describes Boule de Suif as 'a triumph' (p.267), no doubt because it, too, goes beyond the mere fact of sexuality to explore the hypocrisies which surround it. In Bel-Ami, on the other hand, 'the world represented is too special, too little inevitable, too much to take or to leave as we like' (p.277), and even in La Maison Tellier Maupassant is 'the showman exhilarated by the success with which he feels that he makes his mannikins . . . caper and squeak' (p.269). The danger is exactly that of moralistic art; actuality is subjected to a particular point of view and the fictional illusion destroyed by our sense of manipulation.

James circumvents Maupassant by two routes. He demonstrates how, in erecting his own method and predilections into a dogma, Maupassant has both contradicted his own critical tenets and weakened his creative output; and he gets round the complete relativity and implicit abandonment of evaluation in Maupassant's original argument by demonstrating, through his study of Maupassant's work, that the final court of critical appeal must be the quality of an artist's perception, a criterion by which Maupassant can be judged to possess only limited perfection. The attempt at circumvention begins with an attack on Maupassant's assumption that the simple epic manner is preferable to the analytic - 'le roman exécuté de cette façon y gagne en sincérité. Il est d'abord plus vraisemblable, car les gens que nous voyons agir autour de nous ne nous racontent point les mobiles auxquels ils obéissent'.⁵⁰ James here has Maupassant beaten on his own ground, since he is contradicting his earlier argument for the individual artist's free point of view. As James is quick to point out, the degree to

which motives are hidden rather depends on your particular perception: 'For some people motives, reasons, relations, explanations, are a part of the very surface of the drama, with the footlights beating full upon them' (p.257). Maupassant is in danger of erecting his own view of reality into a rule: 'if M. de Maupassant thinks meanly of "explanations", it is, I suspect, that they come to him in no great affluence' (p.258). James is of course concerned to defend his own method, but he is not merely answering one dogma with another. His main point is that only a flexible eclecticism can do justice to reality and achieve that fine balance on which intensity of illusion depends:

When it is a question of an artistic process, we must always mistrust 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. (p.256)

D.H. Lawrence described exactly that perception - and in surprisingly Jamesian terms - when he defined morality in the novel as 'the trembling instability of the balance. When the novelist puts his thumb in the scale, to pull down the balance to his own predilections, that is immorality'.⁵¹ Maupassant's 'thumb in the scale' was responsible for the impression of arbitrariness in Bel-Ami, in which the choice of a broad canvas meant that 'the physiological explanation of things here too visibly contracts the problem in order to meet it' (p.277). In La Maison Tellier, in contrast, Maupassant was dealing with a more manageable subject and responded to all its possibilities: 'Every good story is of course both a picture and an idea, and the more they are interfused the better the problem is solved. In La Maison Tellier they fit each other to perfection' (p.269).

The juxtaposition of the prostitutes' depravity and Constance's

innocence in La Maison Tellier, beautifully epitomised in all its complexity of contrasts and similarities when Constance sleeps in Rosa la Rosse's arms, is the kind of 'great situation' James admired in Daudet's Les Rois en Exil, and we are reminded of James's approval of Daudet's appreciation of the 'intermingled relations' of a subject. Part of the essay on Maupassant is devoted to an attack on the narrowness of English novel traditions: 'No doubt there is in our literature an immense amount of conventional blinking' (p.272); this kind of blind optimism is at least as bad as Maupassant's cynicism, but James concludes, echoing Maupassant, that the problem is essentially that, 'The feeling of life is evidently de part et d'autre, a very different thing' (p.273). But James is not prepared to dismiss this finally as a problem of relativity. He is prepared to argue absolutes to the extent of a commitment to a belief in the complexity of reality and to a critical scale which judges novelists according to their ability to recreate that complexity. In the end, James feels that he has 'got round' Maupassant by pointing out on what restricted terms he has achieved his success:

This condition, it seems to me, is that of having totally omitted one of the items of the problem, an omission which has made the problem so much easier that it may almost be described as a short cut to a solution. The question is whether it be a fair cut. M. de Maupassant has simply skipped the whole reflective part of his men and women - that reflective part which governs conduct and produces character. . . . For those who are conscious of this element in life, look for it and like it, the gap will appear to be immense.
(pp.284-5)

In restricting himself mainly to the epic method, Maupassant shows failures of judgment, destroying the balance both of his subject and of the relationship between subject and writer: 'The rule misleads, and the best rule certainly is the tact of the individual

writer, which will adapt itself to the material as the material comes to him' (pp.257-8). Taste is the final arbiter - a vague term, but lent absoluteness by James as he relates it to the critical detection of the arbitrary, voulu elements in a work, elements reflecting a limited consciousness in the writer. To see the Maupassant essay as endorsing selection as opposed to the 'selection but inclusiveness' of 'The Art of Fiction', as does L.H. Powers, is to misread completely James's tone.⁵² To equate the argument of this essay with the personal exhortations of the Notebooks to be concise 'à la Maupassant' (NB, pp.89, 92, 102, 104, 293) is to confuse a basic theoretical statement with a particular technical problem. James is hardly advising himself to emulate Maupassant's thin point of view. James's criteria are an amalgam of French analytic criticism - in his acknowledgment of Maupassant's intensity of illusion in many tales - with an English prescriptiveness still concerned to define the morality of art, and which assumes the existence of a shared view of a complex reality from which the most successful novelists will begin.

Maupassant's 'case' is strong enough, nevertheless, to make James acknowledge that execution might be the most important thing: 'In default of other convictions it may still, for the artist, be an adequate working faith to turn out something fine. . . . The dogmatist is never safe with [Maupassant's ability]'.⁵³ The phrasing reveals that James feels he has 'other convictions', in fact, and his adopted critical role in Partial Portraits was to rouse the convictionless English novel to awareness through his own version of 'un coin de la nature vu à travers un tempérament'. Those 'other convictions', which allowed James to circumvent Maupassant in Partial Portraits, suggest a distinction between technical brilliance and strength of subject which recalls the James

of 1875, hoping that the 'chiselled and gilded empty shell of French literary form' might find 'a living soul again' (Na, December 30 1875, p.419), and point out that the difference between the criticism of the 80's and that of the 60's and 70's is mainly one of confidence in criteria. James's early strident objections to sex in the novel are recast as a valid critical question: what are the limitations of an overt treatment of sex? Maupassant's case proves the limited interest and effectiveness of overstatement, particularly when transferred from the conte to the full-length novel, and James's distinction between the lasting moral subtlety of La Maison Tellier and the limited life of anecdotal vignettes like Au Bord du Lit is exactly right.

In the essays on Daudet and Maupassant, James achieves a fine balance between promotion and defence of his own method and convictions, and accurate characterisation of his subjects. His taste for the 'poetic' leads him to overestimate Daudet, and his idealism sometimes causes him to point slightly too heavy artillery at Maupassant's contes lestes, but the balance is restored in his final comment: 'at once so licentious and so impeccable' (p.287). On the whole, in spite of important differences between their points of view, James comes close to fulfilling the role of Maupassant's ideal critic who 'ne doit apprécier le résultat que suivant la nature de l'effort'.⁵⁴ It is in his comparative, evaluative use of that appréciation that he registers his disagreement with the inheritors of 'L'Art pour L'Art'.

Essays in London and Notes on Novelists: Zola and Flaubert

Zola and Flaubert were for James 'lions in the path' more formidable and ultimately less negotiable than Maupassant. The problem is essentially the same: in Zola's case, 'we had never

before had to reckon with so literary a treatment of the mean and vulgar' (NN, p.46); and in Flaubert's we are 'to accept for the sake of his aesthetic influence the idiosyncrasies' (ELE, p.147) - the familiar criticism of the disproportion in French realism between method and subject is rendered somewhat empty in the face of consummate 'doing'. But whereas Maupassant was sufficiently small an artist to be circumvented in terms of quality of mind and breadth of vision, the vast and solid edifice of the Rougon-Macquart and Flaubert's artistic seriousness presented critical problems of a quite different order. James's relationship with both writers shows a Strether-like growth in appreciation and he did them full justice only relatively late in his career. In Partial Portraits James was still using Zola and Flaubert to illustrate the greater acceptability of Daudet's more conventional talent. His ultimate attempts to deal with them on their own terms are a measure of his increasingly coherent eclecticism, but also of his final emancipation from the more restricting aspects of his conservative critical stance. These late essays offer yet another compromise - between Flaubertian aestheticism and Zola's scientism. They are full of subtle insight, but James's eagerness to define the difference between Zola and Flaubert's theoretical positions and his own can mean that he interprets their practice too rigidly in the light of their theory: his understanding of these two greatest proponents of French realism remained limited.

As so often, it is James's emphasis rather than his basic observations which change in his criticism of both novelists. In 1874 Flaubert's novels apart from Madame Bovary are 'a capital refutation of the very dogma in defence of which they appeared. The fatal charmlessness of each and all of them is an eloquent plea for the ideal' (LRE, p.146); in his best essay on Flaubert,

of 1893, the weaknesses, the hardness and coldness, of these works fall into place 'in proportion as we swallow him whole and cherish him as a perfect example' (ELE, p.148). Flaubert's 'case' is to be a representative figure, a warning against the 'hardness of consistent realism' in the earlier criticism, and against 'an extraordinary singleness of aim, . . . the artist not only disinterested but absolutely dishumanised', in the later essays (PP, p.208; ELE, p.132). A grudging admiration is the hallmark of James's work on Zola. It was the publication of L'Assommoir in 1877 which made him realise that Zola was a novelistic force which it was impossible to ignore, much as one might dislike his method and subject-matter, and his comments on the novel reveal his ambivalent response: 'remarkable and repulsive novel' (LRE, p.164); 'It is worth it if your stomach can stand it' (Harlow, p.295). Between the 1880 review of Nana and the essay of 1902 reprinted in Notes on Novelists James refers to Zola only in passing and the most revealing comments are in letters rather than criticism. In 1881, for example, he wrote to Perry: 'Zola has his faults and his merits; and it doesn't seem to me important to talk of the faults. The merits are rare, valuable, extremely solid' (Letters, II, 341).⁵⁵ The 1902 essay takes up the themes of these early comments, both in its emphasis on Zola's faults as ultimately unimportant and in its distrust of his rigid system. Reviewing Une Page d'Amour in 1878, James commented on Zola's 'extraordinary elaborateness and patience of arrangement':

This, indeed, is almost his strongest quality; he evidently sat himself down at the outset and tabulated, as it were, the enormous contents of his twenty novels - pigeon-holed his episodes and characters as if he had been a clerk in a post-office. (Na, May 30 1878, pp.361-2)

In the 1902 essay James extends his initial observation, seeing

Zola as ultimately 'a prey to the danger that had for a long time more and more dogged his steps, the danger of the mechanical all confident and triumphant' (NN, p.25).

The Notes on Novelists essay on Zola is a fine piece of criticism, and it is here that we see James recognise the impossibility of circumventing Zola in his usual terms. The criticism of failure to do justice to all aspects of experience is made, the essay contains James's fullest critique of Zola's 'experimental' method and it points out, and tries to account for, the falling-off in the later novels, but it is mainly concerned to acknowledge Zola's unique achievement in its own terms:

If . . . subjects of the private and intimate order, gave him more or less inevitably 'away', they yet left him the great distinction that the more he could be promiscuous and collective, the more even he could . . . illustrate our large natural allowance of health, heartiness and grossness, the more he could strike us as penetrating and true. (NN, p.50)

To change the stress in Yeats's comment on Eliot, 'It may not be my way, but it is a way'. Zola's vision is 'penetrating and true', forcing James to accept its validity, because it deals fully and uncynically with its chosen material. A wealth of social detail makes Zola's world self-justifying where Maupassant's selection created an impression of arbitrariness.

As with Maupassant, though less overtly so, James approached Zola through his theoretical statements. It is a pity that James never commented explicitly on Zola's criticism since Zola was the most important contemporary novel theorist, but it is clear that he read the critical works as they appeared. Both letters and articles contain tantalising references which indicate the extent to which James allowed the theory to colour his assessment of Zola's

novels.⁵⁶ In his review of Nana James comments:

. . . the system on which the series of Les Rougon-Macquart has been written, contains, to our sense, a great deal of very solid ground. M. Zola's attempt is an extremely fine one; it deserves a great deal of respect and deference, and though his theory is constantly at odds with itself, we could, at a pinch, go a long way with it without quarrelling. What we quarrel with is his application of it . . . (HF, p.277)

This is typical of James's relationship with Zola as theorist in its equivocal mixture of approval and unsubstantiated criticism, though the overt acknowledgment of areas of agreement is less usual. Typical, too, is James's reference to Zola's 'system'; James seems to have reacted most strongly to the dogmatic tone of Zola's more extreme polemical criticism at the expense of the better essays. One could hardly expect James to go far with the naive and repetitive Roman Expérimental, but the more considered versions of the theory in the other works in the same volume, and in Les Romanciers Naturalistes show parallels with James's own views. The three features of the naturalist novel defined in Zola's essay on Flaubert - 'la reproduction exacte de la vie'; no exaggeration of characters; and author as 'le metteur en scène caché du drame' - would on the whole be approved by James as principles of composition; and the concept of the novel described in Du Roman is essentially James's: 'Un grand romancier est, de nos jours, celui qui a le sens de réel et qui exprime avec originalité la nature, en le faisant vivante de sa vie propre'.⁵⁷ Even closer to James's more individualistic emphasis is Zola's famous and often-repeated catch-phrase defining the novel as 'un coin de la nature vu à travers un tempérament'.⁵⁸

In the early essays, James's quarrel with Zola's application of his theory is concentrated, predictably, on their interpretations

of morality. James's view, as he attempted to express it in the Nana review, was in fact very close to Zola's own:

Une page bien écrite a sa moralité propre, qui est dans sa beauté, dans l'intensité de sa vie et de son accent. . . . Pour moi, il n'y a d'oeuvres obscènes que les oeuvres mal pensées et mal exécutées.⁵⁹

The emphasis on thought as well as execution differentiates Zola - and James - from Flaubert, and James echoes Zola's criteria in his objections to Nana. The novel is 'mal pensé': 'The human note is completely absent, the perception of character, of the way people feel and think and act, is helplessly, hopelessly at fault'; and 'mal exécuté': 'It is not his choice of subject that has shocked us; it is the melancholy dryness of his execution' (HF, pp.279-80). Earlier, in 1878, James had criticised Une Page d'Amour according to similar criteria. It lacks 'the really magnificent reality of [L'Assommoir]', and 'the matter, the fonds, of M. Zola's story strikes us as very weak and common' (Na, May 30 1878, p.362) - a reference surely not to Hélène's affair so much as to Zola's moralistic intention in punishing her through the death of her daughter. And yet James's early attitudes to Zola are constantly cited to prove his prudishness. There is a sense throughout the Nana review that James is only just succeeding in making theoretically respectable a dislike of the novel arising from sheer revulsion from its subject-matter. Having described the novel as 'dull', James goes on to inveigh against its 'monstrous uncleanness' without having really analysed its dullness, and the whole tone of the review ('indeed, never surely was any other artist so dirty as M. Zola!') is in tension with the claim it makes to be indifferent to subject (HF, pp.275, 276). The result is a review which, not surprisingly, has been used to misinterpret James's actual criteria and which is irrelevant and unjust to the novel

it considers (and which, incidentally, James never reprinted). Nana is not Zola's best novel and shows in parts the 'air of tension and effort' James found in the novel as a whole (Nana's relationship with Fontan, for example), but it is compelling as a portrait of one kind of corruption under the Second Empire, focussed in its protagonist, and in its depiction of the theatre world, aristocratic hypocrisy and Nana herself through a series of dramatic set-pieces. In 1902 James's continuing dislike of the novel is more successfully converted to critical comment: '"Nana" is truly a monument to Zola's patience; the subject being so ungrateful, so formidably special, that the multiplication of illustrative detail, the plunge into pestilent depths, represents a kind of technical intrepidity' (NN, p.40). This continuing coyness about the novel's subject, and James's very different reaction to the equally disagreeable L'Assommoir, point up the specifically sexual nature of much of his ambivalent moralism, a reaction which perhaps stemmed from James's barely acknowledged homosexuality.

For a complete assessment of James's attitude to Zola during the 70's and 80's, we should be aware of the general climate of critical opinion towards Naturalism and James's sensitivity to that opinion as a reviewer. His most overt submission to public outrage came in his infamous New York Tribune description of Zola's realism: 'Unfortunately the real, for him, means exclusively the unclean' (NYT, May 13 1876; PS, p.135), and I have already referred to similar compromises of critical integrity in the review of Edmond de Goncourt's La Fille Elisa and in James's oblique attacks on Zola in his essays on Daudet. But such compromises must be seen in the light of the critical controversy which culminated in Vizetelly's prosecution and imprisonment in 1888-9 for selling translations of Zola's novels. Comments like that

in the Tribune are qualified by James's enthusiasm for Zola in his letters and a comparison of any of his comments on Zola with the vituperative attacks in English periodicals reveals the distance between James's critical criteria and Grundyism. Feeling against Zola was at its height when James commented on the power of L'Assommoir and wrote to Perry of Zola's rare and valuable merits.⁶⁰ Indeed, in the Nana review, James openly agreed with Zola's objections to English moral prescription as 'a bad thing for the novel itself, when the novel is regarded as something more than a simple jeu d'esprit, and considered as a composition that treats of life at large and helps us to know' (HF, pp.278-9).

The educative tone is by now familiar and James asserts his critical independence further when he modifies that plea for freedom with the realisation that a Naturalist over-reaction against prescription runs the danger of creating its own restricting conventions, such that Nana 'never, to my sense, leaves for a moment the region of the conventional' (HF, p.280). The recognition that Naturalism, in its extreme form, could lead only to a dead end is James's most valid and most searching criticism of Zola - or of the theory which Zola himself only partly followed. James's own deep commitment to realist method is ultimately responsible for his objections to Zola's application of it. Interestingly, both novelists plead generality in justifying their own interpretations. In Du Roman, Zola defends himself against accusations of immorality:

Il est stupide de prétendre que je rétrécis l'horizon, que je relègue la littérature dans nos faubourgs, que je la réduis à l'ordure de la langue, lorsque au contraire, je montre le domaine littéraire s'étendant de plus en plus, se confondant avec le domaine des sciences.⁶¹

But similarity of argument shows up the gulf between the two. Whereas Zola's plea was something of a sop to the critics, James's arguments for 'a spark of the ideal' reflect his belief in a moral realism unable to function amid realist conventions of determinism, scientism and 'la bête humaine'. His fears are echoed, and glossed, by Lionel Trilling's attack sixty years later on 'the chronic American belief that there exists an opposition between reality and mind and that one must enlist oneself in the party of reality'.⁶²

James asserts his mistrust in a method claiming direct social relevance through his shifting and complex concept of 'taste', a characteristically moral-aesthetic term which can be applied to both novelist and reader and which, in its looseness, allows for a broad-based attack. James pronounced Nana 'unreadable' because of lack of taste in its execution. Something of a conventionally moralistic use of the term is certainly present, but James clearly means to diagnose the problem as far more than a mere lack of delicacy:

Go as far as we will, as long as we abide in literature, the thing remains always a question of taste, and we can never leave taste behind without leaving behind, by the same stroke, the very grounds on which we appeal, the whole human side of the business. Taste, in its intellectual applications, is the most human faculty we possess, and as the novel may be said to be the most human form of art, it is a poor speculation to put the two things out of conceit of each other. Calling it naturalism will never make it profitable. . . . It is impossible to see why . . . if naturalism is, as M. Zola claims, a method of observation, it can be followed without delicacy or tact. (HF, pp.277-8)

Several things are implicit here. Underlying the passage is the familiar Jamesian idea of the diversity of experience in which taste represents our finer perceptions; the novel, as a reflection

of life, supplying moral experience in the way that life does, should therefore reflect those finer perceptions. 'In its intellectual applications' bridges the gap between moral and aesthetic criteria, extending taste to cover the writer's response to his material; technique is the means by which aesthetic and moral responses become inextricable in the really successful work. In Nana, for example, we can imagine James objecting to the unnecessarily specific description of the dead Nana, unsubtle and vindictive in its irony. Or we might compare the whole novel with James's own treatment of sex - hints stimulate the imagination far more than details, and the Nana review anticipates James's more thorough examination of the consequences of a lack of taste in his essay on Maupassant.

James's concept of taste is born of the ideal element in his real/ideal compromise and it is in some ways irrelevant to Zola's aims, as James realised in Notes on Novelists where he wrote of Le Ventre de Paris, L'Assommoir and Germinal:

The conception on which each of these productions rests is that of a world with which taste has nothing to do, and though the act of representation may be justly held, as an artistic act, to involve its presence, the discrimination would probably have been in the fact, given the particular illusion sought, more detrimental than the deficiency. (NN, p.30)

Specific detail in a novel such as L'Assommoir is the right response to its material, the aim being pure, dense recreation of a social phenomenon, a kind of realism nowhere paralleled in the English novel. As James describes it:

I doubt if there has ever been a more totally represented world, anything more founded and established, more provided for all round, more organised and carried on. It is a world practicably workable, with every part as

functional as every other, and with the parts all chosen for direct mutual aid. (NN, p.44)

As a result, L'Assommoir is 'completely genial' (NN, p.43; my emphasis) - another aesthetic-moral term used to describe the effect of a work in which technique exactly serves material.

Zola thus forces James to acknowledge another kind of doing, even to the extent of modifying his precious principle of taste. There is no circumventing the greatest examples of Zola's method, but James cleverly makes his own case in Notes on Novelists by 'proving' that, in the end, Zola's lack of taste was equally the cause of his later failures:

'The matter with' Zola, then, so far as it goes, was that, as the imagination of the artist is in the best cases not only clarified but intensified by his equal possession of Taste . . . , so when he has lucklessly never inherited that auxiliary blessing the imagination itself breaks down as a consequence. There is simply no limit to the misfortune of being tasteless; it does not merely disfigure the surface and the fringe of your performance - it eats back into the very heart and enfeebles the sources of life. (NN, p.38)

In other words, the kinds of works possible for the artist who lacks taste - the ability to respond to varied material - are severely restricted; purist realism is ultimately dead, and Zola's career provides a beautifully neat case against its own precepts. Implicit in all this is of course quality of mind and James allies the novelists's ideal qualities under the heading of taste in his discussion of Zola's disastrous last novels:

When you have no taste you have no discretion, which is the conscience of taste, and when you have no discretion you perpetrate books like 'Rome', which are without intellectual modesty, books like 'Fécondité', which are without the sense of the ridiculous, books like 'Vérité', which are without the finer vision of human experience. (NN, p.38)

All this indicates the vast differences between James's and Zola's interpretations of realism. The similarities between their general theoretical statements which I have pointed out are merely the predictable affinities between two sons of Balzac and inheritors of the critical school of Sainte-Beuve and Taine. In spite of a tendency to restrict the novel to studies of the individual consciousness, James revelled in the protean nature of a form exactly suited to a protean reality and this is why he so disliked Zola's dogmatism: 'it comes back very quickly . . . to the liking: in spite of M. Zola . . . who will not reconcile himself to this absoluteness of taste, thinking that there are certain things that people ought to like, and that they can be made to like' ('The Art of Fiction', PP, p.397). James criticises Zola's disregard of the reciprocal relationship between author and reader several times, part of his argument against the rigid systematisation which he saw as typically French.⁶³ He was particularly sensitive to art with a palpable design, something he detected in a lot of Zola's work: just as detailed physical description kills a work's imaginative effect, so does polemic. Zola's extreme reaction against the romantic school restricted his theory of the novel; James, a willing inheritor of both schools, produced a more fertile concept of the form, benefiting from both realism and romance.

In spite of critical claims to the contrary, then, I think any influence Zola's 'experimental' method had on James is superficial.⁶⁴ French realism in general clearly influenced the subject-matter of The Princess Casamassima and James occasionally adopted Zolaesque terminology,⁶⁵ but can we really draw a very useful distinction between James's approach to characterisation in The Princess and in, say, The Portrait of a Lady? Would it not be possible to describe Isabel as a character formed in a

certain way by her American upbringing, brought into contact with very different European mores, and the novel as a study of the result? As F.W.J. Hemmings has pointed out: 'In fact, Le Roman Expérimental, once the flourishes are stripped away, reduces itself to a simple rechristening, as 'experimentation', of the well-tryed process of deduction from observation'.⁶⁶ James said of Zola, 'What we quarrel with is his application of [his theory]' (HF, p.277), and his own emphasis in his most 'experimental' novel is on Hyacinth's consciousness through which he achieves a kind of freedom. Allowing always for the idiosyncratic nature of the Prefaces, remote from the novels they describe, it is interesting that James should use the preface to The Princess for one of his most eloquent justifications of the novel of consciousness. Indeed, Zola is cited as one of the few writers uninterested in mind: 'The great chroniclers . . . have at least always either placed a mind of some sort . . . in possession of the general adventure (when the latter has not been purely epic, as with Scott, say, as with old Dumas and with Zola); or else paid signally as to the interest created, for their failure to do so' (AN, p.67); and James's definition of the artist's concern is very different in its implications from anything Zola ever wrote: 'the affair of the painter is not the immediate, it is the reflected field of life, the realm not of application, but of appreciation' (AN, p.65).

James's most frustrating comment on Zola as a critic comes in the passage from the Nana review I quoted earlier: 'his theory is constantly at odds with itself'. He might be referring to discrepancies between Zola's theory and practice, his use of reality for symbolic, picturesque effect: 'The doctrine of M. Zola, so jejune if literally taken, is fruitful, inasmuch as in practice he romantically departs from it' ('Robert Louis Stevenson', PP, p.163).

This was something Maupassant commented on ('Mais fils des romantiques, romantique lui-même dans tous ses procédés, il porte en lui une tendance au poème, un besoin de grandir, de grossir, de faire des symboles avec les êtres et les choses'⁶⁷) but which James, seeing the novels through the theory, often ignored. He might be referring to the whole question of the inevitable subjectivity of a work of art which is raised by Zola's idiosyncratic descriptive method and by his contradictory comments on the role played by the artist's personality - for James, part of Zola's 'case' is the fact that, 'His personality is the thing that finally pervades and prevails' (NN, p.23). Or he might be referring to what was for him the basic weakness in the concept of the experimental novel, the confusion of science and art. This is most fully discussed in Notes on Novelists, but it is implicit throughout James's work on Zola and it provides conclusive evidence against any very important influence. By 1880-1, when Zola's most important critical work was published, James had moved beyond the point Zola had reached. James was fascinated by Zola's system; he acknowledged several times that it was vital to his success in his best novels, but ultimately:

The matter is one of appreciation, and when an artist answers for science who answers for the artist - who at least answers for art? Thus it is with the mistakes that affect us, as I say, as Zola's penalties. We are reminded by them that the game of art has, as the phrase is, to be played. It may not with any sure felicity for the result be both taken and left. If you insist on the common you must submit to the common; if you discriminate, on the contrary, you must, however invidious your discriminations may be called, trust them to see you through. (NN, p.42)

This eloquent defence of the high seriousness of art and the vital role of technique should be taken in conjunction with the

equally eloquent rejection of pure technique in the essay on Flaubert of the same year:

Style itself . . . never totally beguiles; since even when we are so queerly constituted as to be ninety-nine parts literary we are still a hundredth part something else. This hundredth part may . . . make us imperfect as readers, and yet without it should we want or get the book at all? (NN, p.79)

Those critics who would make of late James a life-denying aesthete would do well to study his work on Flaubert more closely. James's comments on Flaubert are essentially limited to using him as a warning 'case' against the tyranny of style, as Zola provided the case against the tyranny of life. Between the two James defined his own concept of the fertile reciprocity of life and art, and again, as with Zola, his eagerness to make Flaubert representative of a particular critical position limits his readings of the novels. There is of course a strongly positive aspect to James's relationship with Flaubert - James looked on him as a martyr to the novel's cause whose efforts had secured critical respect for the form, and his particular technical debts have been pointed out by Philip Grover⁶⁸ - but it is informed always by the spirit of James's precocious early observation to his father: 'I think I easily - more than easily - see all round him intellectually' (Letters, II, 38).⁶⁹

During the 70's James used Flaubert as the epitome of realist method and he is therefore criticised according to the familiar set of criteria which emphasised a discrepancy between artistic seriousness and flimsy subjects. But these early essays also contain less rigidly predictable observations which remained constant in James's work on Flaubert even after he recognised the subtle individuality of his genius. In James's review of La Tentation de Sainte Antoine he described the novel as lacking 'any abundant degree of imagination' and referred disparagingly to Flaubert's

'cleverness' (LRE, pp.149, 147); in 1884 James described Flaubert as having 'talent without cleverness, and imagination without having fancy' (PP, p.319). The observations are not contradictory, merely typical of James's struggle to define his sense of something missing in Flaubert's genius. The problem is seen as partly a matter of a characteristically narrow French vision and James's early note that the novels constitute 'a plea for the ideal' (LRE, p.146) is still being sounded in 1888 when he contrasts 'the superiority of Gustave Flaubert as a painter of aspects and sensations and his lapses and limitations, his general insignificance, as a painter of ideas and moral states' ('Pierre Loti', ELE, p.167). But it is also defined in less general terms: in 1874 James described Flaubert's career as 'an extraordinary example of a writer out-living his genius' and he accounted for the deadness (for him) of the novels following Madame Bovary in terms of a lack of sympathy: 'the facts in "Salammbô", in "L'Éducation Sentimentale", and in the performance before us, appeal so very meagrely to our sympathy that they completely fail in their appeal to our credulity' (LRE, p.146). Flaubert's own coldness - 'he would have given everything he had to be able to glow' (PP, p.319)⁷⁰ - makes him unable to rouse his readers' sympathies; what he lacks is Balzac's quality of 'love', the 'saturation with his idea' (LB, p.95) which enabled him to become the characters and situation he described. The problem is similar to Zola's lack of taste in that it involves an inappropriate response to material; in Flaubert's case the attempt to render life accurately through an obsessive concern with style results in novels which are 'mechanical and inanimate', lacking Madame Bovary's quality of 'disinterested observation' (FPN, p.258). Life is put at the service of art and the consequent dangers are most fully analysed by James in the essay of 1893:

Why may, why must indeed in certain cases, the effort of expression spend itself, and spend itself in success, without completing the circle, without coming round again to the joy of evocation? How can art be so genuine and yet so unconsolated, so unhumorous, so unsociable? (ELE, p.133)

The success of expression is insufficient for James since the novels thus produced are 'sterile', 'splendidly and infinitely curious', and he answers the problem of Flaubert's 'case' in that essay not so much in the famous conclusion - 'He should at least have listened at the chamber of the soul' - as implicitly in his analysis of Flaubert's unchangingly negative attitude to life: 'It had literally been his life-long dream to crown his career with a panorama of human ineptitude' (ELE, pp.158, 136). James's idealist preconceptions cannot accept an art born of cynicism; Flaubert's lack of the kind of genial sympathy Daudet, for example, possessed, the paucity of his basic idea, condemned his works to be mere curiosities: 'he never got beyond the superstition that real literary greatness is to bewilder the bourgeois' ('The Journal of the Brothers de Goncourt', ELE, p.221). In this essay of 1893 George Sand, significantly, stands as Flaubert's anti-type and Flaubert's willingness to make concessions for her is used to represent the kind of flexibility which might have saved the novels: 'To make a hard rule never to be corrupted, and then to make a special exception for fondness, is of course the right attitude' (ELE, p.141). James's criticisms of Flaubert have a lot in common with those offered by George Sand in their correspondence. Her accusations of inhumanity and her assertion that 'un roman doit être humain avant tout' are echoed in James's 'not only disinterested but absolutely dishumanised' (ELE, p.132); and her belief that form is an effect rather than an end in itself, though more

dismissive than James would ever be, represents a similar diagnosis of Flaubert's basic weakness.⁷¹ The similarities provide yet further evidence of James's eclecticism and of his essentially life-based position. In his view, Flaubert's great mistake was to equate life and art, since there are certain elements of experience art can never control. A failure of generosity and positiveness towards life resulted in this basic error - a failure to take account of the 'relations [that] stop nowhere' and of the Jamesian 'bewilderment' meant ultimately that though Flaubert 'polished ferociously . . . there was a side of the matter that his process could never touch' (ELE, p.138).

My emphasis so far on James's disagreements with Flaubert misrepresents the overall tone of his essays on the 'writers' writer' (ELE, p.131) who 'stand[s] for our operative conscience' (NN, p.70). James's later writing on Flaubert shows an increasingly sympathetic presentation of both man and method, abandoning the earlier idea of Flaubert as representative of the whole French realist tradition and concentrating on him as an individual - as Flaubert himself would have approved.⁷² James obviously makes use of his personal acquaintance with Flaubert and his circle and of his reading of Flaubert's letters, but he also, I think, uses Zola's excellent essay in Les Romanciers Naturalistes.⁷³ As James abandons his earlier tendency to pigeon-hole authors he is better able to appreciate the complexities of Flaubert's genius, the quality mechanically categorised by Faguet into realist and romantic, the diversity recognised by George Sand and explored by Maupassant and Zola.⁷⁴ James deals with this most subtly in the essay of 1893, his best work on Flaubert:

Far and strange are the refuges in which such an imagination seeks oblivion of the immediate and the ugly. His life was that of a pearl-diver, breathless

in the thick element while he groped for the priceless word, and condemned to plunge again and again.

(ELE, pp.151-2)

A powerful portrait of the nature of Flaubert's mind and genius is built up through such moments of sympathetic insight.

And yet, as I said earlier, James continued to use Flaubert as a representative 'case' even when he emphasised his independence. The positive assessment of the two late essays is built, by a slick Jamesian twist of logic, out of the idea that it is Flaubert's very limitations which 'keep him in touch and relation' (NN, p.67). Flaubert's appeal is represented as confined to minority tastes and fellow artists and Flaubert himself as a martyr to the novel's cause, his total commitment to style, though mistaken, giving the novel a new aesthetic authority: 'Flaubert's hardness was only the act of holding his breath in the reverence of his search for beauty' (ELE, p.149). His importance for James was in providing an example of a devotion to form which could be directed to different ends and the essays are concerned to qualify Flaubert's theory while recommending its seriousness. In Essays in London, for example, James quotes letters in which Flaubert states his commitment to authorial impersonality and describes selection as Flaubert's 'highest morality' (ELE, pp.129, 130). Both principles were important to James himself but the weight given to them by Flaubert is criticised in James's reference to his 'unattainable ideal' and in the argument of the essay as a whole which concludes that Flaubert stopped short and 'should have listened at the chamber of the soul' (ELE, p.158). In Notes on Novelists James presents two alternative interactions between subject and style: 'The more he feels his subject the more he can render it - that is the first way. The more he renders it the more he can feel it - that is the

second way' (NN, p.81). Flaubert believes in the latter method, the limitations of which, James argues, are amply demonstrated by Flaubert's own limitations; James believes in a fertile mixture of the two, Balzac's 'saturation with his idea' combined with Flaubert's discovery through expression.

The end to which expression is to be directed in the Jamesian novel is of course the depiction of character and the terms of James's lasting admiration for Madame Bovary are thus entirely consistent with his overall assessment of Flaubert. He admires the novel not merely for its formal perfection, but for the portrait of Emma herself. The note of French Poets and Novelists - 'she remains a living creature, and as a living creature she interests us' (FPN, pp.260-1) - is still sounding in Notes on Novelists: 'That is the triumph of the book as the triumph stands, that Emma interests us by the nature of her consciousness and the play of her mind, thanks to the reality and beauty with which those sources are invested' (NN, p.63). No amount of method can redeem the other novels, which for James lack this vital ingredient, from the realms of the 'strange and curious' (FPN, p.253). Subject and sympathy are supplemented and realised, but not replaced, by method.

In spite of the sympathetic and convincing portrait of Flaubert woven by James's prose, the question remains of how far James ever really understood him or did him critical justice in his own terms. In using Flaubert as a 'case' James implicitly aligns himself with the critical school of Sainte-Beuve and Taine whose methods Flaubert so disliked. I have already quoted part of the letter to George Sand in which he complains of those methods; he continues: 'On analyse très finement le milieu où [l'oeuvre] s'est produite et les causes qui l'ont amenée; mais

la poétique insciente? d'où elle résulte? sa composition, son style? le point de vue de l'auteur? Jamais'.⁷⁵ James's approach to Flaubert suggests that he is very much aware of these elements, but his desire as a novelist to define his own position means that he gives an overview of a writer's work, rather than subjecting individual novels to close analysis. Indeed, James's criticism of Flaubert contains less detailed consideration of the novels themselves than does his work on many other writers. This is, of course, because he only really admired Madame Bovary and had therefore to show his appreciation of Flaubert in very general terms. James understood Flaubert's ideal of the perfect work of art, but in using the dehumanising effects of that ideal as his 'case', he often misses the details of how Flaubert's subtle narrative method works. His prescriptive optimism blinds him to the way Flaubert justifies his 'cynicism' through point of view, as Zola's was justified by solidity of specification. Interpreting Flaubert's irony simply as cynicism, James misses the way Flaubert's carefully controlled irony in fact invites supplementary moral judgments from the reader so that in L'Éducation Sentimentale, for example, part of the intended experience of reading the novel is our interpretative need to divorce our view of Madame Arnoux from Frédéric's. James's eagerness to justify his own subtle centres of consciousness means that he misses Flaubert's narrative strategy, and he criticises the novel for allowing us to see Madame Arnoux only through Frédéric's eyes (NN, p.68). Similarly, James contradicts his earlier, saner assessment of Emma Bovary when in the late essays he criticises her as too limited, missing the point that there is a consciousness beyond Emma's - the reader's. It is odd that the master of the unreliable narrator should thus mistake Flaubert's similar narrative strategy. Is James's assessment

of these novels distorted perhaps by the same sexual squeamishness, though now completely disguised, which underlay his moral ambivalence towards Madame Bovary in French Poets and Novelists?

In 1883, James contrasted Daudet's 'poetical touch' with Flaubert's 'hardness' (PP, p.208). By 'poetical' James means an appreciation of the 'intermingled relations' thrown up by a subject, a sense of the abstract and hidden springs of existence; Flaubert, in contrast, had only a sense of 'the strange, the grotesque'. The remark applies particularly to Salammbô and La Tentation (works which Flaubert's French critics would have described as 'poetical'), in which James, following Sainte-Beuve, finds character subordinate to description. In spite of Flaubert's claim: 'toutes servent à mes personnages et ont une influence lointaine ou immédiate sur l'action',⁷⁶ he miscalculated in Salammbô the boggling and finally deadening effect of the detail. James, however, extends to L'Éducation the criticism that Flaubert should have listened at the chamber of the soul, that his view of character remains external. But is James's advice about the soul really relevant to the kind of novel Flaubert was writing? Maupassant, another fellow craftsman and a disciple of Flaubert, finds his characterisation perfectly adequate: 'Les dedans étaient ainsi dévoilés par les dehors'.⁷⁷ James's description of Flaubert's method in terms of his own pinpoints the difference between the French and James's concepts of how the novel of manners should be managed. Both are primarily concerned with individual psychology, but James circumvents the problem of minimal authorial presence by making the characters supremely conscious, thus guiding novel and reader onto the required plane. The inheritors of the French realist tradition demand a different kind of work from the reader - supplementing the clues and filling in the silences of

less self-aware characters.

In spite of these critical aberrations, however, James's own novels are an indirect, eloquent witness to the subtlety with which he read Flaubert. There is an unpublished letter of 1892 in which James criticises Gosse for his 'old-fashioned' treatment of his tale, 'The Secret of Narcisse':

There would have been - there were - two ways, I think, of dealing with it - the facile, the usual, and, as I have called it, vieux jeu way, the old-fashioned English 'historical-tale' way (which for me, as a form, has ceased to have any interest - it is too cheap!) or the way of Gustave Flaubert in the Trois Contes, for instance . . . - the way of verbal magic and surface perfection and ciselure and infinite particularity - the way, in short, of renovation by style.⁷⁸

The technical lesson offered by France was well-learnt, but we are concerned with James's theory and having absorbed and reapplied a novelist's technical revelations in his own practice, James felt free in his criticism to use that novelist as a generalised case in his continuing discussion and definition of the Novel, a method which, like all attempts at generalisation, runs the risk of distorting its examples by particular emphases. The novel was for James infinitely flexible - 'un coin de la nature vu à travers un tempérament' - and the history of his relationship with French realism, as with all other artistic movements with which he came into contact, is one of careful eclectic selection among its various dogmas. James went beyond Zola's Naturalism, at one end of the spectrum, stopping short of Flaubertian aestheticism at the other.

Yet, as we have seen, this basic belief in the form's flexibility is in tension with, and governed by, a tendency to

prescription born of James's conservative idealism. It was this which kept him the eternal outsider of French culture and which prevented him from ever completely understanding the contemporary French novel. James always to some extent retained that symbolic, idealised picture of France described in A Small Boy and Others in his memory of learning the significance of 'Style' as a child in the Galerie d'Apollon: 'The glory meant ever so many things at once, not only beauty and art and supreme design, but history and fame and power, the world in fine raised to the richest and noblest expression' (SBO, p.361). The actuality, where he found undeniable style at the service of a disturbing frankness and a tasteless professionalism, could only be a disappointment:

Nothing, in consequence, is more striking than the failure of any sense - as we ourselves understand it - of a division between the public and the private: the writer becomes primarily a writer and ceases in the same proportion to be anything else. His soul, his life and its pulsations are mere wheels and springs in the machinery of expression, and the man, as a man, can treat himself to no distinctive experience, reserve no garden-plot for wasteful human use.⁷⁹

It is not surprising that James returned to Balzac's romanticism and to George Sand in his late essays - but they rub shoulders there with Flaubert and Zola. James's concept of style and the picturesque had after all been profoundly modified by the sons of Balzac.

The French writer, on the other hand - I speak most, of course, of the creators, as we perhaps a trifle fatuously call them - can afford an expenditure of expression, particularly in prose, that causes his English-speaking brother to appear by contrast to carry on a very small business.⁸⁰

Never fully at home in France, James approached the French novel with

an Anglo-Saxon critical bias; but in the controversies about the English novel in which he became involved during the 80's and 90's, he is the advocate of French critical self-consciousness.

CHAPTER THREE: ENGLISH CONTROVERSIES

'His great justification . . . it seems to me, is, that the cause he upheld was the most important, for it was simply the cause of liberty, in which we are all so much interested.'

(James on Sainte-Beuve)

'. . . the idea is the only thing; on the whole it takes care of itself. One must write for that - to write for the public is to follow the scent of a red herring.'

The goal of James's continuing conscious eclecticism was artistic and critical freedom. His rational objections to French realism were based on a mistrust of any method which threatened to subject perception to dogma, be it social determinism or technical fastidiousness. In those oppositions between matter and method, morality and form, which dominate and sometimes distort James's essays on the French, England implicitly supplies the moral term in the antithesis, with which James is usually emotionally allied. It is perhaps surprising then to find that his attitude to the English critical and intellectual climate was consistently dismissive. But here again, and more pressingly, freedom is the controlling criterion. The reader, rather than the author or text, was the basis of judgment in the English novel criticism of the 70's and 80's; the idealism which is such an important element in James's own critical attitude had stultified into prescriptive moralism, 'the view', as James put it (referring to Andrew Lang), 'of the old lady round the corner or the clever person at the dinner party' (Lubbock, I, 139-40). It was this limiting refusal to take the form seriously which alarmed James. His own meliorist allegiance had been profoundly modified by his creative experience and contact with French experiments, allowing him to combine the moral and evaluative concerns of idealism with technical insights transcending

prescriptive critical labels. The rigid preconceptions of English criticism precluded the professional standards of objective analysis he sought to establish.

In James's controversies with English critics we see his sophisticated compromise between various critical positions most clearly. The principles of freedom of subject and technical seriousness which he pitted against English pragmatism appear very French, yet such pleas for artistic liberty are at the same time the direct result of his concept of the high moral seriousness of art. In the face of blinkered Grundyism James argued for freedom as the basis of morality: 'the essence of moral energy is to survey the whole field' ('The Art of Fiction', PP, p.406); mature moral judgment is possible only with full knowledge. The recurrent theme of the novels, from The Portrait of a Lady to The Ambassadors, is also the theme of the criticism. A French technical awareness is the means to this broad moral efficacy. Technique and morality are inextricable, since it is by technical mastery and formal perfection that intensity of illusion is created, and on intensity of illusion depends the novelist's claim to extend, life-like, our moral experience. To restrict the writer's available subject-matter or technical resources - either by pandering to the reader's expectations or protecting his sensibilities, like Walter Besant; or by subordinating objective perceptions to didactic aims, like Shaw and H.G. Wells - is to condemn him, in James's eyes, to dishonesty.

James perfected these ideas in the essays of the 80's and 90's which, of all his criticism, most obviously demonstrate the ideal of critical freedom which he envisaged as the necessary corollary to an unfettered novel. They are of course present in embryo in the early reviews and, most cogently argued in 'The Art of Fiction', they underlie all James's later criticism. Their

characteristic blend of conservatism and innovation is reflected in James's critical method, modelled on Sainte-Beuve in its tone of urbane sympathy and attempts at objective characterisation, but incorporating the vocabulary of contemporary French realist analysis. The standard of the essays from this period is consistently high. The inconsistencies of French Poets and Novelists are largely solved and the self-centred defensiveness which dogs the later criticism is not yet present. In the controversies at the end of James's career the concept of the novel as 'a personal, a direct impression of life', of the house of fiction's many windows, is too often undermined in practice as James's own principles and method harden into dogma. The strength of the criticism which grew out of the controversies of the 80's lies in the object-lesson it offers in flexibility. As so often, James's critical strategy works on at least two levels. His 'analytic' novels had fallen foul of anti-realist critics and his pleas for artistic freedom are pleas for his own freedom, but he broadens this immediate motive. His understanding of the form transcended the categorising terms of the controversy in which he was involved and the related criticism comes close to fulfilling James's Sainte-Beuvian ideal: 'he was more than any one else the independent individual, pinning his faith to no emblazoned standard and selling his vote to no exclusive group' ('S-B', p.305).

A few months after settling in London at the end of 1876, James reviewed the Royal Academy exhibition for the Nation and inveighed against Average Opinion as an aesthetic standard:

The savor of aesthetic Philistinism is of the strongest; the pictures all seem painted down to the level of the most vulgar bourgeois taste. Everything is anecdotal; the sense of beauty, of form, of

imaginative suggestiveness, is strikingly absent.

It would, indeed, on the evidence of the present exhibition, not be difficult to represent the Academy as a society for the promotion of front-parlor aesthetics. . . . Here, as throughout the field of English art and letters, the influence of the 'young person' and her sensitive cheek is perceived to prevail. ('The Grosvenor Gallery and the Royal Academy', Na, May 31 1877, p.321)

James sounds the keynote of his attitude to English art, recalling his early dislike, expressed in a letter to William, of the English 'mortal mistrust of anything like criticism or "keen analysis"' (Letters, I, 209), and his implicit endorsement of Taine's view, in Notes sur l'Angleterre, that the English lack 'ideas' (LRE, p.58)¹. Victorian narrative painting, with its idealisation of the demi-monde and heavily sentimental depiction of middle-class subjects, was a feature of the increasing democratisation of art, an exact parallel to the circulating library and the three-decker novel. To James, the work of Rossiter and Tissot (whose Holiday was in the Grosvenor Gallery exhibition of 1877) represented a vulgarisation, in the interests of flattery and easy comprehensibility, of the principles of realism:

The only thing I can say . . . is that the realism of the Dutch painters seems soft, and that of such men as M. Tissot seems hard. . . . Is there then to be no more delightful realism? ('The Picture Season in London', Galaxy, August 1877; PE, p.141)

That 'delightful' points up James's neo-classical criteria; the real lent aesthetic dignity by formal design is what he seeks. To draw the parallel with the novel: Turgenev or George Eliot, not Zola, is the model by which superficial realism is found wanting.

James wrote these reviews for an American audience and

though there is justice in his criticism, it conforms too to the stereotype of English aesthetic indifference which he developed as the self-consciously cosmopolitan American earlier in his career. The same self-consciousness is present in the first impressions of England which James recorded for Perry: 'If they want a novelist they want also a critic' (Harlow, p.294). Like his early comments on France, James's generalisations about the state of English culture foster his ambition and help to contain his insecurity. English inadequacies leave room for the aspiring young American who had yet to prove himself with a substantial publication.

But there is another, less transient, way in which English Philistinism supplied James's own needs. As a novelist of manners, he settled in England rather than France, responding with Balzacian relish to the more pronounced 'picturesque' conventions of English society, to exactly those social rigidities and discrepancies between acknowledgment and actuality which resulted in the restrictive attitudes to art he so hated. The practising novelist and the critical theorist are thus to some extent at odds, and James's letters of the period reflect his ambivalent reaction. In 1883, for example, James replied from Boston to William's unfavourable impressions of London:

There is more beside, and it is this more beside that I have been living on in London. Every now and then you will feel it (though as you are not a 'story writer' you will feel it less than I) much as you have felt the stupidity, the dowdiness and darkness. England always seems to me like a man swimming with his clothes on his head.²

As a critic, James untiringly fought the inflexible self-absorption of English attitudes captured in that image; the exuberance of the image itself is born of his novelist's delight in the picturesque

possibilities of such a subject. The critical work which most clearly reflects this duality is James's essay of the same year on the satirist George du Maurier. James weaves the essay around the French/English contrast suggested by du Maurier's mixed parentage, clearly sympathising with the 'very Gallic element in some of Du Maurier's gifts - his fineness of perception, his remarkable power of specifying types, his taste, his grace, his lightness, a certain refinement of art' - and above all with his ironic view of the English, 'the irony of the thorough-going artist and of the observer who has a strain of foreign blood in his veins' (PP, pp.342, 371). The English, in contrast, 'have not a spontaneous artistic life; their taste is a matter of conscience, reflection, duty' (p.370). Yet James is still, at the same time, the small boy who pored over Punch, absorbing without question its depiction of English types:

The accumulated volumes of this periodical contain evidence on a multitude of points of which there is no mention in the serious works - not even in the novels - of the day. The smallest details of social habit are depicted there, and the oddities of a race of people in whom oddity is strangely compatible with the dominion of convention. (pp.333-4)

Critically, James regrets the English lack of artistic spontaneity; emotionally he celebrates its availability for du Maurier's exquisite irony.

There are occasions when the convenient critical formula of artistic stolidity or indifference limits James's reading of particular novelists, just as in French Poets and Novelists he had subjected Balzac to the general label 'realist'. (There is, I think, a narrowly schematic element in James's insistence on 'the absence of free aesthetic life' in George Eliot's novels, for example [PP, p.50].) But as far as English criticism is

concerned, James's generalisations were just. Richard Stang and Kenneth Graham have suggested in their studies of Victorian novel criticism that though James remains unique as a theorist of the novel, most of his major premises had been anticipated by other writers. Stang argues, for example, that most critics would have agreed with James's plea for freedom of subject-matter in 'The Art of Fiction', and Graham suggests that concepts like organic unity were already familiar in 1884.³ But this is the special pleading of hindsight. Scattered insights do not constitute critical maturity - or even a lively atmosphere of discussion - and the danger of Stang and Graham's method is that their juxtaposition of thematically similar comments from hundreds of forgotten reviews suggests a far greater coherence than actually existed. English reviewers' attitudes to the subjects of French naturalist novels reveal a more equivocal view of freedom of subject than Stang allows, and the criteria behind James's famous paragraph in 'The Art of Fiction', 'What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?' (PP, p.392), are very different from those governing the pleas for organic unity Graham cites in comparison. The English critics are arguing simply for relevance; James has in mind the Flaubertian narrative flexibility in which point of view combines inextricably characterisation, incident and description.⁴

English novel criticism was predominantly pragmatic and insular. In 1899, in his essay 'The Present Literary Situation in France', James commented that as far as criticism was concerned, the French 'have so much the start of us that the spirit of the matter begins for them quite where we are condemned to see it - and in no little exhaustion - give way' (NAR, October 1899, p.490). How much truer that was of the 70's and 80's when discussion

centred on the anti-realist feeling which reached its climax in the Vizetelly trials of 1888-9. In emphasising the moral effect of a novel on its reader, English criticism precluded that 'aesthetic or psychological' analysis, 'going into fine shades', the objective assessment of the professional critic, which James sought.⁵ Artistic and critical professionalism in England was the professionalism of Trollope's Autobiography: novels polished off between Post Office duties with the aim of excelling 'if not in quality, at any rate in quantity'.⁶ Arnold, so profound an influence on James's general outlook, wrote hardly at all about the novel, and by 1883 James was finding Arnold's method symptomatic of the English critical imbalance:

. . . the writer who in our time has appealed to [the English] most eloquently on behalf of art has rested his plea on moral standards - has talked exclusively of right and wrong. ('George Du Maurier', PP, p.370)

What was missing in fiction criticism was technical understanding of the way a novel might work - a lack difficult to remedy without the liberating shift from reader to text or author, from prescription to evaluative description. Average Opinion demanded that the novel fulfil certain comfortable conventions and technical discussion amounted to little more than complaints when novels lacked plots or rounded endings, and treatment of characters as if they were actual people. James himself suffered from such methods. A pamphlet of 1884, Ethics of Some Modern Novels, attacked The Portrait of a Lady:

Mr. Goodwood's proposition was unjustifiable. Even if the marriage of a divorced woman could be advocated, there were in this case no grounds for a divorce; though ample ones for a separation.⁷

This is an extreme example, but when Arnold finally wrote his essay

on Tolstoy in 1887 his approach to Anna Karenin ('Poor Anna!') was different only in degree from such crude ad hominem discussions.⁸ Arnold had a particularly difficult subject - Tolstoy's novels have consistently evaded the formalist criteria of Western commentators from James onwards - but in equating Anna Karenin with life he is nevertheless typical of the English critical inadequacy in dealing with realist novels:

But the truth is we are not to take Anna Karénine as a work of art; we are to take it as a piece of life. A piece of life it is.⁹

English critics were taken in by realism's imitation of life, by its Trollopian confidence in the writer's knowledge and control over actuality; they lacked the understanding and the vocabulary to deal with the technical realisation of mimesis.

A neo-classical prescriptiveness, based on art as an idealisation of nature, underlies these confused responses to fiction. A similar presupposition is clearly involved in James's preference for, for example, Turgenev over Zola, but in the context of English criticism the fertile admixture of French formal awareness receives most emphasis. English idealism, lacking this vital modification, can be separated into two main arguments which reach roughly the same position and are frequently confused by contemporary reviewers. According to the first, the novel is an inherently inferior genre, valuable mainly as escape and consolation. Its formal obligations are therefore to the idealising conventions of plot, happy ending and clearly delineated character types of whom the majority are morally attractive. Mrs. Oliphant, for example, in a review which James described to Perry as 'superficial and old-fashioned' (Harlow, p.317), warns young writers off 'French' subjects and describes the novelist as a 'public benefactor' in his ability to 'obtain

for us in the midst of our cares half a day's, nay half an hour's oblivion of them, and who can introduce us in times of solitude to excellent company'. Charles Dudley Warner, in an article in the Atlantic Monthly which James found typical enough to answer at some length in 'Alphonse Daudet' (PP, pp.226-7), states that 'the main object of the novel is to entertain', and, equating art with 'an idealization of nature', reaches the deceptively Jamesian-sounding conclusion that 'bad art in literature is bad morals', 'bad art' being in turn equated with realist method and equivocal endings.¹⁰

In arguing that novels should do justice to 'the saving qualities that keep society on the whole, and family life as a rule, as sweet and good as they are' (p.470), Warner is representative, too, of the second argument according to which the novel has a more serious role as teacher and preserver of the status quo, and should therefore either avoid ugliness and vice altogether or depict them only to demonstrate their uninviting consequences. The potential for hypocrisy and dishonesty in such a view is obvious, though the variations within it are vast and there is a fine line between its more intelligent proponents and James's belief in the high seriousness of art. (And James's sexual squeamishness meant that his plea for liberty was general; like Turgenev, he did not argue the point 'in the interest of particular liberties' ['Ivan Turgénieff', PP, p.304].) Leslie Stephen, for example, is very close to James in his article of 1881, 'The Moral Element in Literature', both in his belief that 'the worth of the author is in proportion to his whole intellectual force', and in his equation between the moral effects of art and those of history:

It is as absurd to ask what is the moral of Faust or Hamlet as to ask what is the moral of the history

of Napoleon. That is not because there is no moral, but because there are infinite morals.

But Stephen doesn't pursue his assertions fully and at the end of the article expresses his concern that in Naturalist art the writer 'appeals to the brute within us, which has not been quite suppressed by the growth of civilisation'.¹¹

In its cruder form this argument degenerates into shrill, emotive Grundyism according to which it is art's role, 'in the midst of the ugly and sordid realities of daily life to present the image of a fairer and better world, the desire of which springs eternal in the human breast'.¹² Much more dangerous, because more insidious, was the defensive rationalised Grundyism of the circulating libraries and more discerning conservative commentators like Andrew Lang and George Saintsbury. Assessing the state of the French novel at the beginning of 1888, Saintsbury found it no healthier than the English, citing as the main reason:

. . . the opposite of that cause which, according to some good people, has weakened our own novel - the absence of consideration for the young person. Doubtless it is not good to write always in the fear of Mr. Podsnap, but it is a great deal worse to live in a perennial state of saying, 'Who's afraid of Mr. Podsnap?'.¹³

James was answering a whole school of defensively insular, and therefore restrictive, critics when he challenged Walter Besant in 'The Art of Fiction' with his crusading principle that 'the good health of an art which undertakes so immediately to reproduce life must demand that it be perfectly free' (PP, p.384).

There are echoes of this conservative prescriptiveness in James's own criticism, however - particularly in French Poets and Novelists - and I want to look more closely at the points of similarity and difference between James and his contemporaries.

The distance between Warner's 'bad art in literature is bad morals' and similar statements by James is clearly huge. When James argues that morality inheres in the author's treatment of his chosen subject he judges that treatment by the internal criteria of consistency and the created illusion of breadth, the 'exquisite geometry' within which relations shall happily appear to stop; Warner, and others like him, judge according to external preconceptions about the nature of art and fictional reality. The comparison illustrates another danger in the method of Richard Stang's study. Apparent similarities of terminology or even argument between James and contemporaries serve in most cases only to emphasise their radically different degrees of understanding: criteria, not forms of words, are what matter. And yet prescription, as we saw in the last chapter, was something James never fully shook off; in James's consistent emphasis on the moral significance of art, we can detect his common background with a critic as different empirically as Warner.

The picture becomes more confused when we compare James with a more intelligent critic than Warner. Leslie Stephen's essays on morality and art have in common with James the Ruskinian argument that good art will be produced by good men, in James's words, 'that the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer' (PP, p.406).¹⁴ Stephen was one of the few English intellectuals James respected - and he was of course in part responsible for James's recognition in England, publishing Daisy Miller and Washington Square in the Cornhill.¹⁵ In 'The Moral Element in Literature' his emphasis on the myriad morals to be drawn from literature as from life distinguishes him from Grundyism and suggests a position close to James's own. In James's critical theory, the principle of quality

of mind and the hope that subject-matter be 'none but the richest' are central to his position of compromise; they vitally qualify the French principle of freedom by introducing an evaluative term. Again, the parallel with Leslie Stephen reminds us that James's eclecticism had a firmly Anglo-Saxon base. But the similarity with Stephen serves too to demonstrate James's radicalism and the justification for his unqualified dismissal of English fiction criticism. For James and Stephen's interpretations of quality of mind are, on examination, rather different and in Stephen's treatment of particular authors, both as editor and critic, we see how ingrained were defensive 'front-parlor aesthetics', even among the more enlightened. In his essay 'Art and Morality' of 1875, Stephen takes issue with realism's claim that all experience is legitimate material for objective artistic representation:

There are passions which ought to be suppressed, however little we may be inclined to the ascetic theory. The progress of the race is a process of eradicating brutalising and anti-social instincts.¹⁶

And he put these principles into practice when he complained in 1871 that Balzac gave a diseased vision of life, and later in his book on George Eliot when he found Maggie's elopement with Stephen Guest unacceptably degrading; as an editor his protective morality was alarmed by the first draft of Hardy's Return of the Native in which Thomasin went through an illegal marriage ceremony with Wildeve.¹⁷ This view of art as the handmaid of Victorian civilisation is implicit in the remark I quoted earlier from Stephen's essay 'The Moral Element in Literature' condemning Naturalism's appeal to 'the brute within us'. The artist's mind is discussed in that essay in terms of health and disease:

. . . the highest powers can only reach their fullest development in a thoroughly healthy organism, using

health in the widest possible sense, which therefore includes moral health.

We are told that though a work of art should not aim to make a single moral point, the author's 'whole purpose should be to utter his assertions in the most perfect and vigorous way possible'.¹⁸

In this context, Stephen's apparently Jamesian willingness to make morality dependent on quality of mind looks rather different. For Stephen this quality has to do with solid and wholesome ideas; for James quality means quality of perception and intelligence, that free intelligence playing upon a subject for which ideas are merely a restrictive apparatus, described by Keats as 'negative capability' and recognised in James himself by T.S. Eliot: 'He had a mind so fine that no idea could violate it'.¹⁹ Stephen measures 'the worth of a book by the worth of the friend whom it reveals to me', an essentially subjective approach²⁰; for James, the value of a novel 'is greater or less according to the intensity of the impression', an intensity realised and judged by technical ability, susceptible to more objective criteria:

We may believe that of a certain idea even the most sincere novelist can make nothing at all, and the event may perfectly justify our belief; but the failure will have been a failure to execute, and it is in the execution that the fatal weakness is recorded. ('The Art of Fiction', PP, pp.384, 395)

This kind of comparison between the principles underlying similarities of phrase suggests the critical distance between James and even his more intelligent contemporaries.

I have based this comparison on Partial Portraits, the collection which grew out of James's confrontation with English prescriptiveness. In the earlier French Poets and Novelists the balance between idealism and innovation is less successful.

Published in February 1878, French Poets and Novelists was part of James's bid to supply the English need for both a novelist and a critic which he had described to Perry on his arrival. It was intended both to prepare the English public to receive him as a serious novelist who had assimilated current developments in the French novel, and to form part of a general strategy to introduce a broader field of reference and more sophisticated techniques into English critical discussion. The serious reviews greeted the collection with bland commendation, accepting James as an advocate of critical moderation and common sense. James must have felt both gratified and disappointed by their response. On a personal level, it was pleasing to have his peculiar qualifications as a novel critic recognised; but the general challenge implicit in a book devoted to French literature was ignored.²¹ It is hardly surprising that it should have fallen flat. In James's judgment that Balzac 'had no natural sense of morality', in his regret that modern French novel-writing lacked 'charm', in his assumption that we 'avert our heads' from Baudelaire's subject-matter, in his disapproval of Turgenev's pessimism (FPN, pp.114, 242, 83, 309-15), reviewers recognised and approved their own preconceptions.

Yet James's method in French Poets and Novelists is subtly radical in ways the critics missed; the volume is not interesting simply because 'it shows us what our subject had to escape from', as Ezra Pound once suggested.²² Attention to the how of realist method rubs shoulders uneasily with a more traditional English emphasis on its presuppositions and effects. In the last chapter I analysed, for example, the confused criteria behind James's objections to Turgenev's pessimism, pointing out the way in which a valid discrimination between integral and gratuitous irony is mixed up with the dictates of personal taste (above, pp.96-7).

There is a similar confusion in James's judgment of Madame Bovary: 'At the end the intensity of illusion becomes horrible; overwhelmed with disgust and pity [the reader] closes the book' (FPN, p.263). Objective critical vocabulary is qualified by emotive epithets as James uncritically dismisses the novel's intensity of illusion as 'horrible'. Earlier in the essay on Flaubert James makes an important distinction:

The mass of the public finds [Flaubert's novels] dull, and wonders how a writer can expend such an immensity of talent in making himself unreadable. To a discriminating taste, however, M. Flaubert can write nothing that does not repay attention. (FPN, p.254)

In the context of English novel criticism, in which judgment was largely a matter of systematised personal taste, James's attempt to separate critical from personal responses, average from 'discriminating' taste, is important.

The analytic method which distinguished James's early criticism from that of his American contemporaries is similarly significantly different from English critical norms. James's approach to characterisation, for example, was based, as we have seen, not on an equation of characters with people, but on his appreciation of the creative relationship between author and character, that objective portrait-painting in which the author's intelligence plays alike over the attractive and the unattractive figure.²³ In the essay on Balzac, James extends to the novel the kind of serious detailed analysis normally reserved for verse. He discusses, for example, Balzac's 'narrative architecture', exploring the interaction of character and place and the role of verifiable details which make the 'tissue' of his novels 'extraordinarily firm and hard' (FPN, pp.96, 118). Again the shift of attention is from the illusion itself to the means by which it

is created.

This kind of technical emphasis became a vital element in James's stand against English restrictions in Partial Portraits, though it wasn't fully demonstrated until the Prefaces were published. It is implicit in the generalisations of 'The Art of Fiction' and suggests the form the unwritten sequel to that essay might have taken.²⁴ During the 80's, under the pressure of first-hand experience, as a novelist, of English critical obtuseness, James's own stance clarified and the inconsistencies of French Poets and Novelists gave way to the confidence of Partial Portraits: James's 'French' concern with method became more marked. We can see the process at work in the 1883 essay 'Anthony Trollope'. There are several small but important differences between the original version published in the Century Magazine and that in Partial Portraits (1888), which show James moving towards a more precise, and more French, critical vocabulary. In his discussion of Trollope's treatment of his protagonist in The Vicar of Bullhampton, for example, James's original phrase, 'understood and expressed', becomes 'analysed and rendered'; and in the later version James hesitates to call one of Trollope's novels a 'picture', 'because the idea of composition is not the controlling one'.²⁵ In both cases James imitates the French adoption of critical terms from the visual arts in the interests of greater technical precision. Slightly different criteria underlie another change in the interests of precision earlier in the essay. Trollope's 'complete appreciation of reality' (Century Mag., p.386) becomes in the later version his 'complete appreciation of the usual' (PP, pp.100-1): James avoids the original implication that there is but one reality, in keeping with his view of fictional reality as a variable quality, dependent on the novelist's creation of illusion.

And according to that, most important, criterion, Trollope is judged successful. French vocabulary and French emphases are used to define the nature of Trollope's genius, rather than as yardsticks by which he is found inadequate. James depicts Trollope as the type of English artistic indifference; he 'responds in perfection to a certain English ideal':

According to that ideal it is rather dangerous to be explicitly or consciously an artist - to have a system, a doctrine, a form. (PP, p.100)

But the essay as a whole suggests the potentially equally restrictive nature of French formal emphases, since Trollope's achievement exists in spite of, even because of, his unselfconscious method. Discussing, for example, the preeminence of character in Trollope's novels, James comments:

There is not even much description, in the sense which the present votaries of realism in France attach to that word. (PP, p.106)

The juxtaposition is to Trollope's advantage; he achieves 'finish, such as it is' by other means. The qualification is present but not damning - James has learnt to contain critically his earlier, harsher ambivalence towards Trollope, the 'partiality of which we have yet been somewhat ashamed' (N&R, p.68)²⁶ - and the essay beautifully demonstrates James's finely achieved balance, typical of Partial Portraits, between his general condemnation of English indifference to method and his responsibility as a critic to the particular qualities of his chosen authors. He avoids answering dogma with dogma, demonstrating the principle of freedom in his Sainte-Beuvian flexibility.

James's most important essay on Sainte-Beuve was published in 1880 and it provides in effect the thematic introduction to the series of essays which became Partial Portraits.²⁷ For in

that essay James emphasises Sainte-Beuve's critical independence, his belief that the critic was not 'the narrow lawgiver or the rigid censor', and he lists among his 'great qualities' his 'intense interest in the truth of any matter, his desire to arrive at the most just and comprehensive perception of it' ('S-B', pp.305, 303). Truth according to that formulation is a varying quality, inherent in the object of attention; Sainte-Beuve's perception, like James's, remains unviolated by the tyranny of ideas. We have seen James's critical independence at work in the Trollope essay, where French realist vocabulary is used to characterise a very different kind of realism. Throughout the 80's he exercised that independence in the interests of greater critical awareness and his radical eclecticism is nowhere more clearly seen than in his sensitivity to the relationship between author and reader.

A stereotype of the average reader dominated English novel criticism, and 'truth' was an external standard based on defensive conventional assumptions about what life was like, or could be acknowledged to be like. French naturalist theory, according to James's rather schematic view, ignored the reader except as the recipient of a doctrinaire, and equally distorting, pessimism, which equated truth or reality with low life and determinism. In the interests of freedom James rejects both emphases. 'The Art of Fiction' is an argument against prescription by readers, but in shifting critical emphasis from subject to execution James acknowledges that such a shift can never be absolute:

I needn't remind you that there are all sorts of tastes: who can know it better? . . . So that it comes back very quickly, as I have said, to the liking: in spite of M. Zola, who reasons less powerfully than he represents, and who will not reconcile himself to this absoluteness of taste, thinking that

there are certain things that people ought to like, and that they can be made to like. (PP, p.397)

The reader with a priori assumptions against the subject of a particular book has of course no right to pronounce on it critically:

Of course I may not care for your idea at all; I may think it silly, or stale, or unclean; in which case I wash my hands of you altogether. I may content myself with believing that you will not have succeeded in being interesting, but I shall, of course, not attempt to demonstrate it, and you will be as indifferent to me as I am to you. (PP, pp.396-7)

And yet James's acknowledgment of the absoluteness of taste is in effect a recognition that this complete separation of preconception from technical appreciation is an impossibility: 'As people feel life, so they will feel the art that is most closely related to it' (PP, p.397). James saw, with the insight of the creative artist, that realist fiction's peculiar problem of disguising its artificiality in the interests of mimesis raised particular, messy, critical difficulties. Even the most subtle reader will be influenced by personal experience; when we glibly pronounce a character 'convincing', for example, the line between internal and imported criteria is inevitably blurred.

Of course James is concerned to educate English readers into a greater awareness of the novel as both mimesis and artifact, but he recognises the germ of reason in their existing wrong-headedly life-based approach. James locates truth in a balance between the author's original perception and his realisation of it and criticism must steer a similarly balanced course between the dictatorship of presuppositions about the nature of life, and the Flaubertian dictatorship of form:

. . . even when we are so queerly constituted as to be ninety-nine parts literary we are still a hundredth

part something else. This hundredth part may, once we possess the book - or the book possesses us - make us imperfect as readers, and yet without it should we want or get the book at all? ('Gustave Flaubert, 1902', NN, p.79)

That hundredth part is as susceptible as the literary parts to education, and the novel, with the help of an informed criticism, is uniquely equipped to supply vicariously the variety of experience on which its education depends. 'The essence of moral energy is to survey the whole field', and so we come back to the freedom of both novelist and critic as a necessary factor in the high moral seriousness of the form.

James described criticism's educative role best in his late essay, 'The New Novel':

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 its interest, as only by its so ascertaining them can the interest grow more various. This is the very education of our imaginative life (NN, pp.249-50)

Making the reading process 'as aware of itself as possible' - James's constant aim as a critic, though during his later years there is a growing discrepancy between theory and critical practice. In the rest of 'The New Novel', and in the ensuing controversy with H.G. Wells, James only partly fulfils this ideal of uncommitted intelligent curiosity, but during the 80's and 90's he was genuinely receptive to different kinds of 'doing'. This practical demonstration of critical flexibility was part of James's strategy against prescription. As the furore over French realism came to

a head and spilled over into attacks on his own fictional method, James refused to be tied down to the terms of the controversy in which he was immediately involved. His creative understanding of the novel had brought him to a far wider interpretation of 'realism', so that he avoided, for example, his contemporaries' rigid differentiation between realism and romance. James used the vocabulary of current assumptions to overturn them. His 'single criticism' of Besant in fact destroys the basis of the school of criticism Besant represented and sets the novel and its critics on a new and freer footing: 'He seems to me to mistake in attempting to say so definitely beforehand what sort of an affair the good novel will be' (PP, pp.383-4).

The Nature of Realism: Besant, Howells and Stevenson

Realism is a literary mode easier to recognise than to define. It can of course be used in a restricted sense, to refer to the particular phenomenon of determinist, objective studies of low life or the commonplace, which originated in France and continued in this century mainly in America.²⁸ But in its common general application it becomes almost as protean as the novel itself, definable only by the descriptive juxtaposition of representative examples, as in Auerbach's classic study, or by J.P. Stern's negative definition, exploring the limitations of its coexistence with other modes within a single text.²⁹ James embraced realism in its broadest and vaguest sense, as having a basic mimetic obligation to 'life', delighting in its resistance to more restrictive definitions. In the criticism of the middle period James anticipated his own later practice and began to push realism to its limits, minimising, though never wholly abandoning, obligations to a consensus about a knowable reality

and consequently eschewing distinctions between realism and romance. In contrast with most of his critical contemporaries, he worked from the Paterian assumption that judgments of 'imitations of life' must be ultimately subjective - 'may not people differ infinitely as to what constitutes life' ('Alphonse Daudet', PP, p.228) - and the only received idea about the nature of reality to which he held the novelist was its complexity. Beyond that, reality was a function of the perceiving consciousness, 'un coin de la nature vu à travers un tempérament', and the novelist's remaining obligation was to prove the validity of his perception. In judging the success of that, objective assessment was possible.

The vitally flexible nature of James's realism was misunderstood by his contemporaries. His novels were labelled 'realist' according to blinkered definitions and a hostile equation of realism with its particular 'French' manifestations informs even the more favourable reviews. R.H. Hutton, for example, editor of the Spectator, offered very qualified approval of the genius he found in Washington Square:

There is no doubt that it is genius, and genius of the most marked order, genius for painting character, and genius for conceiving unalloyed dismalness of effect, without tragedy and without comedy. If you desire a consummately clever study of perfect dreariness, you have it in Washington Square.³⁰

Hutton is closer than most reviewers to the descriptive approach James sought but his analysis is heavily coloured by idealist preconceptions. (It is interesting to compare English attitudes to James's novels with a sympathetic French article which appeared in the Revue des Deux Mondes in 1883, praising James for 'l'art des portraits, l'horreur de la banalité, une distinction de forme'.³¹)

But James suffered most from the restrictive labels applied

not by hostile reviewers but by an ally. In November 1882, William Dean Howells published in the Century Magazine his controversial article 'of painfully overcharged appreciation', 'Henry James, Jr.'.³² In making James the representative of 'a new kind of fiction', Howells raised the defensive ire of English critics and ushered in a period of discussion about the nature of fiction which, if it didn't match the French critical atmosphere which James had enjoyed in 1876, at least began to remedy the complete lack of such discussion which he had bemoaned to Perry on his arrival in England. Howells provided James's anti-realist critics with ammunition. He talked of James's 'analytic tendency', confirming the conservative critics' use of 'analysis' as a term of abuse, and fuelled their indignation further by his claim that 'in one manner or other the stories were all told long ago'. The most contentious passage in the article raised the new school of fiction above its predecessors:

The art of fiction has, in fact, become a finer art in our day than it was with Dickens and Thackeray. We could not suffer the confidential attitude of the latter now, nor the mannerism of the former, any more than we could endure the prolixity of Richardson or the coarseness of Fielding. These great men are of the past - they and their methods and interests; even Trollope and Reade are not of the present. The new school derives from Hawthorne and George Eliot rather than any others; . . . It is largely influenced by French fiction in form; but it is the realism of Daudet rather than the realism of Zola that prevails with it . . .³³

The English response to such upstart iconoclasm was immediate. In March 1883 James wrote to Howells that 'articles about you and me are as thick as blackberries - we are daily immolated on the altar of Thackeray and Dickens'. An article in the Quarterly Review,

'American Novels', was typically shrill ('Three volumes of "analysis" in small type is somewhat trying, even to the most sternly cultivated aestheticism') and even reasoned responses to Howells's points, such as that by Arthur Tilley in the National Review, bowed ultimately to the yoke of popular convention:

Human nature, in spite of modern improvements, remains much the same; it still enjoys a 'rounded plot'; it still pursues, not for the sake of the pursuit, but for the sake of the end; it still loves to be amused; and, above all, it still hates to be bored.³⁴

The rather unenlightened debate about plot and character which followed Howells's article is still echoing in Besant's 'The Art of Fiction', in James's reply to Besant, and in his ensuing debate with Robert Louis Stevenson.³⁵

The month in which Howells's 'Henry James, Jr.' appeared saw too the publication in Longman's Magazine of Stevenson's 'A Gossip on Romance'. The essay is typical of Stevenson's criticism in its combination of intelligent insight with a disarming but also irritating refusal to take itself seriously, of sophisticated critical perception with the point of view of a very ordinary reader. He apparently indulges the reader's escapist longings:

. . . the great creative writer shows us the realisation and the apotheosis of the day-dreams of common men. His stories may be nourished with the realities of life, but their true mark is to satisfy the nameless longings of the reader, and to obey the ideal laws of the day-dream.

But he goes on to argue the necessary organic inter-relation of 'the dramatic and the pictorial, the moral and romantic interest' in art's highest achievements and to suggest romance's possible transcendence of antithetical labels: 'It reaches into the highest abstraction of the ideal; it does not refuse the most pedestrian

realism'.³⁶ The appearance of Stevenson's article beside Howells's plea for the new realism foreshadows the debate between realism and romance which was to preoccupy critics during the 80's and which is implicit in Howells's comment that James 'declared' for the novel when he stood 'at the dividing ways of the novel and the romance'.³⁷ Stevenson differs importantly from later advocates of romance, like Andrew Lang and George Saintsbury, in his expansive and exploratory use of the term. His is not a defensive and essentially moralistic reaction to realism, but the practitioner's appraisal of the potential of his preferred mode. It is doubtful whether James read Stevenson's essay before it was reprinted in Memories and Portraits in 1887, but he would have approved its refusal to be tied down by critical labels; it typifies that quality of honest independence which made James so fond of Stevenson.

I talked of James 'suffering' from Howells's article, since it was Howells's readiness to define and differentiate, to identify James as leader of a school and as peculiarly American, which undermined James's Flaubertian desire for flexible independence. The article encouraged a restricted interpretation of James's realism and a tendency to identify it with Howells's own more doctrinaire method. Howells and James had, of course, similar interests in expanding critical awareness but the obvious partisanship of 'Henry James, Jr.' points up just how far James's critical strategy transcended mere self-defence. I would not, however, want to go as far as Oscar Cargill, who has argued that James's annoyed embarrassment at Howells's 1882 tribute was sufficient to cause a serious rift between the two. This is hardly supported by the extensive and continuous correspondence (much of it still unpublished) in which the ties of a long-standing affection and mutual respect are clear. James extended his critical flexibility

to Howells himself and bore his well-meaning panegyrics quietly. In an atmosphere of critical indifference Howells was one of the few correspondents - Stevenson and Gosse were the others - with whom James enjoyed regular critical discussion.³⁸

In the 1882 article Howells was, after all, on the same side as James, but we should beware of making the contemporary mistake of therefore confounding their critical positions. In seeking to encourage what he perhaps rather optimistically saw as James's popularity, Howells endorsed James's emphasis on the reader's obligation to allow the author his chosen method and to be prepared to reassess the form in the light of that:

If we take him at all we must take him on his own ground, for clearly he will not come to ours. We must make concessions to him, not in this respect only, but in several others, chief among which is the motive for reading fiction.

It seems to me that an enlightened criticism will recognize in Mr. James's fiction a metaphysical genius working to aesthetic results, and will not be disposed to deny it any method it chooses to employ.³⁹

But Howells stumbles on such principles as a result of his plea for 'particular liberties' rather than, like James, seeing them as central to the general cause of freedom. Critical reactions to Howells's article retreated from the suggestion that the reader be receptively prepared to work at a novel. Their defence of the easy popular conventions points up the growing rift between commercial success and aesthetic self-awareness, a rift engendered by the monopoly of the circulating libraries and the critical defence of their restrictive criteria. Howells saw James's need in such a situation to make his audience; his eagerness to define and claim popularity for the 'new school' is the result of a desire to help do that.

Walter Besant's lecture 'The Art of Fiction', delivered at the Royal Institution in April 1884, is at first sight an attack on the commercial Philistinism which denied fiction the status of a fine art. It suggests a plea for the seriousness of the form similar to James's own. The terms in which Besant defends his claim, however, implicitly identify him with the forces he is ostensibly attacking. He bases his case not on the novel's inherent qualities, its particular nature and potential, but on a confused combination of neo-classical claims for the antiquity of storytelling, moralistic emphasis on its didactic role, and the dangerous assumption that its popularity guarantees its worth:

It is an unfailing source of delight to millions, happily not too critical. Why, out of all the books taken down from the shelves of the public libraries, four-fifths are novels, and of all those that are bought nine-tenths are novels. Compared with this tremendous engine of popular influence, what are all the other Arts put together?⁴⁰

John Goode, in his stimulating but uneven article on James's controversy with Besant, has pointed out the significance of Besant's position as chairman of the Society of Authors which, in its concern to promote and protect writers' commercial interests, treated the novel as a commodity. Besant's own novels were strongly didactic, urging philanthropic optimism as the solution to social problems.⁴¹ In his lecture, seriousness is equated with broad moral efficacy which is in turn measured by popular success - fiction's status as an art form is made to depend on establishment moralism and the whims of uneducated taste. This defensive need to justify the form in public terms qualifies all those parts of the lecture in which Besant examines fiction's particular achievements: having established, for example, that the 'human interest in

Fiction . . . must come before aught else', he reduces the creation of character to adding 'another exemplar or warning to humanity' (Besant, pp. 10, 22).

Besant rejects Howellsian realism in a disparaging reference to 'a school which pretends that there is no need for a story' (p.27), but his own position is naively mimetic in its unexamined assumption that the novelist has an obligation to an absolute external reality and that even the most unsophisticated reader will be capable of assessing his accuracy:

Remember that most of the people who read novels, and know nothing of the art of writing them, recognise before any other quality that of fidelity . . . (p.16)

To achieve this fidelity the aspiring novelist is advised to follow Besant's first Rule: 'that everything in Fiction which is invented and is not the result of personal experience and observation is worthless' (p.15).⁴² We can supply the reasoning behind this rejection of imaginative invention from an earlier essay, 'The Value of Fiction':

If a novel is but faithful to life, it cannot but be wholesome in its effects, because it will be based on the great moral laws which govern the issues of life.⁴³

Public optimism rather than critical understanding governs Besant's lecture. An essentially neo-classical belief in providential nature and the possibility of imitating it leads him to ignore the problem of how observation is translated onto the page, of how the ordinary reader actually recognises the fidelity in which Besant has such faith. What he fails to see is that the unsophisticated reader will mistake established convention for accuracy. In the context of the debate between realism and romance, Besant's demands that the novel concentrate on character and eschew imagination place

him firmly on the side of realism, but once again presuppositions about reality and easy assumptions about how representation is achieved restrict novel criticism to the unthinking repetition of formulae which embody certain acceptable moral notions and ensure popular success.

The publication of Besant's 'Art of Fiction' provided James with an opportunity to correct and extend both Besant's confusion of realism with blinkered moralism and Howells's identification of realism with James's own analytic method. The lecture was typical of so much that James disliked in English criticism - its conservative appeal to popular taste, its moral dishonesty masquerading as a knowledge of 'truth', its fear of imaginative experiment and willingness to lay down prescriptive rules - yet its central plea for the artistic seriousness of the novel form meant that he could reply diplomatically, proceeding by what appeared to be a careful qualification rather than aggressive negation of Besant's points. James's own 'Art of Fiction' is, among other things, a masterpiece of irony, but the generous welcome extended to Besant in the opening paragraphs is genuine: 'There is something very encouraging in his having put into form certain of his ideas on the mystery of story-telling' (PP, p.375).

Two other responses to Besant's lecture remind us of the misleading closeness of vocabulary and even ideas between James and contemporary critics, something James exploits in 'The Art of Fiction' as part of his conciliatory strategy. Andrew Lang, for example, whose 'beautiful thin facility to write everything down to the lowest level of Philistine twaddle' James was to describe later to Stevenson (Lubbock, I, 139), answered Besant in the Pall Mall Gazette. The tone of his short article contrasts strongly with James's generosity. Lang is far more concerned to score minor

points than to take up the larger issues raised by the lecture: he takes issue with Besant's claim that story-telling is among the most ancient art forms, for example, and (rightly) with the implicit assumption that popularity can somehow be used as a measure of artistic success; then he shifts his attention to Howells and the importance or otherwise of 'story':

To my own taste, the story is the thing, and I prefer, for sheer sensual enjoyment, a book like 'Margot La Balafrée' to all the Bostonian nymphs who ever rejected English dukes for psychological reasons. But, to be fair, it is a matter of taste. A novel is a picture of life; many people like the picture to represent still life, or, as the French put it, nature morte.⁴⁴

The dismissive reference to Bostonian nymphs of course again brackets James with Howells by recalling the patriotic defensiveness roused by 'An International Episode' five years before, and James was in turn more subtly dismissive of Lang's comparison in 'The Art of Fiction' (PP, p.401).⁴⁵ But what I want to emphasise is the difference between Lang's reduction of the whole problem to 'a matter of taste' and James's exploration of the complex relationship between taste and appreciation. Lang shows a closed and complacent refusal to move from an entrenched position: the sarcasm of the last sentence is typical - the French phrase is clearly added so that we re-translate it literally. A second response came from James's reviewer R.H. Hutton, in the Spectator. As might be expected, Hutton is more thoughtful than Lang and he is mainly concerned to point out the impossibility of writing good fiction according to rules. He falls back on the idea of individual and indefinable genius:

. . . within the margin between the boundary of actual experience and the boundary of that which a daring imagination duly saturated with experience suggests, lie all the greatest efforts of the greatest novelists.⁴⁶

James would have agreed - he makes a similar point in 'The Art of Fiction' - but again the difference is between James's exploration and extension and Hutton's defensive use of received ideas. When James takes issue with Besant's rule that the novelist write only from experience, he does so by examining the nature of both experience and genius, of the interaction Hutton takes for granted:

What kind of experience is intended, and where does it begin and end? Experience is never limited, and it is never complete; It is the very atmosphere of the mind; and when the mind is imaginative - much more when it happens to be that of a man of genius - it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations. . . . If experience consists of impressions, it may be said that impressions are experience, just as (have we not seen it?) they are the very air we breathe. (PP, pp.388-9)

The effect is both freer and clearer than conventional generalisation.

The terms in which James welcomes Besant's lecture contain, for all their warmth, implicit criticism and they immediately establish the fine balance between topicality and generality which controls the whole essay. James compares the present awakening of debate with the English novel's previous lack of self-awareness:

Only a short time ago it might have been supposed that the English novel was not what the French call discutable. . . . I do not say it was necessarily the worse for that: it would take much more courage than I possess to intimate that the form of the novel as Dickens and Thackeray (for instance) saw it had any taint of incompleteness. It was, however, naif (PP, pp.375-6)

The published version of Besant's lecture makes no mention of the French novel, betraying an insularity to which James immediately draws attention, and which he continues to criticise implicitly throughout his essay in his choice of examples, replacing Besant's use of Charles Reade and James Payn by Flaubert, Turgenev and

Edmond de Goncourt.⁴⁷ James's reference to Dickens and Thackeray recalls of course Howells's essay; the parenthesis draws attention to the reference even as it wittily suggests its randomness, and establishes the desired mixture of commitment and independence in James's attitude to the Howells controversy.

James's treatment of Besant is controlled by this finely balanced tone which makes endorsement and censure almost indistinguishable. He extends Besant's claim for fiction as an art form by suggesting that public recognition of its status is entirely dependent on its own critical self-awareness: 'It must take itself seriously for the public to take it so' (PP, p.377). This seriousness should be a feature of narrative itself, as well as of its associated criticism, and in developing this argument James undermines Besant's criteria and shifts the discussion onto a different plane:

It is still expected, though perhaps people are ashamed to say it, that a production which is after all only a 'make believe' (for what else is a 'story'?) shall be in some degree apologetic - shall renounce the pretension of attempting really to represent life. This, of course, any sensible, wide-awake story declines to do The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life. (PP, pp.377-8)

James's technical approach is immediately established in his demand that the novel appear confident of its created illusion. 'Apologetic' refers to the Trollopian fraternising with the reader which James felt endangered representation:

It implies that the novelist is less occupied in looking for the truth (the truth, of course I mean, that he assumes, the premises that we must grant him, whatever they may be), than the historian, and in doing so it deprives him at a stroke of all his standing-room. (PP, pp.379-80)

Trollope's cavalier disregard for the integrity of his fictional illusion finds its critical parallel in the defensive tone of Besant's lecture, where a claim for the inherent seriousness of fiction is contradicted by a concern to justify it according to external moral criteria. They stand as practitioner and theorist of unthinking Victorian realism.⁴⁸ James's tone, in contrast, suggests not apology but celebration of a form whose justification is its unique flexibility, its freedom to reflect the myriad views of reality provided by individual novelists, and it is here that James makes his most radical break not only with naive contemporary discussions of realism, but with the whole nineteenth-century mimetic tradition:

. . . the good health of an art which undertakes so immediately to reproduce life must demand that it be perfectly free. It lives upon exercise, and the very meaning of exercise is freedom. . . . The ways in which it is at liberty to accomplish this result (of interesting us) strike me as innumerable, and such as can only suffer from being marked out or fenced in by prescription. They are as various as the temperament of man, and they are successful in proportion as they reveal a particular mind, different from others. 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 the impression. (PP, p.384)

James's definition of the novel as a mode of perception, summed up most famously in the Prefaces's image of the house of fiction's many windows (AN, p.46), is also the centre of 'The Art of Fiction'. Later arguments - that we judge a work by its execution, that 'the measure of reality is very difficult to fix', that we grant the artist his donnée and expand our concept of 'story', that the reader's personal impression of life, his taste, is bound to

affect judgment (PP, pp. 385, 387, 394, 400, 395 ff.) - restate or are dependent on this central description of the novel as 'a personal, a direct impression of life' and of its value as dependent on the 'intensity of the impression'. It is the centre of James's controversy with Besant in its shift of emphasis from external to internal criteria, invalidating prescription at a stroke, and its logical outcome is to extend discussion far beyond contemporary quarrels about permissible subjects and authentic characters to the post-realist criterion of James's 1902 essay on Balzac:

. . . all we can do is to say that the true itself can't be more than done and that if the false in this way equals it we must give up looking for the difference. (NN, p.111)

James originally wrote that: 'The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does compete with life',⁴⁹ and altered 'compete' to 'attempt to represent' in 1888 (PP, p.378) after Stevenson's objection that art can't hope to compete with life's multifariousness. Mark Spilka has argued that James discarded the phrase 'before its final meaning had become apparent',⁵⁰ but in 1888 James also added the parenthesis locating truth clearly in the novelist's perception or interpretation of reality: '(the truth, of course I mean, that he assumes, the premises that we must grant him, whatever they may be)' (PP, p.379). He appeases Stevenson, whose friendship was one of the most positive results of 'The Art of Fiction', but carefully maintains his original modernist implication by inserting this vital explanatory clause. Spilka's unwillingness to grant James full understanding of his own implications perhaps arises from the specifically realist context of 'The Art of Fiction'. The reference to Trollope, however, (whose achievement, as we have seen, James nevertheless valued)

helps to pinpoint the complexity of James's position. His argument is working at two rather different levels. Like Besant, he is first of all defending the novel's status against the claim that it is 'after all only a "make believe"' (PP, p.378), that it is simply not 'true', a naive but persistent assumption, probably responsible for Arnold's distrust of the form, and oddly still echoing into the twentieth century. Trollope's self-denigratory intrusions pander to and partake of this attitude. Unlike Besant, who similarly panders to the novel's detractors by looking for external justification, James's defence is to stress the necessary autonomy of the imagined world, with Balzac's 'magnificent historical tone' as his touchstone ('Anthony Trollope', PP, p.117). But written into what is apparently an apologia for traditional realism is the sense of its fragility. Trollope's willingness to step out of his illusion is paradoxically the result of complete confidence in his narrative position, in the knowledge that 'he can give his narrative any turn the reader may like best', as James puts it in 'The Art of Fiction' (PP, p.379). He can afford to condescend to his form in front of the reader exactly because they share a belief in his ability to know and control both his fictional world and the 'real' world which it reflects. James's acute awareness of the 'umbrella' of consciousness (Letters, I, 145) had begun to cast doubts on the possibility of such complete knowledge as early as 1869. He distrusts authorial intrusion because it crudely destroys the illusion through which the realist does seek to 'compete' with life; it is also too painful a reminder of the individual's narrative insecurity, of which Trollope was never even aware.

I don't want to misrepresent the buoyant tone of 'The Art of Fiction', with its resounding peroration urging the young

novelist to 'try and catch the colour of life itself' (PP, p.408). The 'sense of certain difficulties',⁵¹ was always a stimulant for James and central to his love of the novel and its paradoxes: 'here we get exactly the high price of the novel as a literary form . . . positively to appear more true to its character in proportion as it strains, or tends to burst, with a latent extravagance, its mould' (AN, pp. 45-6). What I want to stress is the essay's strongly relativist argument, its (I am sure) conscious iteration of what was to become a central modernist perception. Written during what has been described as his most straightforwardly realist period, 'The Art of Fiction' (like the exactly contemporary Princess Casamassima) points forward to James's later practice where the relationship between fiction and reality is extended to include ironic or ideal projections - 'so much the worse for that life' (AN, p.222) - and the solipsistic use of the reflecting consciousness invites us to read The Turn of the Screw, The Sacred Fount, The Ambassadors as reflexive texts about the limitations of knowledge and of narrative.

James's break with Besant's (and Howells's) external standard of truth was complete, and when he described 'The Art of Fiction' to Stevenson as 'simply a plea for liberty' (HJ & RLS, p.102) he hugely understated the radical complexity of his arguments and motives. The brilliance of the essay lies in its combination of this radical questioning with contemporaneity. James rejects, for example, the distinction between 'romance' and 'novel':

I can think of no obligation to which the 'romancer' would not be held equally with the novelist; the standard of execution is equally high for each. (PP, p.394)

The argument arises logically from the concept of fiction's 'competition' with life - both realism and romance are concerned

to create illusion - and from James's plea for the novelist's freedom to move unhampered among established modes to express his individual perception, the critic's job being assessment after the fact. But James is also seeking immediate escape from the repetitive and sterile to-and-fro of the current romance/realism debate as conducted by, for example, George Saintsbury:

. . . the fictitious dissection of character deal[s] for the most part with minute and superficial points But the incidents, the broad and poetic features of character on which the romance relies, are not matters which change at all. They are always the same, with the sameness of nature, not of convention.⁵²

Andrew Lang, another advocate of romance, opened his essay 'Realism and Romance' with a deceptively Jamesian argument:

. . . these two elements blend with each other so subtly and so constantly, that it really seems the extreme of perversity to shout for nothing but romance on one side, or for nothing but analysis of character and motive on the other.

The similarity with James is of course superficial, as Lang's inflexible definitions suggest; his plea for compromise is a thinly-disguised prescriptive attack on realism, some examples of which, he allows, are 'about as good as possible, granting the genre'.⁵³

James's admiration for the hero of these defenders of romance, Robert Louis Stevenson, perhaps puzzling at first sight, was an attraction of opposites reinforced by their mutual seriousness about the novel. As with Loti or Daudet, James was drawn to a very different personality; he even used the same phrase to describe both Stevenson and Daudet: in his first letter to Stevenson he delights in 'the native gaiety of all that you write' (HJ & RLS, p.102), and Daudet's 'native gayety' is cited in James's essay

of 1882 as part of his charm (LRE, p.183). More importantly, he was fascinated and attracted by Stevenson's romantic test of the relationship between fiction and reality and by his solution of the fictional problem in ways James himself would never have attempted. Again as he wrote of Daudet, 'half my affection . . . comes from the fact that he writes in a way in which I would not write even if I could' (PP, p.213). James recognised in Stevenson's 'romances' and essays exactly that flexible and fertile approach to genre which he advocated in 'The Art of Fiction'.

Soon after the publication of 'The Art of Fiction', James wrote to Perry of his disappointment at its reception:

. . . my poor article has not attracted the smallest attention here & I haven't heard, or seen, an allusion to it. There is almost no care for literary discussion here, - questions of form, of principle, the 'serious' idea of the novel appeals apparently to no one, & they don't understand you when you speak of them.
(Harlow, p.317)

After Howells's miscalculated enthusiasm and the stolidity of Besant and other reviewers, Stevenson's 'A Humble Remonstrance', published in answer three months later, was a delight.⁵⁴ The most obvious and immediate difference between Stevenson's essay and other contributions to the Besant controversy is the way in which it takes for granted fiction's status as an art form - Stevenson's redefinition of fiction as 'the art of fictitious narrative in prose' (HJ & RLS, p.87) is not the small-minded fault-finding of Lang's reply but a serious attempt to establish critical accuracy. Like James, Stevenson replaces the prevalent tone of slightly apologetic bonhomie with one of intelligent inquiry based on technical understanding, and his position on the same 'side' as James is immediately established in his

differentiation between the volumes in Mudie's library and any kind of aesthetic standard:

Now the fact of the existence of the modern English novel is not to be denied; materially, with its three volumes, leaded type, and gilded lettering, it is easily distinguishable from other forms of literature; but to talk at all fruitfully of any branch of art, it is needful to build our definition on some more fundamental ground than binding. (HJ & RLS, p.87)

Many of the points at which Stevenson seems to differ from James are simply a matter of emphasis - or of Stevenson succumbing too readily to the established image of James's 'realism'. His central objection, for example, to James's phrase 'compete with life' is based on an over-literal interpretation of 'compete':

To 'compete with life', whose sun we cannot look upon, whose passions and diseases waste and slay us - to compete with the flavour of wine, the beauty of the dawn, the scorching of fire, the bitterness of death and separation - here is, indeed, a projected escalade of heaven; . . . No art is true in this sense: none can 'compete with life': not even history, built indeed of indisputable facts, but of these facts robbed of their vivacity and sting; . . . (p.90)

He stresses instead the difference between art and life and approaches that more radical meaning of 'compete' which is implicit throughout 'The Art of Fiction', using an image which James was to take over in the preface to Roderick Hudson (AN, p.5) in his famous description of the artist's problem of achieving apparently inclusive selection:

A proposition of geometry does not compete with life; and a proposition of geometry is a fair and luminous parallel for a work of art. Both are reasonable, both untrue to the crude fact; both inhere in nature, neither represents it. The novel which is a work of art exists, not by its resemblances to life, which

are forced and material, as a shoe must still consist of leather, but by its immeasurable difference from life, which is designed and significant, and is both the method and the meaning of the work. (HJ & RLS, p.92)

Stevenson starts from the position of the romance writer, rejecting mimesis for competition, a formal alternative - 'So far as [literature] imitates at all, it imitates not life but speech: not the facts of human destiny, but the emphasis and the suppressions with which the human actor tells of them' (p.91). James's realist starting-point leads him to suggest that selection can nevertheless include the impression of fullness - 'Art is essentially selection, but it is a selection whose main care is to be typical, to be inclusive' (PP, p.398) - and this is no doubt one of the points on which James would have liked to 'try a fall' with Stevenson (HJ & RLS, p.101) - and probably did when they met. But James was right when he said that he and Stevenson agreed 'much more than we disagree': Stevenson's comparison of literature with speech suggests an understanding of narrative process more sophisticated than any James had met in England, an appreciation of the artifice of fiction giving them common ground from which to discuss more superficial differences.

Developing his argument against a mimetic interpretation of 'compete with life', Stevenson contends that life is not itself the subject of novels, it is 'the inexhaustible magazine from which subjects are to be selected'. He goes on:

. . . and with each new subject - for here I must differ by the whole width of heaven from Mr. James - the true artist will vary his method and change the point of attack. That which was in one case an excellence, will become a defect in another; what was the making of one book, will in the next be impertinent or dull. (p.93)

His disagreement with James here couldn't be more inappropriate, since he is in fact restating James's central principle of technical freedom and the interdependence of subject and method: 'We must grant the artist his subject, his idea, his donnée: our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it' (PP, pp. 394-5). Stevenson's 'difference' from James refers back presumably to his point about life as subject rather than to the artist's need to vary his method; he seems again to have over-interpreted one of James's comments - his encouragement to the young novelist: 'All life belongs to you' (PP, p.407) - at the expense of an accurate response to 'The Art of Fiction' as a whole. Again, however, their agreement on the artist's freedom to deal as he wishes with his subject is more important than the difference Stevenson suggests. His intention in writing 'A Humble Remonstrance' was to keep the debate open and his differences from James are as much rhetorical strategies as reflections of genuine disagreement.⁵⁵

Most importantly, Stevenson shared James's desire to break out of the narrow preconceptions of contemporary criticism. I have already referred to his 'Gossip on Romance' and its suggestion of a real/ideal compromise, and in another earlier essay, 'A Note on Realism', Stevenson explores the possible limitations of both techniques pursued in isolation:

The immediate danger of the realist is to sacrifice the beauty and significance of his whole to local dexterity, or, in the insane pursuit of completion, to immolate his readers under facts; . . . The danger of the idealist is, of course, to become merely null and lose all grip of fact, particularity, or passion.⁵⁶

Again, the essay is written from the standpoint of a writer of romance and Stevenson puts an unJamesian stress on the general, timeless features of humanity:

. . . truth to the conditions of man's nature and the conditions of man's life, the truth of literary art, is free of the ages.⁵⁷

The significant point, however, is Stevenson's flexible and questioning attitude towards his chosen genre. In Partial Portraits James was concerned to extend and modify received ideas of realism and one of the most important reasons for his respect for Stevenson was his recognition in his work of similar attitudes to romance.

As he put it in his Partial Portraits essay on Stevenson:

There is some magnanimity in his esteem for Alexandre Dumas, inasmuch as in Kidnapped he has put into a fable worthy of that inventor a closeness of notation with which Dumas never had anything to do. . . . he is the cause of our perceiving afresh that a tradition is kept alive only by something being added to it. In this particular case - in Doctor Jekyll and Kidnapped - Mr. Stevenson has added psychology. (PP, p.166)

James's annotated copies of Stevenson's works which he used to prepare that essay are in the Houghton Library, Harvard. In some cases the markings are simply against passages for quotation, for example those from Virginibus Puerisque which James uses to characterise Stevenson's unique mixture of boyishness and maturity.⁵⁸ Most interesting are James's comments on the endpapers of Virginibus Puerisque and Kidnapped, which illustrate two further sources of his admiration for Stevenson. James lists the page numbers of marked passages then after a reference to the opening paragraph of 'Walking Tours' from Virginibus Puerisque adds: 'Independence of his sense of the romantic - he likes railway trains - he likes gas'.⁵⁹ The comment suggests not only the flexibility of Stevenson's romanticism, which I have already stressed, but also James's enjoyment of an art in which everyday objects, the material of 'solidity of specification', are given romantic status by the

perceiving, remaking mind. In the case of Kidnapped James isolates this quality in the psychological emphasis with which Stevenson reanimates a stock romance character like Alan Breck. James says in his essay that Alan Breck represents 'the highest point that Mr. Stevenson's talent has reached' (PP, p.147), and almost all the markings in his copy of Kidnapped are against examples of Stevenson's insight into his character; the rest refer to similar subtleties in his treatment of David Balfour.⁶⁰ James was particularly impressed by Stevenson's account of the quarrel between Alan Breck and David, and comments to himself at the back of his copy: 'psychological truth of this - coquetry of his pretending he writes "for boys"'.

There is more to this than James's approval of an emphasis which approximates to his own. James respected Stevenson for their shared seriousness and open-mindedness about their chosen form, but also for his very different practice, an illustration of James's most precious principle:

The breath of a novelist's being is his liberty, and the incomparable virtue of the form he uses is that it lends itself to views innumerable and diverse, to every variety of illustration. ('Robert Louis Stevenson', PP, p.163)

James was not unaware of the limitations and whimsicality which make his enthusiasm for Stevenson initially surprising: in 1888 he wrote to Gosse that Stevenson's 'Letter to a Young Gentleman who Proposes to Embrace the Career of Art' was 'full of his better felicity, with some things charmingly felt and said - and others off the mark as usual'; and his late essay on Stevenson reflects his observation, again to Gosse, that the figure of Stevenson himself would supersede his works:

. . . he has superseded, personally, his books, and

this last re-placement of himself so en scène . . .
 has killed the literary baggage. Out of no mystery now
 do they issue, the creations in question - and they
 couldn't afford to lose it. (Lubbock, I, 395)⁶¹

In 1884, however, Stevenson was both an illustration and a defendant of intelligence, independence and style in the face of Philistinism and out of their public critical interchange grew one of those literary friendships for which James longed. James's copy of Kidnapped is inscribed: 'Henry James from his friend Robert Louis Stevenson. Skerryvore July 21st 1886 and I wish I had a better work to give as good a man', and James's letters to Stevenson in the South Seas express an affection rare in his correspondence.⁶²

The same personal affection informs James's essay of 1888, and in an unpublished letter James shows concern that he has overdone the praise: 'Pray for me - that I don't offend you. If I do, it will only be by too thick a buttering - and yet I shall try not to be indecently greasy'.⁶³ The essay is in fact saved from indulgence by its strong generalising tendency, by James's use of Stevenson's individuality as a case against the Besantian novel industry, the 'mill that grinds with regularity and with a certain commercial fineness' (PP, p.142). At this period, James rarely allowed personal feelings to distort his critical judgment too radically, but his letter is nevertheless a reminder of the interplay between the personal and the general which lies behind many of his essays. It is interesting in this context to compare James's critical treatment of Howells when, in 1886, he finally reciprocated Howells's 'Henry James, Jr.' of 1882 ('William Dean Howells', Harper's Weekly, June 19 1886; AE, pp. 146-56). Again, an unpublished letter shows that James was aware of the problem of tone. He apologises to Howells for not having written sooner to explain:

. . . the, I fear, rather dry tone of the poor little tribute to your genius in the Harper newspaper. That tone, & the general poverty of the article were the result of a desire not to injure you by appearing too much to 'return the compliment' of your so generous article about me, in the Century, in the past time. I had a horror of appearing too mutual & reciprocal, & cultivated (in your own interest) a coldness which I didn't feel.⁶⁴

James protests, perhaps, too much but he is not entirely insincere here. I have already referred to letters to other people in which James expresses his admiration for Howells's novels, and this comes across, in a rather strangled version, in the essay:

Quietly and steadily [his novels] have become better and better; one may like some of them more than others, but it is noticeable that from effort to effort the author has constantly enlarged his scope. His work is of a kind of which it is good that there should be much today - work of observation, of patient and definite notation. (AE, p.151)⁶⁵

But the strangely reticent tone of 'William Dean Howells' is surely due as much to the restrictions which friendship put on complete critical honesty as to the earlier controversy. James's sophisticated, flexible realism put him out of sympathy with Howells's increasingly doctrinaire method, just as in the early 70's he had distrusted Howells's naive Americanism. It was easier for James to respond to Stevenson, the writer of romance, than to Howells, an affinity reflected in these articles on his two friends.

James notes but doesn't develop his sense of Howells's limitations. Having described, for example, Howells's love for 'the common, the immediate, the familiar and vulgar elements of life', James adds a qualification:

. . . the world is very large, and life is a mixture of many things; she by no means eschews the strange,

and often risks combinations and effects that make one rub one's eyes. (AE, p.152)

There is implicit criticism in James's account of how Howells 'hates a "story", and (this private feat is not impossible) has probably made up his mind very definitely as to what the pestilent thing consists of' (p.152); and James objects overtly to Howells's indifference to style, as expressed in a recent critical article:

. . . to the effect that the style of a work of fiction is a thing that matters less and less all the while. Why less and less? It seems to me as great a mistake to say so as it would be to say that it matters more and more. . . . The style of a novel is a part of the execution of a work of art; the execution of a work of art is a part of its very essence . . . (p.155)

The plea for an extension of possible subjects recalls James's objections to the French novel; his doubts about the possibility of defining 'story' and his differentiation between internal and external criteria recall 'The Art of Fiction' and objections to Besant's prescriptiveness. James on several occasions encouraged Howells's developing practice of realism in terms of its French equivalent - 'I regard you as the great American naturalist' (Lubbock, I, 105)⁶⁶ - but as Howells's criticism became increasingly dogmatic in its defence of a (Bowdlerised) version of Zolaesque principles, James objected as he had objected to Le Roman Expérimental:

It seems to me that on occasions you mix things up that don't go together, sometimes make mistakes of proportion, and in general incline to insist more upon the restrictions and limitations, the a priori formulas and interdictions, of our common art, than upon that priceless freedom which is to me the thing that makes it worth practising. (Lubbock, I, 137)

As far as theory goes, James's strictures are justified. Howells's criticism is naive and defensive, useful in its editorial function

of introducing new and European writers to American readers, but offering no coherent aesthetic.⁶⁷ True to his critical principles, James was consistently respectful of Howells's more important creative work, yet his respect is qualified by an acute awareness of the differences between them:

His abundance and facility are my constant wonder & envy - or rather not perhaps, envy, inasmuch as he has purchased them by throwing the whole question of form, style & composition overboard into the deep sea - from which, on my side, I am perpetually trying to fish them up.⁶⁸

It is perhaps significant that James never wrote on Howells during his most important creative period. The 1886 essay illustrates the difficulty of combining public tribute to a friend with critical honesty, and James's only other public work on Howells was his fulsome letter on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday in 1912 (Lubbock, II, 229-35).

We can sense in James's comments on Howells in his letters (complicated always by his mixed envy and admiration for a friend and fellow artist who achieves, apparently effortlessly, popular success) a certain limitation reminiscent of his response to French naturalism. We return here to the two interpretations of realism, James's recognition of the role of the perceiving consciousness and acknowledgment of only a basic obligation to 'life' making him critical of the narrower mimesis which seemed, by defining its own limits, to restrict the novel itself. One of the most useful approaches to Howells's novels is in terms of their national and social commitment and his earliest American critics, eagerly looking for the 'great American novelist', seized on this identification of realism and democracy. Even Thomas Sergeant Perry, sceptical, as we have seen, of the 'great American novel', argued

in 1882 that: 'Realism is the tool of the democratic spirit, the modern spirit by means of which the truth is elicited, and Mr. Howells's realism is untiring'.⁶⁹ Such vocabulary is completely alien to James, but the case of Howells warns of the way James's answering plea for freedom of 'doing' could itself lead to a defensive critical myopia. In that letter to William, 'form, style & composition' clearly refer to James's own creative practice; James infringes his own critical principles by mechanically separating these elements from the material which defines them. This tendency to erect his own method into a critical standard is most marked in the Prefaces and the criticism which came after them, but in the criticism of the middle period it underlies his fondness for Stevenson and affects his assessment of, for example, Hardy.

James's method in Partial Portraits is still largely free from this narrowness, and provides a practical critical equivalent to its own principle of freedom. The punning title humbly reflects James's debt to Sainte-Beuve, and at the beginning of his essay on Stevenson James makes his critical alignment clear:

He gives us new ground to wonder why the effort to fix a face and figure, to seize a literary character and transfer it to the canvas of the critic, should have fallen into such discredit among us, and have given way, to the mere multiplication of little private judgment-seats, where the scales and the judicial wig . . . have taken the place, as the symbols of office, of the kindly, disinterested palette and brush. (PP, pp. 137-8)

James goes on to acknowledge the impossibility of returning completely to this earlier critical art, but in Partial Portraits he combats the prescriptive alternative in his attempt to reach that 'justness of characterization' which he had described as

Sainte-Beuve's constant aim; his essays seek to 'hit' their subjects in the Sainte-Beuvian sense:

His method was to 'hit it' - to 'say it', as he says - to express it, to put his fingers on the point; his philosophy was to accept and make the best of the truths so discriminated. ('S-B', pp. 306-7)

The essay on Trollope, for example, uses the novels to characterise Trollope's authorial persona, 'his clear, direct vision of the things that lay nearest, and his great natural kindness' which in turn helps to define the nature of his realism (PP, p.102). As we have seen, Trollope is placed in a larger context in that James suggests alternative methods, but he never ceases to do justice to Trollope's particular genius. The essay is organised around James's attempt to define the 'quality of mind' which is the ultimate critical criterion of 'The Art of Fiction', and ends with a passage which seeks to 'hit' the nature of the relationship between Trollope and his readers:

Trollope will remain one of the most trustworthy, though not one of the most eloquent, of the writers who have helped the heart of man to know itself. . . . There are two kinds of taste in the appreciation of imaginative literature: the taste for emotions of surprise and the taste for emotions of recognition. It is the latter that Trollope gratifies . . . (p.133)

Examples could be multiplied: 'The Life of George Eliot' develops the theme of the artistic contrast between observation and reflection suggested by the etiolated portrait of George Eliot in Cross's Life and though James's sympathies are clearly with the former method he again attempts an accurate portrait of works written according to a different formula: 'there rises from them a . . . large, generous way of looking at things; and a constant effort to hold high the torch in the dusky spaces of man's conscience' (pp. 61-2);

the essays on Daudet and Maupassant which I examined in the last chapter show the same balance between personal interest and just characterisation according to the principle of 'The Art of Fiction': 'We must grant the artist his subject . . .: our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it' (pp. 394-5). James attacks his prescriptive opponents not with open aggression or petulant defensiveness but with a practical demonstration of free intelligence.

Robert Buchanan attacked Partial Portraits in 1889 for insularity:

These . . . are the glorious discoveries of the young man's omniscience - George Eliot, Alphonse Daudet, Flaubert, du Maurier, Mr. Punch, and the author of Treasure Island. . . . He becomes the little prophet of the little masters, and he publishes a little book about them - a book full of the agreeable art of conversation, such as we listen to in a hundred drawing-rooms.⁷⁰

James's choice of authors on the whole needs no defence - the insularity is Buchanan's - but his inclusion of Constance Fenimore Woolson subjects criticism to friendship and suggests ways in which his relativist critical method might be abused. We have seen that from his earliest criticism James operated a sliding scale, varying his stringency according to the worth of his subject. He does the same with Miss Woolson's novels: there is an amiably satiric note in his account of her liking for, 'little country churches that are dedicated to saints not vulgarised by too much notoriety', and their organists, 'slightly deformed if possible, and addicted to playing Gregorian chants in the twilight, who are adequately artistic' (p.184). But James flatters her not merely by including the essay at all, but by analysing her work according to some of his most cherished criteria: she combines reality and romance, persuading us of the validity of her vision;

she chooses interesting subjects and brings artistic feeling to bear on close observation; and she is independent of any particular critical camp (pp. 183-4, 187). When he is dealing with Daudet or George Eliot, James applies his Sainte-Beuvian method in the interests of evaluation; in dealing with a mediocre friend he remains critically consistent - his criteria are stretched rather than abandoned - but he abrogates evaluative responsibility, and descriptive characterisation becomes a method of compliment.

I mention James's not very frequent - and in the case of Miss Woolson, harmlessly gallant - use of his public critical stance to puff friends because it is symptomatic, I think, of that increasing critical self-centredness which took a different form in his treatment of Howells. With exceptions like his defence of Ibsen, James's later criticism is comparatively insular. He read but didn't write on the new generation of French novelists like Anatole France and Maurice Barrès, and his narrow assessment of the younger English novelists was finally enshrined in 'The New Novel' of 1914. We must get this insularity in proportion - Notes on Novelists contains some of James's very best criticism and in its development of the 'case' suggests the shift to greater generalisation - to The Novel rather than particular novels - typical of the Prefaces. James continued to fight against any restrictions of the novel's autonomy and the 1902 essay on Zola is one of his finest exercises in critical objectivity. But in examining James's relationship with Wells and other contemporaries over the same period we should be aware of ways in which the plea for freedom could itself become prescriptive.

The Function of Art: H.G. Wells and 'The Younger Generation'

The 90's were a period of transition both for James himself

and for the English critical climate as a whole. The general critical level remained low, but the approaching fin de siècle and the influence of Symbolism stimulated attempts to assess the major forces of the Victorian era, to fuse those which seemed to be of value and to cut away dead wood. Oscar Wilde's 'The Decay of Lying', a more extreme version of James's own reservations about simple realism, was published in 1889, and in the work of less wittily iconoclastic critics, the partisan debates of the 80's were superseded by an urge to compromise and combine, so that James's familiar mixture of real and ideal, morality and aesthetics, is echoed in, for example, J.A. Symonds's Essays Speculative and Suggestive of 1890, an attempt to apply evolutionary principles to critical theory, and in Arthur Waugh's 'Reticence in Literature' of 1894.⁷¹ James's critical adversaries changed as the Victorian realism, caricatured in Walter Besant, which upheld societal norms gave way to a social realism of radical reassessment. Havelock Ellis in The New Spirit (1890) even described fiction as 'more than any other art, the art of a period of repression. . . . Our faces now are turned in another direction'.⁷²

This transitional process can be observed in the controversies aroused by Ibsen's plays. As James noted in his review of Hedda Gabler, Ibsen became 'a sort of register of the critical atmosphere, a barometer of the intellectual weather' (ELE, p.241); he provided a focus for Grundyist wrath and for reformist zeal. William Archer collected the most extreme attacks in 'Ghosts and Gibberings' (1891), a catalogue of shrill moralism suggesting that English critical debate still centred on the young person's sensitive cheek, and James condemned the uproar as 'one of those cries of outraged purity which have so often and so pathetically resounded through the Anglo-Saxon world' (ELE, p.244).⁷³ His own concern was with Ibsen's

method, his ability to make drama of 'that supposedly undramatic thing, a picture not of an action but of a condition' (ELE, p.252), but James's analytic defence is not typical of Ibsen's supporters. Ibsen was adopted as the champion of anti-Victorianism: he is one of the writers, together with Diderot, Heine, Whitman and Tolstoy, whom Havelock Ellis discussed as examples of the new democratic spirit in art; his radical defenders concentrated on his 'revolutionary' subject-matter:

If you ask why I have not . . . called Shelley and Ibsen idealists and the conventionalists realists, I reply that Ibsen himself, though he has not formally made the distinction, has so repeatedly harped on conventions and conventionalists as ideals and idealists that if I were now perversely to call them realities and realists, I should confuse readers of *The Wild Duck* and *Rosmersholm* more than I should help them. . . .

The realist at last loses patience with ideals altogether, and sees in them only something to blind us, something to numb us, something to murder self in us, something whereby, instead of resisting death, we can disarm it by committing suicide.⁷⁴

This is of course from Shaw's The Quintessence of Ibsenism and as has often been pointed out, is rather the quintessence of Shavianism. It reflects the utilitarian view of art, epitomised in the juxtapositions of Shaw's The Sanity of Art - 'The worthy artist or craftsman is he who serves the physical and moral senses by feeding them with pictures, musical compositions, pleasant houses and gardens, good clothes and fine implements, poems, fictions, essays, and dramas which call the heightened senses and ennobled faculties into pleasure-able activity',⁷⁵ - which James, whose aesthetic realism was closer to Wilde than to the social realists of the 90's, vehemently opposed in his controversies both with Shaw and with H.G. Wells. Such subjection of art to an ulterior purpose was for James as restrictive

as narrow moralism; art accompanied by precept was like a guest 'arriving to dine accompanied by constables' ('Dumas the Younger', NN, p.299).

James's gradual acceptance of Ibsen is typical of his continuing Sainte-Beuvian openness to new writers. Though he was later to find Kipling 'strangely ungrowing',⁷⁶ he wrote a preface in 1891 to Soldiers Three, a volume of the early stories, in which he uses Kipling to demonstrate his case for flexibility:

. . . there are just as many kinds, as many ways, as many forms and degrees of the 'right', as there are personal points of view. (V&R, p.228)

In 1897 James wrote an 'appreciation' as preface to Hubert Crackanthorpe's Last Studies, praising Crackanthorpe for his attempt to render in English Maupassant's pictorial short story method; during the decade he met Conrad, Stephen Crane and of course Wells, and by 1902 was writing to Gosse of Conrad:

He has been to me, the last few years, one of the most interesting and striking of the novelists of the new generation. His production . . . has all been fine, rare and valid . . .⁷⁷

This was also the period, however, during which James's reading became a process of rewriting. In a letter of 1899 to Mrs. Humphry Ward he admits:

. . . I'm a wretched person to read a novel - I begin so quickly and concomitantly, for myself, to write it rather - even before I know clearly what it's about! The novel I can only read, I can't read at all! (Lubbock, I, 334)⁷⁸

In a previous letter James had thus 'rewritten' a novel which Mrs. Ward had submitted to him for comment and his vehement denial of her accusation that he has only one rule of presentation is somewhat disingenuous (Lubbock, I, 330-1, 332-3). Though he was excited by other novelists' methods and he clung always to the image of the

many-windowed house of fiction, there is in the later years a growing discrepancy between James's general theory and his particular judgments. With the exception of his great tradition of French novelists, James developed a myopic preference for writers whose work he could readily 'rewrite'. The defensive practising novelist lay uneasily alongside the objective critic - most obviously in the Prefaces: the only two critical articles James produced after finishing the New York Edition were the magnificently arrogant 'homage' to Browning, 'The Novel in The Ring and the Book', and the indiscriminating 'Younger Generation'.

James's critical integrity and originality, and his prejudice, are intermixed during the 90's in his responses to Ibsen and Hardy. His conversion to Ibsen involved reassessing rather than relinquishing his original objections. In his review of Hedda Gabler (1891), James acknowledges that Ibsen succeeds in spite of 'the absence of humour, the absence of free imagination, and the absence of style', and in spite of the 'provinciality' he had complained of in 1890 in a letter to Gosse. What saves him is 'the expression of life' (ELE, p.246).⁷⁹ A letter to Julian Sturgis expresses James's ambivalence most accurately:

Yes, Ibsen is ugly, common, hard, prosaic, bottomlessly bourgeois - and with his distinction so far in, as it were, so behind doors and beyond vestibules, that one is excusable for not pushing one's way to it. And yet of his art he's a master - and I feel in him, to the pitch of almost intolerable boredom, the presence and the insistence of life. On the other hand his mastery, so bare and lean as it is, wouldn't count nearly as much in any medium in which the genus was otherwise represented. (Lubbock, I, 217-8)

After seeing Ibsen in performance, James's intelligent response to an obviously innovatory talent overcame his mixture of genuine

critical doubt and Brahminical snobbery. He saw that Ibsen's character-based symbolic dramas transcended their 'common, hard, prosaic' detailism, the obvious social relevance to which Shaw, for example, responded, and they forced him to expand his concept of drama, derived from the Théâtre Français, from Sardou and Dumas films. Perhaps James's own experiments in the theatre made him particularly receptive to new dramatic method; perhaps he could, after all, 'rewrite' Ibsen's studies of 'the individual caught in the fact' (ELE, p.258): James's critical responses are always a complex mixture of the disinterested and the personal but, as in the case of Zola for example, whose imaginative transcendence of Naturalist note-taking similarly forced James to acknowledge other kinds of 'doing', he rarely dismisses an undeniable, even if uncongenial, talent.

James's indifference to Hardy is therefore puzzling. There are of course obvious reasons for his antipathy: professional rivalry is clearly involved - Hardy was the consistently popular novelist at a time when James's own popularity was waning, and his success was irritating proof of the general critical indifference to self-conscious artistry. Yet on one occasion James and Hardy were in the same critical camp. In 1890-91 they both took part in a series of symposia organised by the New Review on 'Candour in English Fiction', 'The Science of Fiction' and 'The Science of Criticism'. Hardy contributed to the first two and for the last James wrote his short paper 'Criticism' reprinted in Essays in London.⁸⁰ The series was an attempt to revive the James/Besant dialogue of the 80's and Hardy and James are allies in the cause of critical and artistic freedom in the face of Besant's continuing defence of circulating library standards and Andrew Lang's superficial confusion of criticism with reviewing. Assuming that James read the other contributions (and I think he must at least have glanced

at 'The Science of Fiction' since Bourget was a contributor), it is perhaps strange that he never acknowledged this alliance with Hardy. Many of Hardy's arguments are apparently close to James's own. In 'The Science of Fiction' he exposes the fallacy inherent in Zolaesque scientific realism, 'copyism', and suggests the inevitability of selection and the need to see the whole in the part:

To see in half and quarter views the whole picture, to catch from a few bars the whole tune, is the intuitive power that supplies the would-be storyteller with the scientific bases for his pursuit.⁸¹

The passage clearly echoes James's insistence in 'The Art of Fiction' on the novelist's necessary ability to 'guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implication of things' (PP, p.389). In 'Candour in English Fiction', Hardy attacks the fact that 'the great bulk of English fiction of the present day is characterised by its lack of sincerity' and argues that 'in representations of the world, the passions ought to be proportioned as in the world itself', and James would have agreed with the spirit of Hardy's attack on restrictive moralism.⁸² But there is a specificness, a plea for 'particular liberties', in Hardy's argument which suggests a concession to the terms of Grundyism, to the logic of fact rather than art, and it is this that separates him critically from James. Hardy's defensiveness here is similar in kind to the sexual woolliness of Tess of the d'Urbervilles which James noted in an exchange with Stevenson, seeing through the radical subject-matter which, as with Ibsen, absorbed critics like Havelock Ellis and Wells.

James's initial reaction to Tess was ambivalent. He wrote to Stevenson in 1892:

The good little Thomas Hardy has scored a great success with Tess of the d'Urbervilles, which is chock-full of faults and falsity and yet has a singular beauty and charm. (Lubbock, I, 194)

Encouraged, however, by Stevenson's violently negative view of the novel - 'Not alive, not true, was my continual comment as I read; and at last - not even honest!' - James was more damning in his next letter:

I am meek and ashamed where the public clatter is deafening - so I bowed my head and let Tess of the D.'s pass. But oh yes, dear Louis, she is vile. The pretence of 'sexuality' is only equalled by the absence of it, and the abomination of the language by the author's reputation for style. There are indeed some pretty smells and sights and sounds. But you have better ones in Polynesia. (HJ & RLS, p.221)⁸³

This is all we have of James's view of Tess and it is cryptic enough, but what is interesting is the way James couples his predictable objection to Hardy's stylistic looseness with a sense of the novel's falseness, its 'absence' of sexuality. The Grundyist denial of sex in the novel was obviously an infringement of both fact and freedom; James seems to see a similar dishonesty in Hardy's equivocation about, for example, the nature of Tess's seduction. Hardy's coy generalising questions at the end of 'Phase the First' suggest an avoidance of confrontation very different from James's own indirect but essentially much harder treatment of sexual intrigue in What Maisie Knew or The Wings of the Dove. James's point hints at more than just the treatment of sex, however. Hardy's equivocation is not simply the result of sexual tactfulness, of course, but of his generally indulgent and unfocussed treatment of Tess herself, and James's objections anticipate, I think, the 'modern' perception that Hardy's shifting formal control suggests an uncertain, certainly an un-Jamesian, relationship with his material, a perception explored fully in recent analyses of Tess by, for example, Ian Gregor and David Lodge.⁸⁴ The point can be amplified by comparing James and Hardy's very different interpretations of their apparently similar statements

on the novelist's intuitive use of the hints provided by life. James's comment in 'The Art of Fiction' is glossed by the preface to The Spoils of Poynton, where he contrasts life's 'splendid waste', its 'classic ineptitude' in using the 'germ', with art's 'discrimination and selection' (AN, pp.120-2): for James, the donnée must be rigorously fictionalised so that its full potential is released by the artistic process. It is this complete fictionalisation which, in James's view, neither Hardy - whose use of 'half and quarter views' to create 'the whole picture' is much more a matter of day-dream, of building romantically on private and sometimes imperfectly assimilated memories, ideas and emotional attachments - nor the social realists - who rely on facts to do their own work - provide. Hardy's uncertain omniscience in dealing with Tess's sexuality betrays to James an indulgence of both popular opinion and his own feeling for his creature: in the words of 'The Lesson of Balzac', 'that damning interference which consists of the painter's . . . not having fixed his creature and his creature's conditions' (LB, pp.95-6).

Hardy was himself quite clear about the differences between his own method and that of James:

Reading H. James's Reverberator. After this kind of work one feels inclined to be purposely careless in detail. The great novels of the future will certainly not concern themselves with the minutiae of manners. . . . James's subjects are those one could be interested in at moments when there is nothing larger to think of.⁸⁵

His comment locates seriousness in matter rather than method, and he found like-minded critics among the younger generation. Havelock Ellis identified Hardy as one of those novelists who are masters not necessarily of style or of 'literary architectonics', but of the human heart; he saw in Jude the Obscure Hardy's 'intense preoccupation with the mysteries of women's hearts', and in Jude and

Sue themselves characters 'crushed by a civilization to which they were not born'.⁸⁶ Another of Jude's early champions was the young H.G. Wells, then fiction reviewer for the Saturday Review, and his is the voice of one who understood Jude's situation from personal experience and who later saw in James not merely a different critical viewpoint, but a pillar of an alien establishment:

For the first time in English literature the almost intolerable difficulties that beset an ambitious man of the working class - the snares, the obstacles, the countless rejections and humiliations by which our society eludes the services of these volunteers - receive adequate treatment.⁸⁷

James understood, however, that the efficacy of a work's 'message' depends on its full artistic realisation; that 'large' subjects do not necessarily redeem works 'purposely careless in detail'. Yet, as David Lodge puts it, Hardy is an '"in-spite-of" novelist',⁸⁸ and though it is easy to adduce reasons for James's antipathy, it is less easy to forgive him for not overcoming them in the face of the 'singular beauty and charm' he fleetingly acknowledged, the power which the younger critics tried limitedly to define in social terms. James's attitude to Hardy is symptomatic of his hardening critical criteria and his unwillingness in the later criticism to deal with 'personal, direct impressions of life' which are formally looser than his own. The narrowness of such particular judgments belies the general fertility of James's critical approach. His concept of seriousness based on the novel's autonomy and its internal consistency, and his commitment to the crucible of art which confers meaning through intensity of illusion, were sufficiently flexible to deal with methods very different from his own, and it has been left to much more recent critics to apply sympathetically to Hardy the kind of close reading James's detection of uncertainties suggests.

James's short correspondence with George Bernard Shaw and his extended relationship and controversy with H.G. Wells epitomise the critical stalemate between the creeds of method and matter, between the aesthetic and the social conscience. The exchange with Shaw of 1909 over James's play The Saloon contains James's clearest statement of his belief in the role of art, and in his urbane self-defence we see the critical integrity and flexibility which became clouded in the later controversy with Wells by the clash of personalities and the ill-judged particularity of 'The New Novel'. After watching rehearsals of Shaw's Arms and the Man, W.B. Yeats described the play as 'inorganic, logical straightness and not the crooked road of life'.⁸⁹ Yeats's comment aptly sums up James's objections to Shaw's artistic and critical approach, and reminds us that his formalism involves the broad realist belief that life's complexity and bewilderment can be captured only when the work of art is free to follow its own logic, rather than the impoverishing logic of imposed ideas.

James had submitted The Saloon, based on the short story 'Owen Wingrave', to the Incorporated Stage Society. They rejected it and Shaw wrote to James defending the rejection. He objected to Owen's death at the hands of his military ancestor's ghost, in terms which recall his view in The Quintessence of Ibsenism that idealism encourages men to disarm death in suicide rather than to resist it:

I, as a socialist, have had to preach, as much as anyone, the enormous power of the environment as a dead destiny. We can change it: we must change it: there is absolutely no other sense in life than the work of changing it; and every young man who lays a ghost and puts his father in his proper place, in the second fighting line - not obstructive across the vanguard's path - is doing his bit of the job, and is delighted in (however secretly) by youth and the crowd.

He went on:

People don't want works of art from you: they want help: they want, above all, encouragement, encouragement, encouragement, encouragement, encouragement and again encouragement until there is no more room on the paper.⁹⁰

James's defence is his belief in art's obligation to reflect the 'crooked road' of life:

You strike me as carrying all your eggs, of conviction, appreciation, discussion, etc., as who should say, in one basket, where you put your hand on them all with great ease and convenience; while I have mine scattered all over the place - many of them still under the hens! - and have therefore to rush about and pick up one here and another there. You take the little play 'socialistically', it first strikes me, all too hard: I use that word because you do so yourself, and apparently in a sense that brings my production, such as it is, up against a lion in its path with which it had never dreamed of reckoning.

(Complete Plays, pp. 643-4)

In applying 'socialistic' principles to James's play Shaw offends against the canon of relevance; the critical attempt to 'hit' the subject depends on an objective response to the nature of the work under consideration, and James's invocation of this principle illustrates that flexibility which made him, at least in theory, capable of encompassing the crusading social realism of Shaw's generation while they remained critically impotent in the face of Jamesian method. In claiming that readers 'don't want works of art', Shaw denies James's central belief in the efficacy of form. James's eloquent answering statement deserves full quotation:

[Works of art] are capable of saying more things to man about himself than any other 'works' whatever are capable of doing - and it's only by thus saying as much to him as possible, by saying, as nearly as we can, all there is, and in as many ways and on as many sides, and with a vividness of presentation that 'art', and art

alone, is an adequate mistress of, that we enable him to pick and choose and compare and know, enable him to arrive at any sort of synthesis that isn't, through all its superficialities and vacancies, a base and illusive humbug. On which statement I must rest my sense that all direct 'encouragement' - the thing you enjoin on me - encouragement of the short-cut and say 'artless' order, is really more likely than not to be shallow and misleading, and to make him turn on you with a vengeance for offering him some scheme that takes account but of a tenth of his attributes. In fact I view with suspicion the 'encouraging' representational work, altogether, and think even the question not an a priori one at all; that is save under this peril of too superficial a view of what it is we have to be encouraged or discouraged about. The artist helps us to know this, - if he have a due intelligence - better than anyone going, because he undertakes to represent the world to us; so that, certainly, if a posteriori, we can on the whole feel encouraged, so much the better for us all round. But I can imagine no scanter source of exhilaration than to find the brute undertake that presentation without the most consummate 'art' he can muster! (Complete Plays, p.645)

Again James attacks prescription with the representational principle from 'The Art of Fiction': 'The essence of moral energy is to survey the whole field' (PP, p.406). Shaw was not to be persuaded. He replied that the problem of whether the ghost was to get the better of the man, or vice versa, was not an artistic question - victory could as 'artistically' be given to either. But he was quarrelling with James's subject, and in his last letter James returns wearily to his belief that: 'Criticism begins, surely, with one's seeing and judging what the work has made of [its subject] - to which end there is nothing we can do but accept it' (Complete Plays, p.646). The artist's freedom to realise his perception remains sacred.

The critical impasse James reached with Shaw was repeated in

the later controversy with H.G. Wells, where the same fundamental critical differences were complicated on both sides by genuine appreciation and sometimes wilful misunderstanding. Wells first saw James at the disastrous first night of Guy Domville, which he was reviewing for the Pall Mall Gazette, and he recorded his impressions much later in his Experiment in Autobiography (1934):

James never scuffled with Fact; he treated her as a perfect and unchallengeable lady; he never questioned a single stitch or flounce of the conventions and interpretations in which she presented herself. (HJ & HGW, p.47)

The half-truth suggests both the social and critical differences between the two, and Wells's limited understanding of James's complex realism. Indeed, the social and critical tensions are inextricably fused throughout the relationship: Wells's irritated fascination at James's meticulous habits of dress is symptomatic of his critical reaction against the objective, self-conscious novel which James represented, a form which seemed to Wells to serve rather than question received social ideas; James's letters to Wells always contain a note of (probably unintended) condescension, as from the established practitioner to the unruly apprentice - in letter after letter, both to Wells and to others, James is impressed by his 'colossal but delectable "cheek"'.⁹¹ Wells's view of James's deference to fact and convention has some social validity, but it is of course a hopelessly superficial account of Jamesian realism. Like Shaw, Wells wanted art to make an obvious social statement; he was indifferent to the subtle social critique offered by James in, for example, The Golden Bowl, with its examination of the tragic alternative between manners and moral chaos. James could be similarly obtuse about Wells's attempts to expand the novel - 'cheek' too obviously betrays his sense of speaking from an unassailable position.

Wells's defensive letter to James after publishing Boon shows just how far his attack was intended as part of a battle between opposed critical positions:

To you literature like painting is an end, to me literature like architecture is a means, it has a use. Your view was, I felt, altogether too dominant in the world of criticism, and I assailed it in tones of harsh antagonism. (HJ & HGW, p.264)

But he and James weren't always in different camps. They met in 1898, soon after Wells had given up his position as regular fiction critic on the Saturday Review. He had been invited to join the review by its new, radical editor Frank Harris who replaced the reactionary George Saintsbury, and he used his position to attack James's adversaries, Walter Besant and Andrew Lang, and the popular success of du Maurier's Trilby.⁹² Though his style recalls the invective of New Grub Street more often than the urbane wit of 'The Art of Fiction', Wells was as concerned as James to promote the seriousness of the novel and an associated criticism which was able to 'appreciate essentials, to understand the bearing of structural expedients upon design, to get at an author through his workmanship, to analyse a work as though it stood alone in the world'.⁹³ He suggests that the interest of a novel depends on treatment rather than subject, and in an article on Turgenev (in which he compares him favourably with the 'incoherent, and sometimes almost amorphous, Tolstoi') Wells finds the Russian's social comment through objective, sympathetic characterisation far more effective than Shaw's method in The Unsocial Socialist, which deals with similar themes but in which 'Mr. Bernard Shaw sympathises, and expects us to sympathise, only with his hero'.⁹⁴

Their common seriousness about the novel attracted James to Wells, but their views on the sources of value and seriousness

quickly began to differ. Wells's flirtation with formalism was short-lived and his critical practice was never as coherent as his general statements of principle: his reviews follow the traditional critical divisions between style, character and incident and it is his rigorous judgment rather than his analytic method which makes him a Jamesian ally.⁹⁵ After the turn of the century Wells became committed to the novel of ideas and reacted strongly against self-conscious artistry. In letters to Arnold Bennett, than a devotee of George Moore and French realism, Wells is aggressively indifferent to formal considerations:

The stile of my general design, the stile of my thought -
C'est moi! . . . I am honestly doing what I can to
clear my prose of repetition & so on, but except among
passages of high value I don't see the force of writing
for beauty of phrase.⁹⁶

Bennett accused Wells of having too narrow an outlook, of not having read enough: 'You still cling to the Dickens-Thackeray standards, & judge by them'; and of not being an artist 'except insofar as you disdainfully make use of art for your reforming ends'.⁹⁷ Their correspondence is a franker version of the euphemistic discussions between Wells and James which were going on at the same time. But Wells wasn't wholly indifferent to method. His reaction against the Francophile novel as potentially narrow was part of his search for a mode suited to his own ends, and he celebrated the possibilities inherent in the English novel's very looseness:

Balzac is an Egyptian temple and damned dark and stuffy
in places to Turgenev's Corinthian capitals, Dickens
is a barn with astonishing gargoyles and the English
novel like the Gothic cathedral is too big a thing for
a complete specimen ever to get itself done.⁹⁸

Later, in his essay 'The Contemporary Novel' of 1911, Wells developed this idea more fully, identifying as the 'underlying fallacy' of

contemporary novel criticism, 'the assumption that the novel, like the story, aims at a single, concentrated impression', and rejoicing to see:

. . . many signs to-day that that phase of narrowing and restriction is over, and that there is every encouragement for a return towards a laxer, more spacious form of novel-writing. The movement is partly of English origin, a revolt against those more exacting and cramping conceptions of artistic perfection . . . , and a return to the lax freedom of form, the rambling discursiveness, the right to roam, of the earlier English novel, of 'Tristram Shandy' and of 'Tom Jones' . . . (HJ & HGW, pp. 139-40, 137-8)

It is not just in his later, less successful 'discussion novels' that Wells adheres to these principles, but in his best work, in Tono-Bungay and the scientific romances.

In a letter to A.C. Benson, James described Wells's essay as 'somewhat rowdy and cheeky, but very vivid and able'.⁹⁹ Again admiration is undermined by condescension, but a defensive condescension perhaps, born of the realisation that it is now Wells who is making the plea for freedom - against Jamesian method. In Tristram Shandy and Tom Jones (and Bouvard et Pécuchet, which James could never understand¹⁰⁰), Wells consciously adopts loose baggy models; he seeks to pre-empt Jamesian objections by suggesting their irrelevance, just as at the beginning of Tono-Bungay he uses one of James's whimsical critical terms against him: 'I warn you this book is going to be something of an agglomeration'.¹⁰¹ 'The Contemporary Novel' is a vivid reminder of the novel's important diversity, but it is naive in many ways and James's guarded praise was after all justified. As James once said to Wells in another context, 'I think you have too great an unawareness of difficulty' (HJ & HGW, p.62), and Wells's idea of a flexible, catch-all novel

which will correspond to the 'uncertainties and changing variety of this seething and creative time' (HJ & HGW, p.147), is conceived in only the very vaguest terms. He begs technical questions in his unexamined assumption that novels are among the most effective instruments of social change because 'they have a power of veracity quite beyond that of actual records' (HJ & HGW, p.154). The echo of James's distinction between actuality and imaginative reality is misleading. Wells is concerned not with the truth of the created illusion which confers value and meaning, but with a simple mimetic relationship whereby the amorphous novel reflects the same quality in life itself, value arising from its accuracy and from its ability to include diverse material. By espousing the picaresque or the Shandian novel, he seeks to avoid the limitations which he felt any more rigid form necessarily imposed on that accuracy; and eventually, as he records in Experiment in Autobiography, he became impatient of any fictional devices and began to move away from the novel altogether:

I realized I had been trying to revive the Dialogue in a narrative form. I was not so much expanding the novel as getting right out of it. ('Digression about Novels', HJ & HGW, p.227)

What Wells failed to see was that any form imposes restrictions which must be carefully exploited, that 'really, universally, relations stop nowhere' and the most discursive form is itself a kind of 'geometry', the 'circle within which they shall happily appear to do so' (AN, p.5). The sharp fall in the quality of his novels after about 1912 illustrates the general applicability of Jamesian formalism. The 'agglomeration' of Tono-Bungay, in contrast, had matched method with matter, working within its discursive autobiographical mode to provide a broad, subjective diagnosis of social malaise.

The success of Tono-Bungay, however, is a reminder that Wells's general point about the restrictiveness of James's outlook had some justification. James undoubtedly enjoyed Wells, as his letters, both to Wells and to others, clearly show. In 1911, for example, the year of 'The Contemporary Novel', James wrote to Wells that he was for him, 'so much the most interesting and masterful prose-painter of your English generation' (HJ & HGW, p.127), and the following year he recommended Wells for membership of the Royal Society of Literature as a 'marked and copious and original' talent among the younger writers.¹⁰³ Yet James never put such praise into a critical context; he never gave Kipps or Tono-Bungay the generous critical appraisal of the Partial Portraits essay on Trollope. The issue is complicated by the unevenness of Wells's output - James's private praise can sometimes be as much a matter of friendship as of real admiration - but the situation essentially reflects the critical myopia with which James dealt with Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and, later, Lawrence. Wells judged James not by the broad tolerance of his general critical principles, but by his practice and the barbed fulsomeness of his letters:

I have read you, as I always read you, and as I read no one else, with a complete abdication of all those 'principles of criticism', canons of form, preconceptions of felicity, references to the idea of method or the sacred laws of composition, which I roam, which I totter, through the pages of others attended in some dim degree by the fond yet feeble theory of, but which I shake off, as I advance under your spell, with the most cynical inconsistency. (HJ & HGW, p.166)

To have James abandon critical principles on your behalf is an equivocal achievement, and 'The Contemporary Novel' was Wells's (still amiable) defence against a position apparently unable to encompass his own method. The offensive Boon was precipitated by

James's essay 'The Younger Generation', reprinted in Notes on Novelists as 'The New Novel', in which James transferred his ambivalent appreciation to a public context.

'The New Novel' is a strangely untypical piece of criticism. The Jamesian 'case' grows usually out of a detailed appreciation of the author under consideration so that James moves outwards from observed particulars to critical generalisations. In 'The New Novel' generalisation comes first and the authors discussed are used to illustrate James's argument for selection and intensity. James's criticism always has a defensive eye on his own method, but his Sainte-Beuvian sympathy minimises any distorting effect; here his thumb is obviously in the scale and though the differences between individual novelists are acknowledged they are not fully explored. As happens occasionally in the Prefaces, as we shall see, a general point becomes more important than accurate critical discrimination. James uses the younger generation to combat his methodological rival, Tolstoy:

. . . as Mr. H.G. Wells and Mr. Arnold Bennett . . . derive, by multiplied if diluted transmissions, from the great Russian (from whose all but equal companion Turgenieff we recognise no derivatives at all), so, observing the distances, we may profitably detect an unexhausted influence in our minor, our still considerably less rounded vessels. (NN, p.260)

Under the heading 'the disconnection of method from matter', James deals in the same breath with Wells's The Passionate Friends, Bennett's The Old Wives' Tale, Mackenzie's Sinister Street, and Sons and Lovers (NN, pp. 260-1).

The essay is James's final attack on 'saturation', on the assumption that mere detailism is a sufficient representation of life, and it extends to the young contemporary novelists the terms

of his earlier criticism of Zola and the simplistic realism of, for example, Howells: 'Reduction to exploitable knowledge is apt to mean for many a case of the human complexity reduction to comparative thinness' (NN, p.257). 'Exploitable knowledge' can be taken to refer both to the items of knowledge, observable fact, and to the means by which they are relayed, fictional convention. Early in their relationship James had written to Wells about his collection of science fiction stories, Tales of Space and Time:

I think you have too great an unawareness of difficulty - and (for instance) that the 4 big towns and nice blue foods and belching news-trumpets etc., will be the least of the differences in the days to come. (HJ & HGW, p.62)

Two years later he wrote to the American novelist Sarah Orne Jewett about the historical novel:

You may multiply the little facts that can be got from pictures and documents, relics and prints as much as you like - the real thing is almost impossible to do . . . : I mean the invention, the representation of the old consciousness (SL, p.234)

The particular cases illustrate James's general points that life, reality, inheres not in facts but in our perception of them and that the complexity of existence is suggested not by simple representational conventions but by registering that complex process of perception (a view taken up of course by Virginia Woolf in her own attack on the materialist novel of Wells and Bennett¹⁰⁴). The function of art is both to order and to maintain that complexity. In another early letter to Wells, James said of Love and Mr. Lewisham: 'I am not quite sure that I see your idea - I mean your Subject, so to speak, as determined or constituted' (HJ & HGW, p.67). He didn't mean that he couldn't see what point Wells was trying to make, but that there seemed to be no necessary relationship between

theme and form. James felt that, except in the hands of a Tolstoy or a Balzac, the discursive, omniscient novel's attempt to imitate life by its breadth of reference only drew attention to its inevitable selectivity. The function of form was to make capital of that selection, of the very difference between art and life, and thus, paradoxically, to suggest sufficiency and 'truth':

The relation is at once to what the thing [i.e. the slice, the selection] comes from and to what it waits upon - which last is our act of recognition. We accordingly appreciate it in proportion as it so accounts for itself; the quantity and the intensity of its references are the measure of our knowledge of it.
(NN, p.272)

In his own practice, of course, James solved these problems through the device of the reflecting consciousness, drawing attention to the difference between art and life in his use of complex syntax and patterns of imagery to suggest states of partial knowledge, and 'The New Novel' clearly derives from James's own method and its full exposition and justification in the Prefaces.

Slightly later than Virginia Woolf's date for the change to the modern sensibility, James's essay, a development of ideas already present in 'The Art of Fiction', nevertheless marks the same watershed.¹⁰⁵ Most of the novelists he discusses were content to work within the conventions of Victorian realism which his own aesthetic realism had called for ever into question, and the revised title of the essay takes on a biting irony which James probably didn't intend. But an emphasis on 'The New Novel's' innovatory theoretical importance doesn't excuse its deficiencies as the objective survey of contemporary fiction it purported to be. Wells must have felt both personally betrayed and confirmed in his diagnosis of James's critical narrowness. Conrad was deeply

hurt by the way James ignored his major novels and bestowed only qualified praise on Chance: 'this was the only time a criticism affected me painfully'.¹⁰⁶ The same imbalance obtains in James's treatment of Wells: the novels James admired most, Kipps and Tono-Bungay, are passed over so that Marriage can be used to make a point about the need to prepare for one's effects (NN, p.265). Arnold Bennett is treated more generously. James praises the confident realism of The Old Wives' Tale in which 'the truth and the poetry . . . melt utterly together', but praise modulates into suggestions of inadequacy compared with Jamesian method:

This felt identity of the elements - because we at least consciously feel - becomes . . . a source for us of abject confidence, confidence truly so abject in the solidity of every appearance that it may be said to represent our whole relation to the work and completely to exhaust our reaction upon it. (NN, pp. 261-2)

Exhaustive realism or the Wellsian novel of ideas leave the reader little room for manoeuvre, and James is arguing for the necessary difficulty and creative involvement of the reading process, so that it both reflects the complexity, the 'bewilderment', of experience and shares the controlling role of art, to 'make life', but again generalisation threatens to distort the appropriate particular response. In juxtaposing Wells, Bennett and Conrad with much younger novelists like Compton Mackenzie and Hugh Walpole - disciples to whom he wanted to give a friendly puff - James makes it clear that it is Wells and Bennett who have shown these younger talents 'what the state in question might amount to' (NN, p.253); but he operates his critical sliding scale, finding more to praise and therefore more to criticise in the older novelists, so that the essay as a whole gives the impression that James values these minor novelists more highly than established talents. The really important new writer, Lawrence, is

dismissed (NN, pp. 252, 261): the obvious autobiographical sources of Sons and Lovers would for James be a clear case of insufficient fictionalisation and control of material, but that only explains, it doesn't justify, his contempt. In spite of its often brilliant exposition of James's own principle of form, 'The New Novel' is a sad critical document, a far cry from the robust, sympathetic intelligence of 'The Art of Fiction' or 'Gustave Flaubert' (ELE) or 'Émile Zola, 1902'.

Wells's reaction in Boon is understandable, though its virulence is unjustified. James had been parodied before, and it was not Wells's uneven imitation, 'The Spoils of Mr. Blandish', which hurt James most, but the superficiality of Wells's assessment of his achievement:

'The only living human motives left in the novels of Henry James are a certain avidity and an entirely superficial curiosity. Even when relations are irregular or when sins are hinted at, you feel that these are merely attitudes taken up, gambits before the game of attainment and over-perception begins'. (HJ & HGW, p.248)

Boon's satiric summary of James's critical position in 'The New Novel' is applied to the novels themselves:

He sets himself to pick the straws out of the hair of Life before he paints her. But without the straws she is no longer the mad woman we love. He talks of 'selection', and of making all of a novel definitely about a theme. He objects to a 'saturation' that isn't oriented. And he objects, if you go into it, for no clear reason at all. Following up his conception of selection, see what in his own practice he omits. In practice James's selection becomes just omission and nothing more. (HJ & HGW, pp. 246-7. Second emphasis mine.)

The passage points up the impasse between two different concepts of 'life' and fictional form, but in refusing James any measure of

understanding Wells is dishonest and needlessly cruel. Even in 'The New Novel' James's reservations had after all been qualified by a genuine acknowledgment of the vitality in Wells's works.¹⁰⁷ James seems never to have realised how far his manner and position irritated Wells. Boon came as a complete shock and James took it very hard. His two letters to Wells after its publication are a moving, dignified mixture of personal baffled hurt and the eloquent re-assertion of critical and creative principles:

It is difficult of course for a writer to put himself fully in the place of another writer who finds him extraordinarily futile and void, and who is moved to publish that to the world - and I think the case isn't easier when he happens to have enjoyed the other writer enormously, from far back; because there has then grown up the habit of taking some common meeting-ground between them for granted, and the falling away of this is like the collapse of a bridge which made communication possible. (HJ & HGW, pp. 261-2)

The 'common meeting-ground' which James assumed was of course a common love for the fictional form, the artistic seriousness which James continued to see even in Wells's increasingly utilitarian view, and his second letter again asserts his appreciation for Wells's achievement as a pertinent example of the novel's infinite variety:

. . . I am pulled up to wonder by the fact that for you my kind (my sort of expression and sort of sense of life alike) doesn't exist; and that wonder is, I admit, a disconcerting comment on my idea of the various appreciability of our addiction to the novel and of all the personal and intellectual history, sympathy and curiosity, behind the given example of it. It is when that history and curiosity have been determined in the way most different from my own that I myself want to get at them - precisely for the extension of life, which is the novel's best gift. (HJ & HGW, pp. 266-7)

For that 'extension of life' to be most effective, experience must

have been ordered and re-formed in the crucible of the imagination, and James leaves Wells with his famous statement of art's function - to render and thus make meaningful observed experience:

It is art that makes life, makes interest, makes importance, for our consideration and application of these things, and I know of no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of its process. (HJ & HGW, p.267)

The coherent critical defence offered by James in answer to Boon is a measure of the vast difference in technical sophistication which had always existed between himself and Wells. As Wells put it in his last letter to James: 'I don't clearly understand your concluding phrases - which shows no doubt how completely they define our difference' (HJ & HGW, p.267). Their 'difference' is the difference between modernism and its opposite, between two modes of writing which have continued to alternate in twentieth-century literary theory and practice in a way foreshadowed by the James/Wells controversy. James's 'art . . . makes life', a description of the process later dubbed 'defamiliarisation' by the Russian formalists, is far from, say Oscar Wilde's 'life imitates art', but the similarities between Wilde's and James's arguments against 'shamelessly reading up' a subject as a substitute for the imaginative power to 'guess the unseen from the seen' ('The Art of Fiction', PP, p.389), show how far James was, too, from the simple mimetic principles of Wells and Bennett.¹⁰⁸ James's late criticism returns to prescription partly because, in defending his own method, he was also conducting a partisan crusade for the self-awareness and autonomy of the fictional art at a time when innovation seemed to have gone underground. Is it then fair to judge his criticism of other writers according to the usual criteria? As Oscar Wilde said elsewhere: 'a truly great artist cannot conceive of life being shown, or beauty fashioned, under any conditions other than those that he

has selected. Creation employs all its critical faculty within its own sphere. It may not use it in the sphere that belongs to others'.¹⁰⁹ James is, after all, primarily a creative artist and his creative understanding, his urge to explain his own method, is what makes his criticism so fertile.

Yet James's criticism is capable of appreciating other 'spheres', and in pointing out the discrepancies between his fertile general tenets and his later critical practice we judge him by his own critical principle of sympathetic eclecticism:

To criticise is to appreciate, to appropriate, to take intellectual possession, to establish in fine a relation with the criticised thing and make it one's own. The large intellectual appetite projects itself thus on many things (AN, p.155)

James's assertion in these last letters to Wells of his principle of variety must have seemed disingenuous after his limited critical treatment of Wells's method and the controversy is a warning against taking the late criticism in isolation as a model. Different literary modes require different criteria and it is only recently that the Edwardian novel has begun to be rescued from the dominant Jamesian judgment derived from 'The New Novel' and the Prefaces, and to be given a more broadly Jamesian close reading which is constructive rather than dismissive.¹¹⁰

CHAPTER FOUR: THE LEGACY OF THE PREFACES

' . . . the Novel remains still, under the right persuasion, the most independent, most elastic, most prodigious of literary forms.'

'Those academics who take seriously the suggestion that it is the "novelist's vade-mecum" will indeed be drawing from it a new academicism . . .'. (F.R. Leavis on the Prefaces)

'James's Prefaces . . . those shrewd and indispensable explorations into the writer's craft . . .'. (Wayne Booth)

James's controversy with Wells is often seen as a prophetic epitome of the larger controversy between formalism and 'life' which has dominated twentieth-century novel criticism. In his prescriptive dissatisfaction with traditional Edwardian realism James indeed pre-echoes the modernist emphasis on technique which his own late fictional method sanctions, but, as I have tried to demonstrate, James's long habit of critical eclecticism, of compromise between formalism and morality, autonomy and mimesis, makes it dangerous to force him into any easy category. He himself recognised no split between formal and mimetic obligations, only the creative tension of the individual novelist's 'geometry' whereby the limited resource of language might reflect and control the chaos of experience. The good critic, as James saw, is necessarily a pluralist, exploring objectively the effects of particular geometries. His own criticism in fact offers authority to both sides of the recent critical argument, not because it is inconsistent, but because James's creative understanding of the novel's process transcends modern wrangling between imitation and autonomy.

James's concept of the novel's unique balance between art and life is expressed most eloquently in the Prefaces, justifying in some measure the common claim that they are his greatest critical

achievement. But the conflict between generalisation and self-defence, inherent to some extent in all James's criticism, is most obviously disruptive in the Prefaces and they have proved to be an equivocal critical model. Dealing with his own novels, James is inevitably biased towards his own geometry, and his articulation of formal problems is more flexible than his analysis of particular solutions. James's followers, and more recent formalist critics, erected this bias into a dogma in their assumption that the most self-conscious and economic form is necessarily the most successful. The Prefaces certainly sanction this equation - 'I delight in a deep-breathing economy and an organic form' (AN, p.84) - and they helped to establish an influential critical taste which found it difficult to deal relevantly with the loose baggy monsters of traditional realism. James also warns in the Prefaces, however, against the 'confusion of kinds':

'Kinds' are the very life of literature, and truth and strength come from the complete recognition of them, from abounding to the utmost in their respective senses and sinking deep into their consistency. . . . the confusion of kinds is the inelegance of letters and the stultification of values (AN, p.111)

As relevant to the critic as to the novelist, this is in fact a restatement of James's critical rule from 'The Art of Fiction': 'The form, it seems to me, is to be appreciated after the fact' (PP, pp. 384-5). The heirs to James's total critical output are not rigid formalists, but those recent critics who, like James, have attempted to combine formal awareness with a traditional Arnoldian concern for value, and to establish a means of describing the novel's diverse forms without prejudgment.

James's famous claim in a letter to Howells that the Prefaces were 'a sort of comprehensive manual or vade-mecum for aspirants

in our arduous profession' (Lubbock, II, 102) wasn't wholly unjustified, in spite of their personal bias. They are the first English attempt at anything like a poetics of fiction (though they of course lack the comprehensiveness that term implies), and they were intended, like all James's criticism, as 'a plea for Criticism, for Discrimination, for Appreciation on other than infantile lines - as against the so almost universal Anglo-Saxon absence of these things' (Lubbock, II, 102). This concern to fight critical obtuseness through a systematic examination of the novel form is foreshadowed in some of the essays collected in Notes on Novelists. From his earliest days as a hard-working reviewer, as we have seen, James had combined observations on particular writers with generalisations about the novel itself; such generalisations were often also part of particular public critical battles - on behalf of a discriminating American literature, on behalf of French formal concerns in the face of English moralism - so that his very choice of certain writers had strategic overtones. This is no less true of Notes on Novelists where James's great tradition of French novelists - Balzac, George Sand, Flaubert, Zola - predominates, but there is a note of confident and leisurely retrospection in these essays, and a more deliberate form of generalisation in the 'case', suggesting James's withdrawal from the forefront of particular controversies in favour of a larger aim. The most important essays in Notes on Novelists are the five dated 1902, on Zola, Flaubert, Balzac, Gabriele D'Annunzio and Matilde Serao. Written while James was at work on the three late novels, they illustrate the critical attitude caricatured by Wells: 'From his point of view there were not so much "novels" as The Novel' (Experiment in Autobiography, HJ & HGW, p.216). Wells is only half right: as these essays make clear, James's criticism moves most comfortably between

particular cases and generalisation, but these 1902 examples are chosen above all for their illustrative value and suggest that new concern with definition which culminated in the Prefaces.

At the beginning of 'Gabriele D'Annunzio' James describes the fascination of the 'case':

The great feast-days of all, for the restless critic, are those much interspaced occasions of his really meeting a 'case', as he soon enough learns to call, for his convenience and assistance, any supremely contributive or determinant party to the critical question. (NN, p.194)

The contribution to the critical question made by the 1902 essays is their illustration of the vital balance between content and form, between the world and the book. I have already juxtaposed James's reasoned attacks on Zola's belief in the efficacy of subject and Flaubert's antithetical faith in form (above, pp. 130-1). I quote them again here because the position of compromise they jointly define is central not only to these particular essays but to the whole of James's criticism, including the Prefaces:

The matter is one of appreciation, and when an artist answers for science who answers for the artist - who at least answers for art? Thus it is with the mistakes that affect us, as I say, as Zola's penalties. We are reminded by them that the game of art has, as the phrase is, to be played. It may not with any sure felicity for the result be both taken and left.

Style itself . . . never totally beguiles; since even when we are so queerly constituted as to be ninety-nine parts literary we are still a hundredth part something else. This hundredth part may . . . make us imperfect as readers, and yet without it should we want or get the book at all? (NN, pp. 42, 79)

The essays on D'Annunzio and Matilde Serao form a similarly illustrative pair. They consider the question of sex in the novel,

and reach conclusions which are very close to earlier James but without the earlier shrillness, a reminder of the close relationship between James's late position and his early traditional idealism. D'Annunzio and Serao's radically different methods give James the opportunity to approach the question from opposite sides - that of aestheticism, sensuality treated for its picturesqueness, and that of naturalism, sensuality seen as the reductive norm of human experience. After a sympathetic examination of both writers' merits - D'Annunzio's power of '"rendering", in the light of the imagination', his stylistic perfection; Serao's occasional vindication of the 'slice of life' by capturing 'the impression of the real thing' (NN, pp. 201, 244) - James detects in both a fatal element of vulgarity.¹ The immediate impression might be that James is transgressing his critical rule of dealing only with a writer's treatment of his chosen subject. In the essay on D'Annunzio he in fact reminds himself that 'we of course never play the fair critical game with an author, never get into relation with him at all, unless we grant him his postulates' (NN, p.205), but his analysis of the weaknesses in both these writers is based on a concept of 'treatment' which goes beyond technical considerations into the grey area of the quality of their perception of their subjects, 'quality of mind'. It is their isolation of the sexual relation that James objects to:

That sexual passion from which [D'Annunzio] extracts such admirable detached pictures insists on remaining for him only the act of a moment, beginning and ending in itself and disowning any representative character. From the moment it depends on itself alone for its beauty it endangers extremely its distinction, so precarious at the best. For what it represents, precisely, is it poetically interesting; it finds its extension and consummation only in the rest of life. (NN, p.231)²

James is working from life-based criteria, but the terms of his

analysis in fact suggest the complete reciprocity of sensibility and technique: the writer's moral failure becomes a technical failure, can only be detected in those terms, so that in D'Annunzio's case James is alerted by his feeling that the novels' 'total beauty somehow extraordinarily fails to march with their beauty of parts', and Serao's lack of discrimination is suggested by the way she forces comic material into the tragic mode (NN, pp. 223, 246-7). James's analysis moves constantly and easily between life and form, reflecting the balance of the novel itself. Like Flaubert, D'Annunzio's case suggests that style 'never totally beguiles'; Serao, like Zola, warns against abandoning the discipline of artistic conventions which, by ordering material, can themselves bestow taste.³

The besetting problem of attempts to establish a poetics of fiction is the very diversity of the form they seek to contain. Generalisation slips too often into prescription, unable to cope with the variety of available examples.⁴ James is committed in the 1902 essays to the 'capacious vessel' of fiction ('Émile Zola', NN, p.23), but even his implied definition, of a flexible balance between matter and form dictated by the individual novelist's perception, takes on prescriptive overtones. There hovers in the background the image of an ideal fusion, readily identifiable as his own particular balance in the device of the lucid reflector. The compromise position suggests itself as a norm, and the aesthetic or naturalist approaches as deviations rather than wholly valid variations. James is most obviously advocating his own method in his notorious criticism of Emma Bovary and Frédéric Moreau as insufficiently intelligent centres of consciousness (NN, pp. 62-6); his dislike of fact untransformed by the crucible of the imagination lies behind his distinction between the reporter and the originator, the businessman and the artist, in Balzac:

The disembarassment, for each, by a more insidious fusion, would probably have conduced to the mastership of interest proceeding from form, or at all events to the search for it, that Balzac fails to embody. (NN, p.93)

But because his main subjects are other novelists whom he deeply admires, this note of self-defence remains a very minor theme in James's 1902 essays. As he says in the essay on Balzac: 'It was not of our author's difficulties . . . that I proposed to speak, but of his immense clear action' (NN, p.93), and the dominant tone is one of generous and confident objectivity. The Sainte-Beuvian tolerance of Partial Portraits is combined with the technical insight of James's maturity; his own understanding of the interaction of a subject with its mode of expression informs his comments on Balzac's romantic extravagance:

. . . the true itself can't be more than done and . . . if the false in this way equals it we must give up looking for the difference. Alone among novelists Balzac has the secret of an insistence that somehow makes the difference nought;

and on Flaubert's aesthetic conscience:

. . . his highly characteristic and suggestive view of the fertilisation of subject by form, penetration of the sense, ever, by the expression - the latter reacting creatively on the former . . . (NN, pp. 111, 81)

The terminology and approach clearly pre-echo the Prefaces, where James examines such themes in much greater detail. As criticism, the 1902 essays are more successful than the Prefaces - there is a strong case for them as James's best critical work. The desire to do justice to another method liberates James from the critical inconsistencies involved in explaining his own, but in making that explanation in the Prefaces he was forced to define fully the principles on which his applied criticism rests. Approaching the

Prefaces from the perspective of the earlier criticism provides a useful corrective to the dominant assumption that they are James's crowning critical achievement but they are, after all, somewhat different in kind from most of the earlier essays, and demand from us a slightly different approach.

The Prefaces

Clearly, it would be unfair to condemn the Prefaces, which are expressly concerned with analysis of James's own work, for a lack of objectivity. They are among the most eloquent, even moving, tributes to the novel form in the language and their eloquence is often the direct result of James sharing his creative problems in specific instances. He wanted to demonstrate the kind of analytic attention his novels had never received - as he says in the preface to The Spoils of Poynton, had the 'finer idiosyncrasies of a literary form' not seemed to be regarded as 'outside the scope of criticism', then 'such surprises of re-perusal, such recoveries of old fundamental intention, such moments of almost ruefully independent discrimination' which constitute the Prefaces would not have been necessary (AN, p.157). Implicit in those lines is the Prefaces' most intensely personal aspect, that process of rediscovery and reassessment whose details might be of interest only to a very few, but which would as a whole amount to a portrait of the artist. In practice the critical and personal aims work inextricably together. James hopes to stimulate discriminating readings of his novels by inviting the reader to share the problems of literary creation and his intellectual portrait is made up of the solutions to many such problems. His organic fictional method extends to his criticism.

When he was at work on the Prefaces James suggested tentatively

to Grace Norton that they might help the New York Edition to sell: 'the real tussle is in writing the Prefaces . . . which are to be long - very long! - and loquacious - and competent perhaps to pousser à la vente' (Lubbock, II, 72). The Edition was of course a financial failure and there is an ironic inevitability about James's final plea for critical recognition demonstrating more forcibly than ever his distance from the demands of the popular market. Even James's friends expected to glean personal insights from the Prefaces, but the revelations are artistic and intellectual, not intimate. Edmund Gosse voiced the common disappointment in his 1920 essay on James:

It is as though the author felt a burning desire to confide in the reader, whom he positively button-holes in the endeavour, but that the experience itself evades him, fails to find expression, and falls still-born, while other matters, less personal and less important, press in and take their place against the author's wish. Henry James proposed, in each instance, to disclose 'the contributive value of the accessory facts in a given artistic case'. This is, indeed, what we require in the history or the autobiography of an artist But this includes the production of anecdotes, of salient facts, of direct historical statements⁵

Those 'other matters' which Gosse obtusely finds 'less important' than anecdotal reminiscence are the general critical questions raised by James's creative problems and Gosse's reversed priorities serve to illustrate the flaccid biographical emphasis in contemporary criticism which James wanted to change. James is prepared to make no concessions to the reader. His 'accessory facts' are almost exclusively technical, so that however fond he may be of Isabel Archer it is inconceivable that he should talk about her in the way Conrad, for example, talks of Antonia in his 'Author's Note'

to Nostromo:

If anything could induce me to revisit Sulaco (I should hate to see all the changes) it would be Antonia. And the true reason for that - why not be frank about it? - the true reason is that I have modelled her on my first love.⁶

Conrad's analyses in his 'Notes' often reflect the Jamesian complexity of his own concern with technique (his description of the genesis of Typhoon, for example, or his discussion of the kind of appeal fiction makes in the 'Preface' to The Nigger⁷), but his straightforward style of explanation posits a very different reader from that suggested by the Prefaces, a reader who will be satisfied and excited by Conrad's whimsical blurring of the edges between fiction and reality when he talks of revisiting Sulaco.

The contrast with Conrad emphasises the technical rigour of the Prefaces where, as in the novels, the reader is expected to share the work of realisation with the author. The theme of self-analysis, though strong and inviting certain critical concessions, is in the end a means to arouse awareness of the novel in general. Again, as so often in James's criticism, a particular critical battle - this time for personal critical justice - is transcended by a larger frame of reference and we are reminded of James's claim for the Prefaces as 'a sort of comprehensive manual' for aspiring novelists. But though they work so closely together the private and public aims are sometimes at odds and we must be aware of the limitations as well as the strengths which arise from the Prefaces' particularity. One of their recurrent themes is the critic's obligation to discern the artist's aims, basing his assessment on the extent to which these have been achieved: 'What matters, for one's appreciation of a work of art, however modest, is that the prime intention shall have been justified - for any

judgment of which we must be clear as to what it was' (AN, p.134). A reading of the Prefaces as criticism raises different questions from a reading of them as literary autobiography. James's expressed intentions justify both and in order to assess the Prefaces as part of James's critical output I intend to take the two themes separately.

Though James paled at the idea of collecting the Prefaces and giving them a preface of their own,⁸ they are obviously intended as an autonomous series and show a careful pattern of exposition and development. Prefaces I to V ('Roderick Hudson' to 'The Tragic Muse') deal in more general terms than elsewhere with the bewildering profusion of choices open to the novelist and the criteria by which he makes decisions; they gradually establish the personal critical vocabulary that James takes for granted later. Together with 'The Ambassadors' and 'The Golden Bowl' these five contain the most exciting and fertile criticism of the series. Prefaces VI to XVI ('The Awkward Age' to 'The Wings of the Dove') are essentially developments on these general themes in the context of particular works, practical demonstrations of the consequences of artistic self-consciousness. They contain fascinating asides - on the ghost-story or international theme, for example - and beautifully recreate the process behind the novels they describe, but anecdote tends to replace the rigorous pattern of alternating example and generalisation established in the opening prefaces, and too often we sense the weariness James expressed to Howells: 'I am afraid I'm too sick of the mere doing of them, and of the general strain of the effort to avoid the deadly danger of repetition, to say much to the purpose about them' (Lubbock, II, 102). The preface to The Ambassadors provides a compressed recapitulation

as James summarises his principles in this his best preface, by recounting the process behind what he considered to be his best novel. In the final preface, which tackles the question of the value of his whole process of revision, James orchestrates the major underlying theme of the series - the sacredness and consolation and vitality of art.

The major justification for James's description of the series as a manual or vade-mecum for the aspiring novelist lies in the first five prefaces. His 'poetics' is never a matter of purely theoretical speculation; as in all his criticism, general precepts arise from the consideration of specific works and problems. His theory is nevertheless lucid and consistent and I want to examine three major ideas which are put forward in these initial prefaces and are applicable as descriptive critical criteria to all novels, but which James never fully explored except in terms of his own idiosyncratic art or similarly organic methods. These are: the means of achieving a balance between the apparently antithetical demands of life and art; the consequent fusion of subject and technique; and the nature of the protagonist.

The preface to Roderick Hudson rivals that to The Ambassadors as a piece of immaculately structured prose. James's memories of writing his first long novel modulate effortlessly into speculations on the apparently infinite possibilities open to the novelist, and the rest of the essay examines in a number of contexts the consequent necessity for discriminating choices, returning regularly to James's own problems with Roderick Hudson. Thus the wealth of relevant memories stimulated by recalling the writing of the novel leads naturally into the famous basic principle of the art of representation: 'Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by

a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily appear to do so' (AN, p.5). James thus establishes right at the beginning the centrality of selection, in which all critical observations begin and end, and the image of art as balance between form and formlessness. The novelist's problem is particularly acute because of his peculiar obligation to life: 'He embarks, rash adventurer, under the star of "representation", and is pledged thereby to remember that the art of interesting us in things - once these things are the right ones for his case - can only be the art of representing them' (AN, pp. 8-9). James's use of 'representation' rather than 'imitation' is important. The novelist's aim is vividness, 'intensity', rather than a simplistic concept of accuracy. James is far from apologising, like George Eliot, for the defectiveness of the artist's mirroring mind⁹ - the unevennesses are taken for granted in the act of selection and art inevitably modifies its subject. The Roderick Hudson preface is a restatement of ideas from 'The Art of Fiction': 'Art is essentially selection, but it is a selection whose main care is to be typical, to be inclusive' (PP, p.378). It extends the examination of James's earlier recognition that the novelist's individual perception of external reality has its own equal validity, but here, as there, there is no question of abandoning that external reality entirely: 'Art deals with what we see, it must first contribute full-handed that ingredient; it plucks its material . . . in the garden of life' (AN, p.312). James's realist commitment is tempered by his sense of the essential separateness, the difference in kind, between art and life, a separateness very clearly depicted in the famous image of the house of fiction from the preface to The Portrait of a Lady: a 'dead wall' divides life and the observing artist, and the windows in that wall are 'but windows at the best' and not 'hinged

doors opening straight upon life' (AN, p.46). Art can only fake and suggest the conditions of life, hence the importance of the right technical response to the chosen subject.

The rest of the preface to Roderick Hudson deals, in various contexts, with the artist's selection of the 'right things for his case', dependent always on the accurate identification of his subject, and with his means of representing them. While representation demands that the novelist deal with all those relations which 'directly minister to interest', formal beauty can be achieved only by excluding those not 'indispensable' to that interest and by stopping at the right place (AN, pp. 5-6). Indeed, it is by solving the technical problem of choice that art achieves its highest potential:

It is only by doing such things that art becomes exquisite, and it is only by positively becoming exquisite that it keeps clear of becoming vulgar, repudiates the coarse industries that masquerade in its name. (AN, p.14)

Here again is the observation from the Zola essay that the game of art 'may not with any sure felicity for the result be both taken and left' (NN, p.42). James makes this comment in the Roderick Hudson preface with reference to the particular problem of foreshortening, following the realisation that he failed to depict successfully Roderick's gradual disintegration. 'Foreshortening', the suggestion of a wealth of events and time in a short space by 'literary arrangement' rather than 'mere elimination' (AN, pp. 12-14), is a restatement of the problem of 'relations that stop nowhere' and once again the specific example illustrates the important general point. But the easy transition between generalisation and example blurs the distinction between generally applicable observations and the more limiting criteria relevant to James's own novels. The

general problems of choice and selection become an argument for James's peculiarly economical 'doing' - particularly when he discusses what is for him the most vital choice of all, seeing and treating one's material from the right point of view, solved, he argues, in Roderick Hudson through the organising centre of Rowland's consciousness (AN, pp. 15-16).

In his discussion of the novelist's various choices, James appears at first to be unclear about the exact relationship between subject and method. The selection of the 'right things' for his case suggests that method is a response to a predefined subject or aim, whereas the two seem to work reciprocally to establish Rowland as the novel's structural centre: since the subject had 'defined itself' as Rowland's view of Roderick, James's response was to make Rowland's point of view prominent; and the use of Rowland as a structural focus in turn dictates the relative importance of the protagonists. James is not, of course, inconsistent here. This is simply the first instance in the Prefaces of a vital critical premise, implicit in the 1902 essays and a central theme here: the belief in the inextricability of subject and technique such that technique in fact helps to define subject, possibly modifying the intention to which it was initially a response.¹⁰ Ideally, then, the novelist not only manages a fusion of the antithetical demands of life and art, but achieves a delicate balance in which the highest representational value is also the perfect formal arrangement. And in the prefaces to The Tragic Muse and The Awkward Age particularly, James demonstrates in more detail how the balance is achieved: 'not by the addition of items (a light that has for its attendant shadow a possible dryness) but by the art of figuring synthetically, a compactness into which the imagination may cut thick, as into the rich density of a

wedding-cake' (AN, pp. 87-8).

The interaction of subject and form has of course long been a critical commonplace so that we are apt to forget how radically new was James's insight, particularly in its application to prose fiction. It was in fact forty years before Mark Schorer formalised the concept of 'technique as discovery' in his seminal essay of 1948 and even then it was accompanied by preconceptions in favour of a Jamesian economy and elimination of the author, though the concept is as usefully applicable to loose baggy monsters with intrusive narrators as to James or Joyce, as Wayne Booth demonstrated in The Rhetoric of Fiction.¹¹ Schorer and Booth, among others, belatedly developed Jamesian insights into incisive tools of descriptive criticism; they provided means of examining the individual novelist's attempts to solve the problem of the relations that stop nowhere, and the ways in which this 'geometry of his own' defines his subject, something less explicitly done in James's own essays on other writers. James intended the Prefaces to provide such critical tools and a passage from the exactly contemporary essay on The Tempest clearly illustrates his irritated concern to shatter critical preconceptions:

[Shakespeare] points for us as no one else the relation of style to meaning and of manner to motive; a matter on which, right and left, we hear such rank ineptitudes uttered. Unless it be true that these things, on either hand, are inseparable; unless it be true that the phrase, the cluster and order of terms, is the object and the sense, in as close a compression as that of body and soul, so that any consideration of them as distinct, from the moment style is an active, applied force, becomes a gross stupidity: unless we recognise this reality the author of The Tempest has no lesson for us. It is by his expression of it exactly as the expression stands that the particular thing is created,

created as interesting, as beautiful, as strange, droll or terrible - as related, in short, to our understanding or our sensibility; in consequence of which we reduce it to naught when we begin to talk of either of its presented parts as matters by themselves. (SLC, p.349)

And this only three years after Bradley's Shakespearean Tragedy!

In the Prefaces James chose to demonstrate and encourage such awareness by recounting his own processes of composition. His fertile general insights into the problems of representation and the interaction of method and subject are therefore restricted in analysis to his own particular solutions, surely a case for reading the Prefaces as an explanatory background to James's other essays rather than in isolation. It is left to later critics who are sufficiently emancipated from Jamesian method - Booth rather than Lubbock - to use these insights as tools of descriptive criticism. I shall be looking later on at the limited analyses of other novelists in the Prefaces themselves, and in the preface to Roderick Hudson we see James bringing restrictive presuppositions to bear on one of his own early novels: it is surely a late Jamesian distortion to see Rowland as the novel's organising consciousness.

However, as that first preface abundantly demonstrates, James's chosen method carries its own kind of critical success. There could in a sense be no more effective way to prove the seriousness of the novel form than to recreate the arduous yet exciting process of creation, the stimulation of working within a set of defined yet flexible variables. In the Prefaces no less than in the novels method is matter and in those which recreate most successfully the course of a novel's development - to The Portrait of a Lady, The Awkward Age, What Maisie Knew, The Ambassadors, The Wings of the Dove - James's ruminating style exactly captures the artist's tentative explorations of his chosen material. Complex

sentence structure, with its capacity for constant modification, reflects James's view of a complex form with infinite potential. There emerges, from the preface to Roderick Hudson and the other introductory prefaces particularly, that sense of the novel as an exquisite balance which is implicit in James's criticism from the beginning and which is a more formalist version of D.H. Lawrence's similar insight.¹² James's imagery suggests both art's romantic freedom - he remembers how, when embarking on Roderick Hudson, 'the blue southern sea seemed to spread immediately before me and the breath of the spice-islands to be already in the breeze' (AN, p.4) - and its obligation to reality - the artist is the 'embroiderer of the canvas of life' (AN, p.5). The novel is a romantic adventure in accuracy, an 'alembic' (AN, p.13) fusing intensity and breadth, mimesis and formal perfection. At its most responsive it combines a realist with a romantic view of life (AN, p.31) and remains truest to its own nature when forced to accommodate the most alien material (AN, p.46).

The preface to Roderick Hudson suggested in general terms the criteria on which choices of material or method might be based. The other four introductory prefaces explore in more detail this 'free selection - which is the beautiful, terrible whole of art' and its consequent 'free difficulty' (AN, p.30). 'The American' defines the alternatives of realistic and romantic treatment and the consequences of mistaking one for the other, and tentatively introduces an examination of the relationship between artist and subject which is continued in more detail in 'The Portrait of a Lady'. This important preface has for its principle of organisation James's rejection of the stereotyped implications of contemporary critical vocabulary - 'heroine', 'plot', 'adventure', 'subject', 'morality' - again developing ideas from 'The Art of

Fiction',¹³ and it asserts the importance of a character-centred art. The examination of character is continued in the following preface, to The Princess Casamassima, where James makes clear his preference for the 'finely aware and richly responsible' protagonist (AN, p.62). All these prefaces implicitly continue the theme of the form/subject interaction, since they all demonstrate James's technical response to his 'germ' and the consequent success or failure of the novel as a whole. In the final introductory preface, to The Tragic Muse, James is more overtly concerned with the problems of formal organisation and the forging of formal perfection out of recalcitrant material.

I want to concentrate for the moment on James's attitudes to character as explored in the prefaces to The Portrait of a Lady and The Princess Casamassima. The thematic centre of the former is the famous image of the house of fiction with its many windows, in which the windows are individual novelists' perceptions of the world, as realised through their literary form: they are pierced in the 'dead wall' 'by the need of the individual vision and the pressure of the individual will' (AN, p.46). The preface as a whole examines more fully this relationship between the perceiving consciousness and the achieved work. An inexplicable subconscious motive provides the 'germ'; the quality of the artist's consciousness then dictates both what he makes of it and the moral value of the ensuing novel: 'The quality and capacity of that soil [the artist's sensibility], its ability to "grow" with due freshness and straightness any vision of life, represents, strongly or weakly, the projected morality' (AN, p.45). In this case, James's germ was the figure of Isabel, and Turgenev's authority is cited for the development of a 'story' intended simply to exhibit that figure as fully as possible. James here asserts his unwavering confidence in

the preeminence of character:

. . . I could think so little of any fable that it didn't need its agents positively to launch it; I could think so little of any situation that didn't depend for its interest on the nature of the persons situated, and thereby on their way of taking it. There are methods of so-called presentation, I believe - among novelists who have appeared to flourish - that offer the situation as indifferent to that support; but I have not lost the sense of the value for me, at the time, of the admirable Russian's testimony to my not needing, all superstitiously, to try and perform any such gymnastic. (AN, p.44)

Again we have the interaction of subject and form: character is both a starting-point and a mode of organisation through the projected perceiving consciousness.

The form of The Portrait was dictated by James's concern to realise Isabel as fully as possible and 'it was naturally of the essence that the young woman should be herself complex' (AN, p.52). In the following preface to The Princess, James justifies at length his preference for the highly conscious protagonist. Since the interest of a situation depends on someone's view and experience of it, the degree of that interest will be directly dependent on the quality of that character's sensibility. 'Stupid' characters are useful to the novelist, but mainly for the light of contrast they throw on the sentient protagonist, just as 'Hamlet and Lear are surrounded, amid their complications, by the stupid and the blind, who minister in all sorts of ways to their recorded fate' (AN, p.62). But perfect awareness is equally undesirable in the hero. James has already commented on the need for a blend of the 'special' and the 'typical' in the fictional hero, in the preface to Roderick Hudson (AN, p.12), and that blend is here translated

into terms of sensibility as a combination of awareness and 'bewilderment':

It seems probable that if we were never bewildered there would never be a story to tell about us; we should partake of the superior nature of the all-knowing immortals whose annals are so dreadfully dull so long as flurried humans are not, for the positive relief of bored Olympians, mixed up with them. (AN, pp. 63-4)

There is an unmistakeable parallel between James's justification of the complex protagonist and his moral evaluation of a novel according to the complexity of the artist's sensibility, a parallel which reflects the near-coalescence of the novelist's viewpoint with his creature's in the late novels. James's most obvious technical contribution to the novel, part of his rigorous fictionalising process, was of course to get rid of the crude 'bored Olympian' of the omniscient narrator and substitute a narrative stance which shares the process of discovery with protagonist and reader. The illusion of breadth, the 'moral energy' dependent on surveying 'the whole field', are therefore obtained through using as aware a registering consciousness as possible. (One thinks of Fanny Assingham's comment from The Golden Bowl: '"Just so what is morality but high intelligence?"'.¹⁴) To present such a consciousness successfully, the writer needs the kind of intimacy with his character which James always admired in Balzac, described so well in 'The Lesson of Balzac' (1905):

There is never in Balzac that damning interference which consists of the painter's not seeing, not possessing, his image; not having fixed his creature and his creature's conditions. (LB, pp. 95-6)

And for James himself such intimacy inevitably produces an internalised portrait:

Intimacy with a man's specific behaviour, with his

given case, is desperately certain to make us see it as a whole - in which event arbitrary limitations of our vision lose whatever beauty they may on occasion have pretended to. What a man thinks and what he feels are the history and character of what he does; on all of which things the logic of intensity rests. (AN, p.66)

The full fictional realisation of a subject reveals, even creates, its interest and this is no less true of character than of any other 'germ'.

John Goode has argued that in late James 'autonomy of self' (the recognition of the otherness of characters) is subjected to 'autonomy of form'.¹⁵ It would surely be truer to say that what James attempted was to make the former the means of achieving the latter, to balance representation with formal values by recording events through independent consciousnesses. The English novel, in James's view, had wasted opportunities for interest by a conventionally functional use of character:

The picture of an intelligence appears for the most part, it is true, a dead weight for the reader of the English novel to carry, this reader having so often the wondrous property of caring for the displayed tangle of human relations without caring for its intelligibility. (AN, p.63)

James's dislike of Hardy is again relevant here. Hardy's confused, because self-indulgent, treatment of Tess wastes, in James's view, the given material. On the other hand, Flaubert's rigorous portraits of Emma Bovary and Frédéric Moreau impoverish his material not solely, I think, because they are unintelligent people but because Flaubert's unremitting irony precludes the Balzacian relationship of love which guarantees the creature's independence: 'It was by loving them . . . that he knew them; it was not by knowing them that he loved' (LB, p.97). In the preface to The Princess James

describes his 'weakness of sympathy' for George Eliot and it is her fully realised respectful knowledge of her characters that he emphasises: James admires her,

. . . constant effort . . . to show their adventures and their history - the author's subject-matter all - as determined by their feelings and the nature of their minds. Their emotions, their stirred intelligence, their moral consciousness, becomes thus, by sufficiently charmed perusal, our own very adventure. (AN, pp. 69-70)

Again the controlling idea is of the novel as balance - between the 'bewilderment' which makes interest possible and the 'awareness' which makes that interest meaningful; and between the discreteness of life, as suggested by the individuality of characters, and the artist's imposed form, his technical realisation of that individuality.

The inexorable logic of James's case is of course intended to seduce us - as it seduced Lubbock - into wholehearted acceptance of his own method: the highly conscious protagonist and the limited point of view. But we needn't follow him quite so far. His distinction between awareness and bewilderment - or, as he puts it later, 'the quality of bewilderment characteristic of one's creature' (AN, p.66) - offers a suggestive approach to the distribution of meaning between characters and narrator or implied narrative stance, an approach which can be applied to relationships between author and character very different from James's own. James himself uses it to compare The Bride of Lammermoor with Tom Jones in one of the Prefaces' rare considerations of other novelists. His analysis of the costumed and assumed rather than felt relationships in Scott's novel, where the characters' simplicity isn't sufficiently compensated for by the narrator, is illuminating and just, and he beautifully describes the way Fielding's persona, really the ruling consciousness in Tom Jones, extends and enhances his protagonist's

lack of imagination (AN, p.68). It was a long time before these kinds of insight became the common stock of fiction criticism. James's absorption in his own method, however, leads him to the assumption that 'we care, our curiosity and our sympathy care, comparatively little for what happens to the stupid, the coarse and the blind', since 'by so much as [the affair] falls within the scope of a denser and duller, a more vulgar and more shallow capacity, do we get a picture dim and meagre' (AN, pp. 62, 67). This is only partly true. Certainly the fully explored dominant consciousness tends inevitably to become complex (it is always an illuminating shock to remember that Bloom was originally conceived as a character in Dubliners), but that complexity might be reflected, rather than the inherent quality James demands of his 'most polished of possible mirrors' (AN, p.70). Awareness and bewilderment can be shared between protagonists, author and reader to give different kinds of interest, and an authorial persona, or irony, or 'saturation with his idea' might lend significance and interest to what remains a limited, even stupid, character. Faulkner's Benjie, even Bloom, prove the point, as does James's own contradictory response to Emma Bovary: in spite of the impoverishing effect of Flaubert's irony and in spite of 'the poverty of her consciousness', the sheer force of authorial 'doing' forces our interest in 'the nature of her consciousness and the play of her mind' (NN, pp. 66, 65, 63).

As well as preparing us thematically for the 'development' section of the series, the introductory prefaces gradually establish James's personal critical vocabulary. As R.W. Short has pointed out, James appropriated words in general use rather than creating his own, and he endowed them with a specific technical meaning, at the same time allowing the usual meaning to perform an explanatory function.¹⁶ This in itself reflects the life/art balance to which

the critic must do justice. The 'germ' (AN, p.42) or original hint for a novel might be the image of a particular character or an arresting social situation and this is very different from the 'subject' (pp. 15, 22) which is not the basic material or story itself but the aspect in which this is viewed, established as much by the technical organisation of the novel as by the will of the artist. The germ contains a certain inherent 'value' (p.48), initially recognised or perhaps only vaguely apprehended by the artist,¹⁷ whose task it then is to realise that value technically, thus creating further 'values' in the work itself, including its overall unity (p.97). To achieve this, the novelist seeks to combine convincing 'representation' (p.9) with 'composition' (p.84). He therefore seeks the right 'centre' (pp. 37, 89) through which his material might be organised and the maximum 'intensity' (p.66) obtained. One way of securing richness of representation is by 'multiplication of aspects', facilitated by choosing the right 'scenic' method (p.90). Ultimately, the novelist's aim is to make his figures 'live' (p. 77) but the work itself must have 'beauty', artistic meaning, which only 'organic form' can bestow (p.84). These flexible and largely self-explanatory critical terms are typically Jamesian, and many are familiar from earlier essays. Together with the moral-aesthetic evaluative terms which, as we have seen, James applies to other novelists, they suggest a critical attitude which combines feeling and judgment with measurement and they recall James's description of the critic's art in Essays in London: 'to feel and feel till he understands and to understand so well that he can say' (ELE, p.276). They also contribute to the reader's sense as he reads the Prefaces of gradually attaining an understanding of James's particular 'geometry'; the recurrent familiar, yet oddly idiosyncratic, terms are defined and redefined

by context until the reader can follow the technical complexities of the preface to The Wings of the Dove, for example, with comparative ease. They are thus instrumental in the training process towards critical subtlety, providing a vocabulary through which the complexities of composition might be understood.

In the preface to The Tragic Muse James applies some of this personal vocabulary to Thackeray, Dumas père and Tolstoy, his methodological rival, in defence of his belief that 'a picture without composition slights its most precious chance for beauty'. The single organisational principle in their novels is mimesis:

. . . what do such large loose baggy monsters, with their queer elements of the accidental and the arbitrary artistically mean? We have heard it maintained, we will remember, that such things are 'superior to art'; but we understand least of all what that may mean, and we look in vain for the artist, the divine explanatory genius, who will come to our aid and tell us. There is life and life, and as waste is only life sacrificed and thereby prevented from 'counting', I delight in a deep-breathing economy and an organic form. (AN, p.84)

The set of ideas behind James's objections ('It is art that makes life') is familiar enough and Percy Lubbock supplied the analytic demonstration of what James meant, at least in the cases of Tolstoy and Thackeray, in The Craft of Fiction.¹⁸ When James differentiates 'life and life' he is distinguishing life itself, arbitrary and wayward, from life used by art and given significance by art's process of clarifying selection. In the preface to The Spoils of Poynton, for example, he compares the artist's development of a germ, the skeleton of a situation overheard at dinner, with its actual development in life:

It . . . amuses him again and again to note how, beyond the first step of the actual case, the case that constitutes for him his germ, . . . life persistently

blunders and deviates, loses herself in the sand. The reason is of course that life has no direct sense whatever for the subject and is capable, luckily for us, of nothing but splendid waste. (AN, p.120)

James is of course being unfair to Dumas, Thackeray and Tolstoy. The rather bizarre link of the three in the first place suggests a blindness to significant differences in the interest of making a single point, and in implying that they completely lack composition James has apparently forgotten his image of the house of fiction, its windows shaped by the artist's 'individual vision and . . . individual will' (AN, p.46). Form, according to that image, is a function of the artist's selective consciousness and the descriptive critic would simply plot the effects of these novelists' particular geometries.

But James is unashamedly partisan and this brief reference to Tolstoy suggests a more restricted sense in which the Prefaces were to be the young novelist's vade-mecum. James is arguing for his own method as a model, for a seriousness derived from the complete fictional digestion of material, in the face of the contemporary novel's Tolstoyan assumption that seriousness inheres in the raw material itself. Tolstoy, a genius, could afford such looseness; imitative minor talents, James felt, could not, as he said later in 'The New Novel': 'of all great painters of the social picture it was given that epic genius most to serve admirably as a rash adventurer and a "caution", and execrably, pestilentially, as a model' (NN, p.260). James never abandoned his conviction that some subjects are more interesting than others - 'I think, verily, that there are degrees of merit in subjects' (AN, p.309) - but he believed that even the fullest subject can have all its resonances articulated only through the artistic process; and for James even Tolstoy 'doesn't do to read over' (Lubbock, II, 336) - the interest

of loosely controlled material is soon exhausted.

The same commitment to method lies behind James's unwillingness, in the case of The Portrait of a Lady for example, to say where his germs really come from: 'We have to go too far back, too far behind, to say' (AN, p.43). Graham Greene took up the theme of James's contemporaries when he objected, with particular reference to the Portrait preface, that 'at a certain level no writer has really disclosed less'.¹⁹ Greene identifies the source of Isabel, probably rightly, as Minny Temple, but this kind of biographical detail is indeed in James 'too far behind', too completely subsumed, to be more than tangentially relevant. The point reminds us of James's attitude to Sons and Lovers, for example, with its incomplete control over personal experience, and again James's insights have been developed only by much later critics.²⁰

The best of these later critics, however - in Lawrence's case Daleski rather than Schorer - combine acceptance of a completely different kind of 'doing' with their rigorous Jamesian analysis. Lubbock's analysis of Tolstoy, on the other hand, though skilful and illuminating, finally falls far short of its subject. James's comment on Tolstoy might be reapplied to the Prefaces. His intended advocacy of his own method to some extent exonerates his occasional narrowness: like much of James's criticism the Prefaces are the self-centred and therefore stimulating criticism of the creative artist; and, to reword slightly Empson's comment on Fielding, James seems ultimately to leave room for the methods he rejects by his fertile analyses of the novel's general problems and his enthusiastic evocations of its almost infinite potential. In the hands of followers with a less generous sensibility, however, the Prefaces have sometimes served 'pestilentially, as a model'.

What then of James as a critic of his own work and the Prefaces as an intellectual self-portrait? They in fact present an accurate portrayal of late James only, rather than the developmental portrait he seemed to assume they would provide. As he says himself of re-reading his later works: 'the march of my present attention coincides sufficiently with the march of my original expression', whereas in the case of works more than a dozen years old he found a 'frequent lapse of harmony between my present mode of action and that to which the existing footprints were due' (AN, pp. 335-6). The developmental portrait actually lies in a comparative reading of the original and revised editions of the early novels. With the emphasis on James as critic, I want to use the Prefaces to compare late James's attitudes to the novel with his earlier views.

The novel's relationship with life, as described in the Prefaces, is ideal and ironic rather than straightforwardly mimetic; it not only interprets life, but extends its possibilities. The art has its basis in an idiosyncratic realist commitment, but thereafter 'doing' is all:

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 - which material elsewhere grown is stale and uneatable. But it has no sooner done this than it has to take account of a process (AN, p.312)

In 'The Art of Fiction', one of the consequences of James's growing insistence on the subjectivity of perception was a blurring of the distinction between realism and romance (PP, pp. 393-4, and above, pp. 178-9). In the preface to The American he explores in more detail his earlier observation that the 'standard of execution is equally high for each' (PP, p.394), insisting on the difference in kind between realist and romantic points of view (AN, p.32), but

pointing out that: 'It is as difficult . . . to trace the dividing-line between the real and the romantic as to plant a milestone between north and south' (AN, p.37). The artist's technical problem is to achieve that transition imperceptibly, as James suggests in his famous image of the romancer 'insidiously' cutting the cable which anchors the balloon of experience and imagination to the earth (AN, pp. 33-4). Intensity and credibility depend on the subtlety of the change, which in turn depends on the accurate identification of the nature of one's material. James criticises his earlier self in The American, not for slipping into the romantic mode, but for obtrusively cutting the cable as he did so (AN, p.35). The technical jolt reflects the young emigré's confusion between reality and Balzacian convention which I looked at earlier (above, pp. 65-6). The mature James is more cavalier, because more accurate, about his relationship with reality than his earnest younger self, playing deliberate technical games with the point at which reality and romance intersect. In the preface to 'The Altar of the Dead' he explains his theory of the ghost-story:

. . . we but too probably break down, I have ever reasoned, when we attempt the prodigy, the appeal to mystification, in itself; with its 'objective' side too emphasised the report . . . will practically run thin. We want it clear, goodness knows, but we also want it thick, and we get the thickness in the human consciousness that entertains and records, that amplifies and interprets it. . . . here prodigies . . . keep all their character . . . by looming through some other history - the indispensable history of somebody's normal relation to something. (AN, p.256)

Similarly, in the preface to 'The Aspern Papers', James plays with the intersection of past and present: 'We are divided of course between liking to feel the past strange and liking to feel it

familiar; the difficulty is, for intensity, to catch it at the moment when the scales of the balance hang with the right evenness' (AN, p.164). We see James here consciously stretching realism's boundaries, exploring particular examples of the critical position already reached in Partial Portraits which located 'truth' not in external reality but in the intensity with which the individual perception of that reality was realised.

In the preface to 'The Aspern Papers', in a passage which Ezra Pound particularly enjoyed,²¹ James advances one of several defences for creating in his tales historical figures who never existed, or types who have never been seen to exist. His response to critics is, 'So much the worse for the time'; 'So much the worse for . . . life' (AN, pp. 168, 222). He has two lines of defence against the retort that 'such a plea represent[s] no "link" with reality' (AN, p.168). The first is technical: 'that one's warrant, in such a case, hangs essentially on the question of whether or no the false element imputed would have borne the test of further development which so exposes the wrong and so consecrates the right' (AN, pp. 168-9); the second is philosophical:

. . . my postulates, my animating presences, were all, to their great enrichment, their intensification of value, ironic; the strength of applied irony being surely in the sincerities, the lucidities, the utilities that stand behind it. When it's not a campaign, of a sort, on behalf of something better (better than the obnoxious, the provoking object) that blessedly, as is assumed might be, it's not worth speaking of. But this is exactly what we mean by operative irony. It implies and projects the possible other case, the case rich and edifying where the actuality is pretentious and vain. (AN, p.222)

This takes us back beyond 'The Art of Fiction' to James's enthusiasm for Turgenev as an example of the necessary compromise between real

and ideal, and beyond that to the young reviewer whose American moral consciousness craved 'a particle of poetry, a ray of the ideal' (review of Disraeli's Lothair, LRE, p.306). These two arguments, the technical and the moral, in defence of imaginative licence illustrate James's continuing eclecticism, the conservative moral concern at the centre of his modernism, and later in the preface to 'The Lesson of the Master' James describes the novelist's task in neo-Platonic terms as 'precisely in . . . aid given to true meanings to be born' (AN, p.224). The artistic transformation of life creates truth insofar as it is uniquely capable of revealing significance; the effect is an Arnoldian criticism of life, with that implicit appeal to a larger 'truth' which plays through James's reservations about French naturalism and his objections to the limited version of life offered by D'Annunzio and Serao.

James's 'supersubtle fry' are the ultimate expression of this high idealism combined with an undiminished interest in the nature of character and consciousness. 'What is either a picture or a novel that is not of character?' James asked in 'The Art of Fiction' (PP, p.393); in the Prefaces he can still 'think so little of any situation that didn't depend for its interest on the nature of the persons situated' (AN, p.44). The excitement of the relationship between author and protagonist, described in the preface to Roderick Hudson - 'A beautiful infatuation this, always, I think, the intensity of the creative effort to get into the skin of the creature; the act of personal possession of one being by another at its completest' (AN, p.37) - still lies behind the highly-wrought Ambassadors and the opportunity to '"do" a man of imagination' (AN, p. 310).

I am stressing the Prefaces' moral and human commitment because I want to make clear the essential continuity in James's

critical position. His delight in 'a deep-breathing economy' (AN, p.84) is not the manifesto of an aesthete who has done with life (versions of Leavis's position still appear often enough to require rebuttal²²), nor does it suggest that the novel is an autotelic construct.

Several of the later prefaces describe how James inserted additional difficulties into his original material for the 'fun' or 'amusement' of solving them technically: in the preface to What Maisie Knew he describes giving his germ 'proper symmetry' by having both parents re-marry (AN, p.140), and we know that he was similarly concerned for symmetry in The Golden Bowl (NB, p.130).²³ This is not technical self-indulgence but the fine tuning of means to ends; virtuosity multiplies meanings, as studies of late Jamesian method have demonstrated.²⁴ By stretching his form James proves its potential - as he says in the preface to The Portrait, the novel has the power 'positively to appear more true to its character in proportion as it strains, or tends to burst, with a latent extravagance, its mould' (AN, p.46). The novel was always for James ideally a balance of opposites. In the late criticism the terms mechanically polarised in French Poets and Novelists - morality and form, real and ideal, realism and romance - are still present, but James understands more fully the subtlety with which they interact.

Such insights into the possibility and effects of the fusion or coexistence of different modes are less tangible than the orthodoxies of point of view and 'picture and scene' to which the Prefaces most obviously gave rise, but they are critically far more fertile. James's comments on his own novels illustrate the point. His own submission to the supremacy of the reflecting consciousness makes him attempt to paint a more coherent technical picture than his career actually allows. In the preface to The Princess Casamassima, for example, he claims that all his novels - from Roderick Hudson

to The Golden Bowl - derive their interest from him 'placing advantageously, placing right in the middle of the light, the most polished of possible mirrors of the subject' (AN, p.70). Earlier, in the prefaces to Roderick Hudson and The American, he had claimed that both novels were saved from their technical inadequacies by having their 'centres' firmly established in Rowland Mallett's view of Roderick and in the consciousness of Christopher Newman himself (AN, pp. 15, 37-8). But these late Jamesian terms aren't really appropriate to the comparatively crude early novels - particularly The American, which is the closest thing to pure plot James ever wrote. Much more exciting, and much more accurate, are James's observations on the inveterate romanticism of many of the early works in which 'I must decidedly have supposed, all the while, that I was acutely observing' (AN, p.26).

In the 1902 essay on Balzac James finally did justice to Balzac's exuberant imagination, which he had found so worrying in the context of the well-defined distinctions of French Poets and Novelists. He recognises that: 'The romantic side of him has the extent of all the others; it represents in the oddest manner his escape from the walled and roofed structure into which he had built himself' (NN, p.110). He brings the same mature discrimination to bear on The American, 'Daisy Miller' and the early international tales, acknowledging the Balzacian convention and stylisation which modified observation during his early 'realist' phase. The American is described as 'consistently, consummately . . . romantic' (AN, p.25), and James realises that so many of the international tales were 'sneaking attempts to substitute the American romantic for the American real', since it was given him to deal only with the 'negative aspects' of the American character (AN, pp. 194, 187). At one point he even discusses the international

theme as in itself superficial:

I simply note . . . the scant results, above all for interesting detail, promised by confronting the fruits of a constituted order with the fruits of no order at all. . . . where the dramatic encounter is but the poor concussion of positives on one side with negatives on the other, we get little beyond a consideration of the differences between fishes and fowls. (AN, p.132)

This is an unnecessarily harsh appraisal of the way those tales in fact work, but it is accurate in its suggestion of the young James's infatuation with well-defined social mores, the infatuation of the notorious passage from Hawthorne - 'no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy . . .' (H, p.43). 'Daisy Miller' is re-appraised in similar terms: 'my little exhibition is made to no degree whatever in critical but, quite inordinately and extravagantly, in poetical terms'; 'my supposedly typical little figure was of course pure poetry' (AN, pp. 269, 270). James detects his idealisation of American innocence. He does insufficient justice to the clarity with which Daisy's mixed coarseness and attractiveness is realised, but he pinpoints the indulgence, the final woolliness of the portrait, which loads her death precariously with tragic meaning.

James's mature discussion of Balzac's romanticism is matched in the 1902 essays on Flaubert and Zola by a similar appreciation of their complex mixtures of mode; James assesses their achievement with a Sainte-Beuvian objectivity free of the compartmentalisation of realist controversies. He eagerly endorses Faguet's analysis of Flaubert's duality: 'he was formed intellectually of two quite distinct compartments, a sense of the real and a sense of the romantic'; and in his response to L'Assommoir and Germinal he anticipates the common critical realisation that often in Zola's

practice "science" . . . has had little hand in the business. The author's perceptions go straight, and the subject, grateful and responsive, gives itself wholly up. It is no longer a case of an uncertain smoky torch, but of a personal vision, the vision of genius, springing from an inward source' (NN, pp.58, 43). Those vague, evocatory terms - 'genius', 'inward source' - are reminders of the undiminished role played by personal sensibility even in James's late criticism. His plea is for the rigorous analysis made possible only through detailed understanding of the form, but objective measurement is modified by the evaluative moral appeal to the 'amount of felt life concerned in producing it' (AN, p.45); the appeal to technique exists alongside a looser dependence on an assumed kinship of sensibility which recognises qualities like sincerity and 'felt life'. And in the preface to The Awkward Age James expresses his relief that though English criticism might fall below the standard he would wish, it at least remains personal and flexible: 'if our art has certainly, for the impression it produces, to defer to the rise and fall, in the critical temperament, of the telltale mercury, it still hasn't to reckon with the engraved thermometer-face' (AN, p.118). The irony is muted: James never broke completely with the English critical tradition of civilised, impressionistic conversation.

The Prefaces are fascinating documents, uniquely capturing the creative process in a cumulative revelation of the interaction of rationale and method. They have been most commonly used by critics to explain (or to systematise) James's own fictional geometry - the intelligent reflector, the 'law of successive aspects', the alternation of scene and picture - but I have concentrated on his analysis of the problems underlying those particular solutions since therein lies the justification for his claim for

them as the aspiring novelist's vade-mecum. Because of their personal subject, the Prefaces show in starker contrast than elsewhere the strengths and weaknesses inherent in all James's criticism: the fertile general insights of the creative writer, expressed with occasionally stunning accuracy in a definition or epithet,²⁵ and the tendency to restrict generalities to his personal method; the constant alternation of example and precept and the misuse of examples to put a personal case. One of their most valuable features is again shared by all James's criticism: James is untiringly eloquent on the dignity and potential - and openendedness - of the novel form. We see this put to analytic use in his mature fusion of earlier antitheses, his concept of the novel as balance; we see it at the end of the preface to The Ambassadors where James pays tribute to 'the most independent, most elastic, most prodigious of literary forms' (AN, p.326); and we see it at the very end of the whole series, in James's moving formal statement of the fertility and responsibility of art: 'But on all the ground to which the pretension of performance by a series of exquisite laws may apply there reigns one sovereign truth - which decrees that, as art is nothing if not exemplary, care nothing if not active, finish nothing if not consistent, the proved error is the base apologetic deed, the helpless regret is the barren commentary, and "connexions" are employable for finer purposes than mere gaping contrition' (AN, p.348).

Legacies

James is a lion in the path with whom all subsequent novel critics have had to reckon and I shan't attempt the near-impossible task of tracing in detail his pervasive influence. The nature of that influence is itself problematic for a study

of James as critic since it inevitably arises from the mixed legacy of his criticism and novels, from a persistent and often damaging tendency to read one exclusively in terms of the other. James was not well served by his most ardent disciples, who perpetuated his own late dogmatism, but without his mitigating high intelligence: Percy Lubbock's reductive systematisation of the Prefaces encouraged a narrow reading of James's criticism which is still echoing in a recent critic's claim that, 'Henry James set up his own kind of fiction as a norm for the novel as a whole, because he was unable or unwilling to see the term novel as a loose designation for a wide variety of fictional types'.²⁶ The injustice of that should by now be quite clear, and the injustice is ironically underscored by the fact that Scholes's argument for a typology of fiction is a more detailed exploration of James's own recognition in the preface to The Awkward Age: '"Kinds" are the very life of literature, and truth and strength come from the complete recognition of them' (AN, p.111). It is that kind of critical correspondence, sometimes unconscious, which I want to look at here. James's protean sensibility anticipated many of the major insights and premises of more recent criticism of fiction. An exclusive emphasis on point of view misrepresents the fertile and responsible eclecticism which was central to James's critical approach.

To make it easier to find a path through the tangles of post-Jamesian criticism, I shall adopt the schematic but useful distinction, made on several occasions by David Lodge, between 'modernist' and 'anti-modernist' methodologies.²⁷ James is most commonly claimed as a champion of modernism - Lodge himself cites the controversy with Wells as the type of subsequent critical arguments - a role reinforced by the fluctuating pattern of his reputation in this century, but his name has also been invoked

at various times to sanction or epitomise the opposite critical creed.²⁸ As with the novels, critics can find in James's theory pretty much what they seek - as he once said of Balzac, he provides an 'extent of ground . . . on which we might all of us together quite pitch our little tents' (NN, p.87). He is one of the most intelligent apologists for traditional realism, and one of the first to radically question its mimetic assumptions; his modernist concern with individual perception is a product of his early neo-classical idealism; and his emphasis on form as the source of meaning is controlled by an Arnoldian concern for form's moral obligations. As I have already suggested, attempts to identify James with a particular critical approach fall short of the mark, not because he is incoherent or inconsistent but because he saw, like Lawrence, that to do justice to the novel a critic must be 'emotionally alive in every fibre, intellectually capable and skilful in essential logic, and then morally very honest'.²⁹

Slowly, and with the tangential help of other voices like those of Pound and Eliot, James achieved his dual critical aim. His creative and critical example facilitated an improved atmosphere of discussion in which his own novels were better read and novels in general received a closer and more discriminating scrutiny. Ford Madox Ford, characteristically unreliable, later played down James's influence, but in 1908 his editorial in the English Review greeted the first volume of the New York edition as the expression of 'an author so single-minded in the effort to express, so felicitous and so successful in expressing in imaginative terms all that is most real, most permanent and most fugitive in the life around him' - a tribute more accurately reflecting James's undeniable presence behind his own work. In 1914 Edith Wharton followed

James's 'The Younger Generation' in the Times Literary Supplement with her own plea for a criticism of fiction along French lines, alive to the necessity and effects of form and to 'what particular thing each particular novel is trying to be'. Her emphasis on criticism's concern 'above all, with the point of view of the creator' suggests her debt to James, but her greater, because more independent, tribute came in The Writing of Fiction of 1925, where she acknowledges James as 'almost the only novelist who has formulated his ideas about his art', but is prepared to suggest that his late novels were the stultified victims of that concern with theory. In 1918, in The Method of Henry James, Joseph Warren Beach provided a sensitive close reading of the novels along the lines suggested by the Prefaces, and followed this in 1932 with a major contribution to the orthodoxy of point of view, and Lubbock's The Craft of Fiction appeared in 1921.³⁰ These are the acknowledged landmarks in the development of a Jamesian critical awareness; the writers, in spite of occasional minor rebellions, are self-consciously his heirs, and they are all loosely modernist (Edith Wharton's fictional method is an exception) in their approach to the novel.

I want to focus on two aspects of their modernism - one fundamentally Jamesian and one, I think, only superficially so. The first is their emphasis on the novel as formal product, and their common concern with point of view is in fact just one aspect of this more important objection to the established ways of looking at fiction, to the tendency, as Lubbock puts it, 'to forget, if we can, that the book is an object of art, and to treat it as a piece of the life around us'. Edith Wharton makes the same point when she compares the novel, the result of 'conscious ordering and selecting', to a statue, and argues that it is that ordering process which

makes it available to criticism.³¹ The consequent rejection of the crudely ad hominem approach of nineteenth-century critics recalls the James of Partial Portraits and the Besant controversy, drawing attention to the artifice of realism in his distinction between factual truth and the truth of the created illusion - and James's critical achievement can in part be measured by comparing the approach implicit in Arnold's 'Poor Anna!' with Lubbock's (albeit limited) formal analysis of Tolstoy's novel.³² Central to James's rejection of Besantian prescription was his recognition that the text must create and not simply confirm the reader's expectations, and that the best reader (and best critic) will be flexibly prepared to complete the author's meaning by responding to the work's formal demands. His method is demonstrated in Beach's reading of James's own novels, and it is made critically explicit by Lubbock. The most valuable section of The Craft of Fiction is not the rigorous application of 'show not tell', but Lubbock's opening consideration of the process of reading itself in which author and reader collaborate 'to recreate the novel in its right form, the best form that the material, selected and disposed by the author, is capable of accepting':

The reader of a novel - by which I mean the critical reader - is himself a novelist; he is the maker of a book which may or may not please his taste when it is finished, but of a book for which he must take his own share of the responsibility.³³

Lubbock's formulation is strikingly modern - and moves, perhaps, further towards the point at which readers alone create what recent criticism refers to as a text's possible significations than James, with his constant attention to an author's intention, would want to go. It also maintains the essential Jamesian concern with the variety of particular geometries and is theoretically as applicable

to loose baggy monsters as to paragons of controlled point of view.

In practice, of course, this liberating understanding of the formal source of meaning becomes inseparable from the assumption that the most economic and self-conscious form is necessarily the best, that the novel, in spite of Tolstoy (whom Lubbock rather grudgingly acknowledges as 'the supreme genius among novelists'³⁴), is not simply changing but constantly improving. The effect is a devaluation of omniscient mimetic realism which has continued to impoverish more recent formalist approaches to fiction - one thinks, as an extreme version of Lubbock's concern with the reading process, of Barthes's distinction between the 'readerly' and the 'writerly' text and clear preference for the latter, in which reader effectively becomes author.³⁵ The controversy between modernists and anti-modernists, prefigured in James's 'The New Novel', is taken up by his disciples: Lubbock's attempt to be fair to Thackeray or Tolstoy is undermined by his rule that fiction should whenever possible aspire to the condition of drama; Edith Wharton is alarmed by a current tendency to return to the formless 'slice of life' and to ignore the vital principle of selection; and seven years later Beach claimed that the disappearance of the narrator, 'a great outstanding feature of technique since the time of Henry James', is what 'finally differentiates fiction from history and philosophy and science'.³⁶ It is this prescriptive disenchantment with traditional realism which I find only superficially Jamesian. I am not trying to deny the similarly limited judgments in his own late criticism, but it is surely the narrow particularity and not the underlying spirit of James's total critical effort which informs the work of his immediate heirs.

To illustrate the point, I want to compare James's approach with that of a less well known commentator who learnt much from

his view of realism. Arthur McDowall's Realism: A Study in Art and Thought was published in 1918. It is an academic study which attempts to draw together contemporary realist movements in philosophy and the arts and in his section on literary realism, McDowall uses James's criticism (mainly Notes on Novelists and the Prefaces) both directly and indirectly - an indication, incidentally, that James's critical influence was not confined to his disciples. Essentially, McDowall follows an argument very close to early James in its distrust of formulaic French naturalism and differentiation between naturalism and realism: 'Both types aim at representing what exists; but naturalism insists that this should be cut to a certain pattern, while realism is, or should be, prepared for all its possible manifestations'.³⁷ But he has also learnt from James's more sophisticated later distinction between external and created truth, between, as McDowall puts it, 'lifelike' and 'living' impressions, and from the Jamesian recognition that realism is not simply a mechanical accretion of fact but a way of looking. He blames Zola for encouraging a confusion between realist method and trivial detail in contemporary writers like Arnold Bennett:

No doubt it is sadly true that, whether through Zola's influence or not - one would have supposed that no example could well be more deterrent for an artist - many later novelists have . . . gone in for exaggerated detail.³⁸

McDowall's treatment of Zola is as formulaic as he accuses Zola of being and it illustrates the major difference between his and James's critical approaches. Though he quotes from James's 1902 essay on Balzac and from 'The New Novel', McDowall has clearly learnt nothing from James's essay on Zola in the same volume. For in that essay we see perhaps most clearly James's flexibility in the face of genius, his understanding of the process of creation

and his total response to a work and the consciousness, the quality of mind, it reveals - qualities which make his criticism so much more appropriate to the elastic form which is its subject than that of more dogmatic successors. James's comment on Flaubert's relationship with George Sand might be reapplied to his own critical method: 'To make a hard rule never to be corrupted, and then to make a special exception for fondness, is of course the right attitude' (ELE, p.141). McDowall, like the early James, dubs Zola 'naturalist' and judges him accordingly; James's late essay is unfettered by such critical labels - he recognises in Zola that creative originality which transcends mere note-taking, validates an apparently limited view of humanity, and forces on the receptive novel new kinds of form: 'we get a glimpse of the pliancy and variety, the ideal of vividness, on behalf of which our equivocal form may appeal to a strong head. . . . The logic is in its huge freedom of adjustment to the temperament of the worker' (NN, pp. 22-3).

McDowall's view of naturalism most obviously echoes James's attack on detailism in 'The New Novel'; what he misses is the subtlety of James's critique which there, too, arises not simply from a priori objections to the method of his contemporaries, but from his sense of their limited imaginative ability to validate that method formally: his concern is the quality of seeing, which Zola possessed, which forces the novel into unprecedented feats of defamiliarisation:

Nothing is further from our thought than to undervalue saturation and possession, the fact of the particular experience, the state and degree of acquaintance incurred, however such a consciousness may have been determined; for these things represent on the part of the novelist, as on the part of any painter of things seen, felt or imagined, just one half of his authority - the other half being represented of course by the application he is inspired to make of them. (NN, p.258)

This premise, amplified by James's late appreciation of Zola, is very different from a rigid devaluation of mimetic realism, and McDowall's more generous conclusion to his consideration of literary realism is in fact closer to James's emphasis on the novel's flexible relationship with life:

The disarray of the new art arises from its offering us only the raw material or the mere process of experience. But why should we condemn the experiment in advance? We may be only at the threshold of its possibilities. The interest of this phase of art seems to be precisely that it aims at a much closer intimacy between art and the experience of living³⁹

That phrase, 'the experience of living', recalls both James and Virginia Woolf, whose seminal essay 'Modern Fiction' was published the following year. In her own fiction, Woolf is much more the disciple of Proust than of James but critically she is James's natural heir, not just because she took up, more confidently and more aggressively, his quarrel with Wells and Bennett, but because her innovatory tone combines, taking her essays on fiction as a whole, with a geniality and discrimination transcending defence of her own method and the particular cause of modernism. Though Virginia Woolf wrote critically only on James's ghost stories, and nowhere refers directly to his criticism, his achievement and example unmistakably inform her discussions of the art of fiction, as one who has demonstrated the possibility of a liberating use of 'pattern'. In her reviews of The Middle Years and Lubbock's edition of the letters, Woolf treats James with a teasing but deeply affectionate respect and she is eloquent on his vital engagement with life, taking as her unlikely text James's notoriously loquacious letter to Walter Berry thanking him for the gift of a dressing-case:

There, to our thinking, we have exploded in our ears the report of his enormous, sustained, increasing, and overwhelming love for life. It issues from whatever tortuous channels and dark tunnels like a flood at its fullest. There is nothing too little, too large, too remote, too queer for it not to flow round, float off, and make its own. Nothing in the end has chilled or repressed him; everything has fed and filled him; the saturation is complete.⁴⁰

And her sympathy with James is again illustrated in her concern to discover why it is that in The Turn of the Screw, that 'courtly, worldly, sentimental old gentleman can still make us afraid of the dark':

It is a state of mind; even the external objects are made to testify to their subjection. . . . The horror of the story comes from the force with which it makes us realize the power that our minds possess for such excursions into the darkness; when certain lights sink or certain barriers are lowered, the ghosts of the mind, untracked desires, indistinct intimations, are seen to be a large company.⁴¹

Virginia Woolf's own fictional method makes her a discerning reader of James.

When Virginia Woolf reviewed E.M. Forster's Aspects of the Novel in 1927 she called the revised version of her article 'The Art of Fiction', and the Jamesian allusion is one obvious example of the general critical kinship with James felt throughout her essays. Both are centrally aware of the problem that 'really, universally, relations stop nowhere . . . ' (AN, p.5). Virginia Woolf puts it slightly differently:

It is the gift of style, arrangement, construction, to put us at a distance from the special life and to obliterate its features; while it is the gift of the novel to bring us into close touch with life. The two powers fight if they are brought into combination.

The most complete novelist must be the novelist who can balance the two powers so that the one enhances the other.⁴²

The novel as balance; the novel's vital concern with character; the novelist's necessary independence from the conventional expectations of readers - these are all Jamesian principles, and in an article on Lubbock's The Craft of Fiction Woolf makes this last point by adopting James's defence of freedom of subject from 'The Art of Fiction'.⁴³ The points of comparison are vague, though important given Virginia Woolf's clear respect for James; but it is not necessarily a straightforward case of influence I am suggesting, rather a common attitude. To make my point clearer, I want to look at Virginia Woolf's treatment of Forster and Lubbock, representatives of antimodernism and modernism, or at least a life-based and a formalist approach, respectively.

The Jamesian title of Woolf's review of Aspects of the Novel reinforces her defence of James in the article against Forster's 'notably harsh judgment' that his late concern with pattern is inimical to the sense of life:

But at this point the pertinacious pupil may demand: 'What is this "Life" that keeps on cropping up so mysteriously and so complacently in books about fiction? . . . Why is the pleasure that we get from the pattern in The Golden Bowl less valuable than the emotion which Trollope gives us when he describes a lady drinking tea in a parsonage? Surely the definition of life is too arbitrary, and requires to be expanded'.⁴⁴

Aggressively modernist compared with Forster's occasionally illuminating amateurism, Woolf uses James to make James's plea for the novel as a self-conscious work of art, and she continued to defend her point in a subsequent exchange of letters with Forster. He found her reference to 'art' too vague, and replied specifically

to her comparison of the seriousness of French and Russian fiction with the domesticity of the English novel: 'I find the Continentals greater than the English not because Flaubert got hung up but because Tolstoy etc. could vitalise guillotines etc. as well as tea tables, and could command certain moods or deeds which our domesticity leads us to shun as false'.⁴⁵ And he referred her to Lubbock as an English critic prepared to judge a novel as a work of art. In her reply, Virginia Woolf remained vague but convinced about the role of art, and unconvinced about Lubbock's critical ability:

I agree that Tolstoi 'vitalises the guillotine' &c. But by means of art I think; admitting that I can't define the word.

No; Percy Lubbock doesn't 'altogether satisfy' me. But then I don't agree with you that he's a critic of genius. An able and painstaking pedant I should call him; who doesn't know what art is; so, though his method of judging novels as works of art interests me, his judgments don't.⁴⁶

Forster's respect for Tolstoy is based on subject; Woolf's on method. Both compare favourably in their attempt to define unmistakable genius with Lubbock's grudging admission that Tolstoy must be a genius, since so much remains after his appalling lapses of artistic control: 'That so much remains, in spite of everything, gives the measure of Tolstoy's genius'.⁴⁷ It is the breadth of Virginia Woolf's idea of how art, form, pattern, might appear in a novel which is important, and her willingness to expand that idea to take in particular overwhelming examples recalls James's treatment of Zola.

In her earlier essay, 'On Re-reading Novels', Virginia Woolf was more positive about Lubbock's critical method, noting the 'admirable subtlety and lucidity' with which he put forward

his notion of form, but she remains sceptical about his fidelity to the actual process of reading, his concept of the book as object: 'The very patness with which the image comes to the pen makes us suspect that it fits a little loosely. And in these circumstances it is best to shake oneself free from images and start afresh with a definite subject to work upon'.⁴⁸ And this she does, attempting to describe the experience of reading Flaubert's Un Coeur Simple, and concluding that our emotional response has as much to do with our picture of a whole work as any intellectual apprehension of its form:

Therefore the 'book itself' is not form which you see, but emotion which you feel, and the more intense the writer's feeling the more exact without slip or chink its expression in words. And whenever Mr. Lubbock talks of the form it is as if something were interposed between us and the book as we know it.⁴⁹

She is not abandoning the concept of fictional form, but again seeking to expand it to express the total reading experience, and to include the loose baggy monsters, Tolstoy's depiction of the guillotine, which Lubbock implicitly devalues:

Is there not something beyond emotion, something which though it is inspired by emotion, tranquillizes it, orders it, composes it? - that which Mr. Lubbock calls form, which, for simplicity's sake, we will call art? Can we not discover even in the vortex and whirlpool of Victorian fiction some constraint which the most ebullient of novelists forced himself to lay on his material, to reduce it to symmetry?⁵⁰

And in her long essay 'Phases of Fiction', Virginia Woolf explored more fully this felt need to deal sympathetically with fiction's diverse kinds.⁵¹

The various bones of contention between modernists and antimodernists on which I have been focussing - the vital difference

in kind between the novel and lived experience; the novel's formal self-consciousness; the reader's role in making the novel by responding to that form; and the consequent dubious status of the apparently ingenuously mimetic Victorian novel - here coalesce as Virginia Woolf attempts to reconcile her strongly formalist sympathies with her equally strong conviction of the novel's commitment to 'life'. What I want to suggest is that in her flexibility (albeit sometimes manifested as an exasperating vagueness) in the face of the novel's multiplicity, Virginia Woolf is the type of James's true critical heir. Like James, and like Lawrence, she is acutely aware of the 'trembling instability of the balance', not only within the novel itself, but in the relationship between novel(ist) and reader.⁵² Her groping concern with the part played by 'emotion' in our response to fiction recalls James's emphasis on 'liking' in 'The Art of Fiction': 'So that it comes back very quickly . . . to the liking: in spite of M. Zola . . . who will not reconcile himself to this absoluteness of taste, thinking that there are certain things that people ought to like, and that they can be made to like' (PP, p.397). Because of fiction's direct confrontation with life, its effect on the reader is more fluid, less predictable than that of other art forms and the critic needs to match that fluidity by sensitivity to his diverse modes of response: 'As people feel life, so they will feel the art that is most closely related to it' (PP, p.397).

But fiction is fiction, not life, and the value of Virginia Woolf's tentative and James's more rigorous explorations of the effects of form is in their potential for explaining and locating the structures of possible emotion and illusion - in any kind of novel. Virginia Woolf was impatient of Lubbock's a priori formulae, just as James finally mistrusted Flaubert's total faith in style;

both would have accepted Forster's priorities - 'for me the whole intricate question of method resolves itself not into formulae but into the power of the writer to bounce the reader into accepting what he says,'⁵³ - but not his refusal to examine the hand controlling the bounce. Theirs is a formalism which avoids the sterile restrictions of rigid modernism and the woolliness of naive mimetic approaches: it is, after all, a 'dead wall' (AN, p.46) which divides fiction from life, but art 'plucks its material . . . in the garden of life - which material elsewhere grown is stale and uneatable' (AN, p.312). The inheritors of James's total critical effort, then, are not necessarily those critics who consciously adopt the narrower applications of his later work. They are rather those who avoid the limiting label 'modernist' or 'antimodernist' and are able to deal justly with the fictional products of both creeds. They work from the Jamesian assumption that realism and romance are formally allied, that realism is a structure, one kind of geometry, susceptible to formal analysis, but they apply that analysis with his vivifying moral engagement.

The pattern of allegiances in the dialogues between James and Wells, Woolf and Forster, has been repeated in subsequent novel criticism - in the debates between the New Critics and Lionel Trilling's Partisan Review allies in America and between formalists and Leavisites in this country, and more recently in the heated discussions between proponents and opponents of the nouvelle critique - and James's reputation, as novelist at least, benefited most, during the 40's and 50's, from the application to the novel of New Critical principles derived ultimately from I.A. Richards (and T.S. Eliot). I have already mentioned Mark Schorer's essay of 1948, 'Technique as Discovery', and the critical taste which that essay and its companion, 'Fiction and the "Matrix of Analogy"',

represent found James's late criticism particularly sympathetic. F.R. Leavis, on the other hand, most obviously in his novel criticism the disciple of Lawrence, rejected the Prefaces in favour of James's mature essays on French novelists 'in which, defining his essential value-judgments . . . he invokes "life"'.⁵⁴ We can find valuable developments and explorations of ideas and approaches sometimes only hinted at by James in both sides of these debates, and again I am concerned with a general legacy rather than with direct influence. Recent structuralist theory, for example, clearly owes nothing directly to James, but it is nevertheless illuminating to compare its examination of the way texts and readers create meanings and 'verisimilitude' with his assertion, 'It is art that makes life' (HJ & HGW, p.267).⁵⁵

Leavis's emphasis on value-judgments and 'life' is important: James's evaluative Arnoldian heritage is what finally separates him from the modern view of fiction as an amoral closed box; verisimilitude, though achieved by a formal approximation to the novelist's particular perception, is for James referential, not simply self-referential, and his suggestive analysis of method and the fine tuning of means to ends in the Prefaces is ultimately concerned to assess 'the amount of felt life' (AN, p.45), which was why, of course, he made allowances for Zola and, in his saner moments, for Tolstoy.⁵⁶ It is this emphasis which separates him, too, from the earlier New Critics. They have much in common with James, developing his recognition of the moral and aesthetic effects of narrative method, but though less dogmatic than recent formalists, their emphasis on self-conscious technique tended to ignore too many aspects of the novel's particular achievement, and in their implicit equation between value and economy of form they are, like Lubbock, closer to James's often ill-considered particular

judgments than to his underlying concern with the novelist's general problems and possible strategies.⁵⁷

When he reviewed Leavis's The Great Tradition, Lionel Trilling wrote: 'It is upon the degree and quality of moral integrity that all esthetic considerations of the novel depend',⁵⁸ and in opposing the more inflexible aspects of the New Criticism with 'quality of mind' and the vital relationship between aesthetic and moral criteria, he reveals his kinship not only with Leavis, but also with James, within the liberal critical tradition. James's most obvious critical successor is Leavis himself, inheritor both of the New Critical tradition of Richards and Empson, and of Lawrence's conviction that a critic 'must be able to feel the impact of a work of art in all its complexity and its force' - as James put it, 'to feel and feel till he understands and to understand so well that he can say' ('Criticism', ELE, p.276).⁵⁹ Leavis is less of a formalist than James, but like James he combines a commitment to the inseparability of form and meaning with an Arnoldian moral concern and a nice sensitivity to the process and experience offered by particular novels. In, for example, his essays on 'the novel as dramatic poem', he explores the novel's peculiar process of constant evaluation, its realisation of 'quality of mind' through pattern. Leavis's critical method has been well described by R.P. Bilan, with reference to his essay on 'The Shadow-Line': 'not to abstract a message but to balance one suggestion against another until one's sense of the tale has settled into an inclusive poise'; and Leavis's own most famous statement of critical principle comes in his discussion of Emma at the beginning of The Great Tradition:

. . . when we examine the formal perfection of Emma, we find that it can be appreciated only in terms of

the moral preoccupations that characterize the novelist's peculiar interest in life. Those who suppose it to be an 'aesthetic matter', a beauty of 'composition' that is combined, miraculously, with 'truth to life', can give no adequate reason for the view that Emma is a great novel, and no intelligent account of its perfection of form.⁶⁰

There, in Leavis's emphasis on formal perfection as somehow the result of moral interest and his dismissal of 'composition', we see his difference from James. Leavis's interest in the novel's particular kinds of achievement through constant movement between the particular and the general, his concern to suggestively recreate the reading experience, and his avoidance of critical jargon in favour of flexible moral-aesthetic terms ('life', 'significance', 'enactment') idiosyncratically applied, all reflect Jamesian preoccupations, but his Lawrentian concern with the 'life-enhancing' text threatened always to degenerate into defence of writers who happened to uphold Leavis's own views. His rejection of T.S. Eliot is one example; his utter blindness to the subtleties of late James is another. At his best, however, Leavis continues the Jamesian effort to perfect a critical instrument as fluid as the novel form itself.

The example of Leavis is a reminder of how often critics fall short of that fluidity, of the need to be 'indefatigably supple' in elucidating 'the most independent, most elastic, most prodigious of literary forms' ('Criticism', ELE, p.278; AN, p.326). His Lawrentian role of social prophet suggests the committed dogmatism of a religious creed. The analogy between critical methodology and religion is indeed very close: criticism slips so easily into self-justifying exclusivity - and, of late, has adopted a private terminology which preserves its own mystery but too

often allows the unique sum of effects in a particular text to slip away. James's own critical language provides a powerful contrast - not simply in employing readily accessible terms, but in the subtlety particularly of the later essays where, as in the late novels, impressions emerge from a complex syntax which is itself an image of the novel's precarious poise. That poise or balance is again reflected in James's constant movement between example and generalisation, his implicit suggestion that any attempt to establish a poetics of fiction must constantly bow before the particular case. Critical rigour is vital - Lawrence's rejection of 'all the critical twiddle-twaddle about style and form'⁶¹ - is hopelessly wide of the mark - and recent attempts to systematise possible approaches to the novel, particularly by examining the process of reading itself - in James's words, making 'our absorption and our enjoyment of the things that feed the mind as aware of itself as possible' ('The New Novel', NN, p.249) - or by exploring 'kinds', the 'very life of literature' (AN, p.111), to which James was so sensitive, have opened up exciting critical possibilities. Allowing, however, for the difference in kind between 'poetics' and 'criticism', it is sadly true that attempts to move from stimulating generalisation to the elucidation of particular cases are often disappointing.⁶² Jina Politi confronts just this problem, drawing on an analogy between poetics and criticism, and our reactions to statistics about road deaths and to particular cases:

Literary texts ask [the critic] to take into account both 'les morts du week-end' and 'the poor bloke who's had it'. If the critic tries to reduce the particularity to a law-like generality ('all poor blokes'), then he has simply managed to move 'the poor bloke' back into the category of 'les morts du

week-end' form. Theoretically, such a reduction is desirable as it makes the model simpler and more elegant. But the fact remains that it still hasn't accounted, as the text asks, for 'the poor bloke who's had it'. And this is, perhaps, the novel's most important presupposition: that a novel must both remember and forget, as should its readers and critics.⁶³

Jina Politi is herself a representative of the best modern criticism of fiction which continues James's tradition of responsible, intelligent eclecticism, supplementing the English amateur tradition of moral sensitivity with formalist sharpness, but avoiding the reductive effects of 'the engraved thermometer-face' (AN, p.118).

T.S. Eliot said in 1918 that 'James was emphatically not a successful literary critic', but went on to distinguish the evaluative task of the 'literary' critic ('his touch is uncertain; there is a desire to be generous') from James's critical gift: 'He was a critic who preyed not upon ideas, but upon living beings. It is a criticism which is in a very high sense creative'. There is obviously limited justice in Eliot's initial comment, but with his own distinctive critical brilliance he characterises exactly the relationship between creativity and critical genius which made James such an intelligent spokesman for the novel: 'James's critical genius comes out most tellingly in his mastery over, his baffling escape from, Ideas He had a mind so fine that no idea could violate it'.⁶⁴ Eliot's famous description is one of the most perceptive tributes James has ever received, and he would have been delighted to be thus judged by the standard of his critical master Sainte-Beuve: 'he was more than any one else the independent individual, pinning his faith to no emblazoned standard and selling his vote to no exclusive group' ('S-B', p.305). As I hope to have shown, it was exactly James's own creative under-

standing of the novel form which allowed him to transcend the tyranny of 'ideas' in contemporary critical controversies and, in his best criticism, to move far beyond a simple defence of his own methods.

It seems fitting that one of James's last critical statements should have been an essay on Shakespeare, written when he was engaged on the Prefaces as the introduction to an edition of The Tempest. The theme of the essay, as of the Prefaces themselves, is the complete formal transformation of private experience in the work of genius, a process epitomised for James in The Tempest, the most artificial and at the same time the most personal of Shakespeare's plays:

. . . such a masterpiece puts before me the very act of the momentous conjunction taking place for the poet, at a given hour, between his charged inspiration and his clarified experience: or, as I should perhaps better express it, between his human curiosity and his aesthetic passion. (SLC, p.347)

James celebrates the protean sensibility which made use of any experience and any formal opportunity: 'Anything was a subject, always, that offered to sight an aperture of size enough for expression and its train to pass in and deploy themselves' (p.350). But James refuses to give up the critical effort to discern the personality, the effects on the man, of even so perfect a creative genius. The essay ends with the suggestion, 'May it not then be but a question, for the fullness of time, of the finer weapon, the sharper point, the stronger arm, the more extended lunge?' (p.357). The attempt to supplement formal appreciation with an imaginative approach to the inherent sensibility, the more or less displayed mind, is typical of James's critical method - as is his faith in the possibility of the 'finer weapon', the more perfectly honed

critical tool, which will capture its subject more closely. Shakespeare presents critics with an unending problem - it is so easy to find in his work an image of any neat formula we bring to it, so impossible to get anywhere near the total achievement.

Without wanting to make the comparison too explicit, one can see something of that Shakespearian quality in James himself. The completeness of the fictional process in the novels is witness to that imaginative genius which 'takes to itself the faintest hints of life' ('The Art of Fiction', PP, p.388), and that protean sensibility extends to the criticism, matching both the inexhaustible novel form and the nature of experience, the 'garden of life' in which even the most self-contained fiction 'plucks its material' (AN, p.312). Reading was for James always an encounter not only with imaginative process, but with another sensibility, and so with life itself. As Gabriel Josipovici, one of the most intelligently Jamesian advocates of the nouvelle critique, recently said: 'Before we are critics we are readers, and before we are readers we are human beings, and the novel's perennial task has been to remind us of that'.⁶⁵ Henry James would have been the first to agree.

NOTES

Chapter One

¹ Morris Roberts in Henry James's Criticism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1929) is particularly hard on the early criticism, accusing James of being 'too intent upon the defects of his subjects' qualities, too much absorbed in his own point of view, and indifferent to the use of the imagination' (p.11). Van Wyck Brooks, 'Henry James as a Reviewer' in Sketches in Criticism (London: Dent, 1934), pp.190-6, provides a useful corrective to the common assumption that the late criticism is the best, describing it as a decay of the potential revealed in the incisive early criticism. Cornelia Pulsifer Kelley in The Early Development of Henry James, rev. ed. (1930; rpt. Urbana, Ill.: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1965), far from granting James too much originality, grants him too little; in her concern to trace early formative influences, she describes a mind which is entirely 'the sum of those influences.

For useful surveys of contemporary English criticism of the novel see Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England 1850-1870 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959); Kenneth Graham, English Criticism of the Novel 1865-1900 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965); Clarence R. Decker, The Victorian Conscience (New York: Twayne, 1952).

² Letters of Charles Eliot Norton, ed. Sara Norton and M.A. deWolfe Howe (London: Constable, 1913), I, 268.

³ For a study of how James nevertheless responded to and transformed the stylistic conventions of these popular writers, see William Veeder, Henry James - the Lessons of the Master: Popular Fiction and Personal Style in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1975).

⁴ Letters of Charles Eliot Norton, I, 208, 385; and see Peter Buitenhuis, The Grasping Imagination: The American Writings of Henry James (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1970), p.29, on the way the literary optimism of the 40's and 50's gave way in the 60's and 70's to 'a sense of loss, of exclusion, of nostalgia for a richer order'.

⁵ Letters of Charles Eliot Norton, I, 297; NAR, April 1865, p.317.

⁶ Rev. of Essays in Criticism, NAR, July 1865; rpt. in V&R, pp.83-97; letter from Arnold to his sister, Letters of Matthew Arnold 1848-1888, ed. George W.E. Russell (London: Macmillan, 1895), I, 309.

⁷ Cf. James's rev. of Taine's Notes on England, where he approvingly quotes Taine's description of French generalisation: '"In our magazines an article, even on science or on political economy, should have an exordium, a peroration, an architecture; there occur few in the Revue des Deux Mondes which are not preceded by a sort of porch of general ideas"' (Na, January 25 1872; LRE, p.58).

⁸ 'On Translating Homer', in On the Classical Tradition, Vol. I of The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold, ed. R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1960), p.174.

⁹ C.P. Kelley, particularly, underestimates James's admiration for Sainte-Beuve. Citing only James's review of the Portraits of Celebrated Women, she concludes that he dealt with Sainte-Beuve 'briefly and inadequately' (p.96); Morris Roberts refers to James's changed later opinion without considering the effect of Scherer's disappointing later work, and he misinterprets the early article on Scherer to mean that James was dismissing Sainte-Beuve for a lack of

dogma - exactly the quality for which he was praising Scherer (Roberts, p.9).

¹⁰ James's 1876 article on Scherer voices his disappointment at the French critic's unfulfilled potential, and uses Sainte-Beuve as touchstone: 'We have often wondered why M. Edmond Scherer, a critic whose privilege it sometimes is, by the acuteness of his insight or the felicity of his expression, to remind his readers of Sainte-Beuve, has never undertaken a work of larger proportions than the short journalistic articles in which he has hitherto been content to record his opinions' (rev. of Études Critiques de Littérature, Na, April 6 1876; LRE, p.118).

¹¹ James was not, of course, alone in his use and advocacy of European criticism. The transcendentalists, particularly Margaret Fuller, were influenced by German criticism and Lowell's essays reflect his wide reading in many cultures. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, who wrote for the Atlantic Monthly, recommended Sainte-Beuve and the Revue des Deux Mondes to his readers, but such voices are rare in the periodical writing of the time: see T.W. Higginson, 'Literature as an Art', AM, December 1867, pp.745-54.

¹² 'Now, when we come across a poet like Théophile Gautier, we have a poet who has taken up his abode at an inn, and never got farther', Essays in Criticism (2nd. ser.) in English Literature and Irish Politics, Vol. IX of The Complete Prose Works (Ann Arbor, 1973), p.47. James's attitude to Gautier is in interesting contrast with a more typically equivocal response in an article in the Atlantic by Eugene Benson which fluctuates between a positive, but guilt-ridden response to Gautier's sensuousness, and stern moral reflections on his work as a diabolical example to young artists: see Eugene

Benson, 'Théophile Gautier - A Literary Artist', AM, June 1868, pp.664-71.

¹³ Letters of Charles Eliot Norton, I, 189.

¹⁴ See William M. Gibson and George Arms, A Bibliography of William Dean Howells (New York: New York Public Library, 1948).

¹⁵ The Nation's attack on 'genial' criticism was in opposition to an article in Putnam's Magazine which claimed that 'nothing is rarer than good bread and genial criticism' and that all critics were unreasonably condemnatory. The Nation, on the contrary, felt that such criticism was all too common, 'practically an enemy of the race', and fatal to the standards of excellence the Nation sought to instil: 'Magazines for May', Na, April 30 1868, p.353.

¹⁶ See Kelley, chap. 6; Buitenhuis, p.38.

¹⁷ Life in Letters of William Dean Howells, ed. Mildred Howells (London: William Heinemann, 1929), I, 162.

¹⁸ Critical documents from the controversy are collected in Theories of American Literature, ed. Richard Ruland, 2 vols., The Native Muse and A Storied Land (New York: Dutton, 1976); and see James W. Tuttleton, The Novel of Manners in America (Chapel Hill: Univ. of N. Carolina Press, 1972); Herbert R. Brown, 'The Great American Novel', Am. Lit., 7 (1935-6), 1-14.

¹⁹ J.R. Lowell, My Study Windows (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marston, 1871), p.65; Letters of Charles Eliot Norton, I, 412.

²⁰ Edwin H. Cady, The Road to Realism: the Early Years 1837-1885 of William Dean Howells (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1956), sees Howells's realist commitment as really beginning with The Undiscovered Country (1880). In the novels following Their

Wedding Journey: A Chance Acquaintance (1873), A Foregone Conclusion (1875) and The Lady of the Arostock (1879), Howells certainly uses highly romantic settings and plots, but his emphasis is on a realist psychological portrayal of American types.

²¹ There are friendly references to Lathrop in several of James's letters after he left America: see Letters, II, 23, 85, 91; but relations became strained after the publication of Hawthorne: 'Poor little Lathrop ought to be [tear] and put to bed, and forbidden the use of pen and ink' (Letter to Perry, Letters, II, 274-5).

²² G.P. Lathrop, 'The Growth of the Novel', AM, June 1874, pp.684-97; 'The Novel and its Future', AM, September 1874, pp.313-24.

²³ 'Realism in Art: Recent German Fiction', Westminster Rev. (1858); rpt. in Literary Criticism of George Henry Lewes, ed. Alice R. Kaminsky (Lincoln, Nebr.: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1964), p.87. See also Alice R. Kaminsky, George Henry Lewes as Literary Critic (New York: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1968); Morris Greenhut, 'George Henry Lewes as a Critic of the Novel', Studies in Philology 45 (1948), 491-511.

My emphasis on James's real/ideal compromise is similar to the conclusions reached by Donald Emerson, 'Henry James and the Limitations of Realism', College English 22 (1960-1), 161-6.

²⁴ Ruland, II, 25-6.

²⁵ Ruland, II, 32.

²⁶ Ruland, II, 35, 36.

²⁷ See Letters, I, 133-4, 160, 246.

²⁸ See, for example, a typically ambivalent comment from the North British Review: 'What is conspicuous above all else is the skill

with which she groups her materials, and the manner in which she deals with revolting topics, so as to hinder the startled reader from tossing her volume away in sheer disgust': 'Sensation Novels: Miss Braddon', North British Rev. 43 (1865), 201.

²⁹ 'For nothing shows so well the growth of James's insight as a comparison of this early criticism of Trollope with the finely appreciative and eloquent essay in Partial Portraits' (Roberts, p.8).

³⁰ Kelley, p.31.

³¹ Taine was comparing Balzac and Thackeray's characterisation: Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise, IV (Paris: Hachette, 1864), 127. See John Bayley, The Characters of Love (1960; rpt. London: Chatto and Windus, 1968), esp. pp.253, 38.

³² It is odd, in the light of these early comments, that Morris Roberts should cite James's acquaintance with the Flaubert circle as the source of his insistence on granting the artist his donnée (Roberts, pp.59 ff., esp. p.61).

³³ See, for example, James's description of Mérimée as 'the most striking modern example of zealous artistic conciseness' (rev. of Dernières Nouvelles, Na, February 12 1874; LRE, p.170); and of Turgenev whose 'merit of form is of the first order. He is remarkable for concision' (FPN, pp.279-80).

³⁴ C.P. Kelley completely underestimates the general critical importance of this review, taking it to refer to historical novels only (Kelley, p.93). For further evidence of James's qualified identification of the novelist and the historian, see a letter to Perry: 'Why use that vile word novelette. It reminds me of chemisette. Why not say historiette outright?' (Letters, I, 50).

Chapter Two

¹ On James's technical debt to the French novelists, see Philip Grover, Henry James and the French Novel (London: Paul Elek, 1973) and 'Mérimée's Influence on Henry James', MLR 63 (1968), 810-17; Lyall H. Powers, Henry James and the Naturalist Movement (Michigan: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1971); Jeanne Delbaere-Garant, Henry James: The Vision of France (Paris: Société d'Éditions 'Les Belles Lettres', 1970); Maurita Willett, 'Henry James's Indebtedness to Balzac', Revue de Litt. Comparée 41 (1967), 204-27.

² James's realist commitment in Hawthorne has been emphasised by, for example, F.O. Matthiessen, The James Family (New York: Knopf, 1948), p.481: 'In reading HJ's critical study, one must remember that he wrote it at the period when he was most conscious of being, along with Howells, one of the first American apostles of realism'; and by Tony Tanner in his on the whole admirably balanced introduction to the reissue of Hawthorne (London: Macmillan, 1967), esp. pp.6, 14.

³ For James's memories of the early influence of the Revue des Deux Mondes, see NSB, pp.52-3.

⁴ Zola, 'Les Romanciers Contemporains', Les Romanciers Naturalistes, Oeuvres Complètes, ed. Henri Mitterand, XI (Paris: Cercle du Livre Précieux, 1968), 229.

⁵ 'Les Romanciers Contemporains', p.229.

⁶ On realism as a process of disillusion and rectification, see Harry Levin, The Gates of Horn: A Study of Five French Realists (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), p.52.

It is George Sand's art which James refers to in 'Minor French Novelists' as 'easy and universal and - above all - agreeable'.

⁷ Horace de Lagardie, 'French Novels and French Life', review of Daudet's Fromont Jeune, Macmillan's Magazine 35 (1877), 386-96.

⁸ Cf. James's essay 'The Théâtre Français': '. . . so trivial an act as taking a letter from a servant or placing one's hat on a chair may be made a suggestive and interesting incident'; 'The extreme suggestiveness, and yet the taste and temperance of this costume, seemed to me inimitable; the bonnet alone, with its handsome, decent, virtuous bows, was worth coming to see' (FPN, pp.410, 414). And see Ezra Pound, 'Henry James', Literary Essays of Ezra Pound (London: Faber, 1954), p.310: 'It is only when he gets to the Théâtre Français that he finds something which really suits him'.

⁹ 'Three French Books', Galaxy, August 1875, pp.276-80, not rpt.; 'The Letters of Madame de Sabran', Galaxy, October 1875, pp.536-46 ; 'The Two Ampères', Galaxy, November 1875, pp.662-74; 'Honoré de Balzac', Galaxy, December 1875, pp.814-36; 'The Minor French Novelists', Galaxy, February 1876, pp.219-33, partially rpt. in FPN as 'Charles de Bernard and Gustave Flaubert'. C.P. Kelley, pp.220-1, argues that James had already dismissed the French novelists when he moved to Paris; Powers, chaps. 1 and 2, on the other hand, implies that James's background prepared him for a crystallising conversion to French Naturalism. Both critics concentrate on aspects of James's background and comments which fit their own theses. Kelley is eager to prove the influence of George Eliot and Turgenev to be all-important; Powers plays down James's romantic allegiances and consequent eclecticism in his

eagerness to stress the similarities, rather than the more important differences, between French and Jamesian versions of realism. One of the first to stress France as the decisive influence in James's career was Edmund Gosse in 'Henry James', Aspects and Impressions (London: Cassell, 1922), pp.23, 24-5.

¹⁰ 'Sainte-Beuve', NAR, January 1880, rpt. in American Literary Criticism, ed. William Morton Payne (Cambridge, Mass.: Longmans, Green, 1904), p.318. (Hereafter references to this essay, abbreviated as 'S-B', appear in the text.) James's essay on Mme. de Sabran is in effect another portrait to add to Sainte-Beuve's Portraits de Femmes and for James's extensive use of Sainte-Beuve on the Ampères, see Philip Grover, 'Henry James and Several French Critics', Philologica Pragensia 11 (1968), 45-52. James had of course implicitly aligned himself with Sainte-Beuve (and Arnold) at the beginning of his critical career in his reviews of Eugénie de Guérin's Journal and letters (Na December 14 1865; September 13 1866, rpt. N&R).

¹¹ 'Appendice', Causeries du Lundi IX (1854; rev. ed. Paris: Garniers, n.d.), 528. References to Causeries du Lundi (CL), 15 vols. (Paris: Garniers, 1851-62) and to Nouveaux Lundis (NL), 13 vols. (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1863-70) will hereafter appear in the text.

¹² James's article does, however, still have a lot in common with Sainte-Beuve's review of Madame Bovary. Both James and Sainte-Beuve use the same passage to illustrate Flaubert's descriptive skill, for example (FPN, p.266; CL, XIII, 286-7); both discuss the possible over-use of the descriptive method (FPN, pp.260-1; CL, p.287); and James still to some extent echoes Sainte-Beuve's doubts about the novel's cynicism (FPN, p.265; CL, pp.294-7).

¹³ 'The manner of this extraordinary pair . . . suggested anything but a quick solution of the problem that seemed to hum in our ears as we read; suggested it almost as little indeed as their curious, uncomfortable style, with its multiplied touches and pictorial verbosity, was apt to evoke an immediate vision of the objects to which it made such sacrifices of the synthetic and the rhythmic' (ELE, pp.195-6).

¹⁴ Sainte-Beuve, NL, VIII, 133: 'le critique préoccupé de l'unité de son plan semble trop pressé d'arriver et de conclure'.

¹⁵ James follows very closely Taine's famous essay on Balzac, Nouveaux Essais de Critique et d'Histoire (Paris: Hachette, 1865), pp.63-170: primary importance of money to Balzac (Taine, p.66; FPN, p.87); almost equal importance of Paris (Taine, p.67; FPN, p.91); Balzac's 'débauches de pensée' (Taine, p.71; FPN, p.105); quality of energy lapsing into tastelessness (Taine, p.75; FPN, p.89); vastness of design (Taine, pp.77 ff.; FPN, p.83, et passim); place a part of action and characterisation (Taine, p.85; FPN, p.118); comprehensive design overcoming artistic problem of selection (Taine, p.89; FPN, p.102); less good at philosophising than describing (Taine, p.91; FPN, p.112); ability to become his characters (Taine, p.93; FPN, p.124); relative success with different types of characters (Taine, pp.119 ff.; FPN, pp.96 ff.); lack of ideal dimension, or even an appreciation of the nature of goodness (Taine, p.132; FPN, p.114). James wrote on Taine's essay on George Sand, Journal des Débats, July 2 1876, rpt. Derniers Essais de Critique et d'Histoire (Paris: Hachette, 1894), pp.127-38, in a Nation note (Na, July 27 1876, p.61) and mentioned it at the beginning of the FPN essay on George Sand (FPN, p.190). Rather than following the argument as closely as in

the Balzac essay, James shares with Taine main topics of discussion and ways of looking at George Sand. He uses a biographical slant to shape the essay, for example (FPN, pp.190-6; Taine, pp.127-30); discusses the effect of the new realism on her reputation (FPN, p.214; Taine, pp.130-1); and emphasises her didacticism and idealisation, the vagueness of her characters but her general Truth (FPN, pp.212, 235; Taine, pp.132-6); and both James and Taine remark on her 'style' (FPN, p.229; Taine, p.136).

For James's use of Taine in his article 'Mérimée's Letters', see Grover, 'Henry James and Several French Critics'.

¹⁶ Correspondance entre George Sand et Gustave Flaubert, (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1904), pp.154-5.

¹⁷ 'prudish distaste': Powers, p.35; William Dean Howells, review of FPN, AM, July 1878, p.119. Cf. George Saintsbury, 'Gustave Flaubert', Fortnightly Rev. (April 1878); rpt. Essays on French Novelists (London: Percival, 1891), pp.336-7, who described James as 'a person who is (or was) wont to speak with all the sternness of New England concerning any transgression of the proprieties' [the parenthesis was added in the reprint], taking at face value James's deeply ironic suggestion that Madame Bovary is 'the pearl of "Sunday reading"' (FPN, p.256); Mervyn Jones-Evans, 'Henry James's Year in France', Horizon 14 (1946), 56: 'One of the reasons why he left America, and New England in particular, was the inhibiting and stifling atmosphere of puritanism. But in Paris he discovered the horrible truth: that he himself was equally puritanical and had just as pronounced a sense of morality'; Roberts, p.45: 'It is difficult to escape the impression that James's morality is sometimes only a genteel distaste for the uglier facts of life'.

¹⁸ Saintsbury, 'The Present State of the Novel' II, Fortnightly Rev. (January 1888); rpt. Essays on French Novelists 'very considerably remodelled' as 'The Present State of the French Novel', pp.2-3. On the reception of French realism in England, see Decker, and William J. Hyde, 'George Eliot and the Climate of Realism', PMLA 72 (1957), 147-64. On James's avant-garde defence of Balzac, see Maurita Willett, p.205: 'In [FPN] he praises Balzac, whose reputation at that time had not yet been firmly established, even for the French'. Saintsbury, in his article on Jules Sandeau, Fortnightly Rev. (January 1878); rpt. Essays on French Novelists, pp.265-8, makes an extended digression defending the 'immoral' conventions of the French novel by drawing an analogy with Restoration Drama.

¹⁹ E.M. Forster, rev. ed. (London: Hogarth Press, 1967), p.12.

²⁰ Letter, October 29 [1883], Houghton Library, Harvard.

²¹ Balzac, Scènes de la Vie Privée, I (Paris: Alexandre Hussiaux, 1855), IV.

²² See, for example, review of Azarian, N&R, pp.24-6; 'The Novels of George Eliot', V&R, pp.31-2. See Grover, HJ and the French Novel, chap. 2, on some aspects of James's technical debt to Balzac - contrast, foreshortening, handling of the duration of time; Maurita Willett deals more specifically with parallels between Père Goriot and The American.

²³ Balzac, 'Avant-Propos', Scènes de la Vie Privée, I, 20.

²⁴ 'Gustave Flaubert', Les Romanciers Naturalistes, p.98.

²⁵ Powers, for example, exaggerates James's Naturalist tendencies; Delbaere-Garant, p.116, suggests that James's sympathies were primarily with George Sand. For a balanced recent survey of James's relationship

with George Sand, see Patricia Thomson, George Sand and the Victorians: Her Influence and Reputation in Nineteenth-century England (London: Macmillan, 1977).

²⁶ This is a frequent criticism of George Sand (cf. LRE, p.135), which James shared with both Sainte-Beuve (e.g. CL, II, 360) and Taine (Derniers Essais, pp.132-3).

²⁷ On James's early familiarity with Turgenev, see Matthiessen, p.548: 'His interest in Turgénieff dated back a long time before their meeting'. Matthiessen describes Henry James Sr.'s enthusiasm for the Russian and quotes a letter from William to Henry which refers, in 1869, to 'your old friend Turgénieff'.

²⁸ Letter to Stanislaus Joyce, [September] 18 1905, Letters of James Joyce, ed. Richard Ellmann, II (New York: Viking, 1966), 106.

²⁹ James liked Turgenev's use of contrast, commenting on it, for example, in FPN, p.289 and LRE, p.192, and it probably influenced his own practice, for example in his use of Henrietta Stackpole in The Portrait of a Lady. But Daniel Lerner is surely wrong to describe the whole concept of the ficelle as something 'for which James wholly credited Turgenev': see Lerner, 'The Influence of Turgenev on Henry James', Slavonic Year Book 20 (1941), 37.

³⁰ Berlin, 'Fathers and Children: Turgenev and the Liberal Predicament', Russian Thinkers, ed. Henry Hardy and Aileen Kelly (London: Hogarth Press, 1978), p.293.

³¹ See Kelley, pp.176-81, 225-8; and Daniel Lerner.

³² Jean Seznec, 'Lettres de Tourguéneff à Henry James', Comparative Lit. 1 (1949), 202.

³³ Letter to Droujinine, Tourguéneff and his French Circle,

ed. E. Halperine-Kaminsky, trans. Ethel M. Arnold (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1898), p.141.

³⁴ Halperine-Kaminsky, pp.125, 178.

³⁵ James's and Turgenev's views on Daudet also coincide: Turgenev on Le Nabab: 'What he has observed is superb; what he has invented is thin, insipid, and not even original' (Halperine-Kaminsky, p.106); James: 'he is not at his best when he gives his his imagination the reins' (LRE, p.186).

³⁶ Quoted by Avrahm Yarmolinsky, Turgenev: The Man, his Art and his Age, rev. ed. (New York: Orion Press, 1959), p.335.

In 'Occasional Paris', for example, James detects in his sense of an ubiquitous '"administration"' in France a denial of both self-respect and individuality (PoPl, pp.84-5), and this observation is extended into a literary context in the 1875 essay on Balzac where the Comédie Humaine is seen as typical of 'the French passion for completeness, for symmetry, for making a system as neat as an epigram' (FPN, p.103), and in the 1902 essay on Zola, explaining Zola's preference for crowds over individuals (NN, pp.27-8).

³⁷ See, for example, Kelley, p.181; Delbaere-Garant, p.191; Jean Seznec, p.203. James's critical emphasis is, interestingly, far closer to the French than to the English critical position on Turgenev. English reviews tended to concentrate on Turgenev as a source of information about Russian life and to moralise about the life revealed. See, for example, 'Peasant Life in Russia', Nat. Rev. 8 (April 1859), 469-87; 'The Works of Ivan Serguévitch Tourguéneff', Brit. Quarterly Rev. 50 (October 1869), 423-47; 'Russia and Nihilism in the Novels of M. Tourguénief', Blackwood's 127 (May 1880), 623-47. French critics, in contrast, concentrate on more purely literary

criteria. See, for example, Mérimée, 'Ivan Tourguénef', Études de Littérature Russe, II, ed. Henri Mongault (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1932), 241-55, and cf. Philip Grover, 'Henry James and Several French Critics'; Daudet, 'Tourguéneff in Paris: Reminiscences by Daudet', trans. James, Century Magazine 27 (November 1883), 49-53; Maupassant, 'L'Inventeur du Mot "Nihilisme"' and 'Ivan Tourguéneff', Chroniques, Études, Correspondance de Guy de Maupassant, ed. René Dumesnil (Paris: Librairie Gründ, 1938), pp.35-9, 89-92. Maupassant's approach in the latter article is typical of the French emphasis: he describes Turgenev's views on the novel form as 'rejetant toutes les vieilles formes de roman à ficelles et à combinaisons dramatiques et savantes, demandant qu'on fit "de la vie", rien que de la vie, - des "tranches de vie" sans intrigues et sans grosses aventures' (p.90).

³⁸ Andre Mazon, Manuscripts Parisiens d'Ivan Tourguénev: Notices et Extraits, Bibliothèque de l'Institut Français de Leningrad, 9 (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1930). Mazon comments, p.28: 'Tourguénev a vu d'abord un petit nombre de figures qui l'ont frappé. . . . Il les a contemplés intérieurement plusieurs mois, plusieurs années'. James records his conversations with Turgenev about his method in PP (p.314) and AN (p.43).

³⁹ Mazon, p.44.

⁴⁰ On Russian reactions to Fathers and Children and Turgenev's response to those reactions, see Berlin, pp.280-9; Yarmolinsky, pp.204-9.

⁴¹ Berlin, p.295.

⁴² Grover, HJ and the French Novel, chap. 6.

⁴³ For Sainte-Beuve's exposition of his critical method, see 'Chateaubriand', NL, III, 15-33; 'Essai de Critique Naturelle par

Emile Deschanel', NL, IX, 62-88.

⁴⁴ Pierre et Jean, Oeuvres Complètes de Guy de Maupassant (Paris: Louis Conard, 1929), p.V.

⁴⁵ Cf. James on 'the extraordinary absence of humour, the dryness, the solemnity, the air of tension and effort' in Nana (HF, p.279). Although James and Zola agree on the whole in their assessments of Daudet, James frequently uses his articles on Daudet to score (unfair) points against Zola. In his review of Ernest Daudet's Mon Frère et Moi (AM, June 1882; LRE), for example, he admires Daudet's desire to please and love of fiction, qualities which Zola is described as considering 'an unpardonable fault in an artist' and 'the most evil passion of the human heart' (LRE, p.184); in PP, he disagrees with Zola's comments on Numa Roumestan and concludes: 'I am not of M. Zola's opinion - delightful as it would be to be of that opinion when M. Zola's sense of propriety is ruffled' (PP, p.201). The first comment is unjustified. Zola admires Daudet's 'exubérances, cette façon vivante d'écrire, si vivante que ses amis croient l'entendre et le voir, en le lisant' ('Alphonse Daudet', Les Romanciers Naturalistes, p.180). And Zola's 'sense of propriety' to which James refers is literary - he objects to an unlikely plot in Numa Roumestan: see 'Alphonse Daudet', Une Campagne, Oeuvres Complètes, XIV (Paris, 1970), 662.

⁴⁶ Cf. a letter to F.W.H. Myers, October 20 [1888], Lubbock typescript, Houghton Library, Harvard. James is justifying what Myers felt to be his 'absence of stricture' in his PP essay on Daudet and arguing that the essay represents an earlier point of view, before Daudet's increasingly strict adherence to realist principles: 'The agreeable side of Daudet was then, to my mind,

quite immense, and none of his late base productions - for they are base - had been put forth. . . . The poor man is a strange mixture - a surface of charm which he presented first, making it chatoyer in the sun, and an underside of foulness and poverty which he has now turned completely uppermost. But the beauty was real and I am not sorry to have expressed my sense of it, as one trying, in general, to do the same things'.

⁴⁷ Zola, review of Les Rois en Exil, Oeuvres Complètes, XII (Paris, 1969), 603. Cf. James and Zola's different views on Numa Roumestan: James approves the romantic plot for its psychological credibility (PP, pp.199-202); Zola objects to the falseness of romantic convention (Les Romanciers Naturalistes, pp.660-2).

⁴⁸ Maupassant, Pierre et Jean, p.VIII.

⁴⁹ On the 'absoluteness' of taste, see 'The Art of Fiction', PP, p.397.

⁵⁰ Pierre et Jean, p.XVIII.

⁵¹ 'Morality and the Novel', Phoenix (London: Heinemann, 1936), p.528.

⁵² Powers, pp.125-8.

⁵³ 'Introduction', The Odd Number: Thirteen Tales by Guy de Maupassant, trans. Jonathan Sturges (London: Osgood, McIlvaine, 1891), p.xvii.

⁵⁴ Pierre et Jean, p.IX. He also, of course, comes close to the Arnoldian ideal of looking at 'the object as in itself it really is', and to Sainte-Beuve's 'principe souverain qu'il faut surtout s'attacher à l'exécution dans les oeuvres de l'artiste, et voir s'il a fait, et comment il a fait, ce qu'il a voulu' ('Lettre à M. le Directeur gérant du Moniteur sur la morale et l'art', CL, XV, 347).

⁵⁵ Cf. another letter to Perry, of 1879: 'the literature [in France] is pitifully thin. Il n'y a que Zola' (Harlow, p.304); one to Howells, July 22 [1879] : 'if you stick to it you will become the Zola of the U.S.A. - which I consider a great function' (Houghton Library, Harvard); and one of 1893 to W. Morton Fullerton, thanking him for the offer of Le Docteur Pascal; 'What won't the French write about next? Strange are the loves of a sick sexagenarian and his niece. Yet I love my Zola' (SL, p.216).

⁵⁶ See, for example, PP, p.397: 'M. Zola reasons less powerfully than he represents'; letter to Perry, Letters, II, 332: 'I thought you would be interested in Zola's article - though he appears to interest you less than with all his views - his vanity, stupidity, fetidity etc., he does me'; NN, p.33: 'The critical volumes in especial abound in the characteristic, as they were a wondrous addition to the sum of his achievement during his most strenuous years'.

⁵⁷ Les Romanciers Naturalistes, pp.97-9: Du Roman, Le Roman Expérimental, Oeuvres Complètes, X (Paris, 1968), 1294.

⁵⁸ On Zola's frequent repetition of this phrase, see F.W.J. Hemmings, Émile Zola, rev. ed. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), p.153.

⁵⁹ 'De la Moralité dans la Littérature', Documents Littéraires, Oeuvres Complètes, XII, 495.

⁶⁰ On Zola's reception in England, see Decker, chap. 5. A typical response came from the Nation reviewer of L'Assommoir: 'The story, as a story, is very simple, but I feel embarrassed to tell it in its simplicity - it is so revolting. I must, however, make an effort and try to make it presentable' (Na, March 15 1877, p.161).

Contrast James's view of the novel from his review of Une Page d'Amour, where he commented on 'the power, the brilliancy . . . the extraordinary technical qualities of the work' (Na, May 30 1878, p.361).

⁶¹ 'Les Documents Humains', Du Roman, p.1315; and cf. 'Le Naturalisme', Une Campagne, pp.507-11.

⁶² 'Reality in America', The Liberal Imagination (London: Secker and Warburg, 1951), p.10; and cf. 'Sherwood Anderson' in the same volume.

⁶³ See, for example, HF, p.274: 'in the eyes of "naturalism" enjoyment is a frivolous, a superficial, a contemptible sentiment. It is difficult, however, to express conveniently by any other term the reader's measure of the entertainment afforded by a work of art'.

⁶⁴ See Powers, chaps. 3 and 4, and his article, 'Henry James and Zola's Roman Expérimental', Univ. of Toronto Quarterly 30 (1960), 16-30.

⁶⁵ We know, for example, that contrary to his claim in the preface, James did some research for The Princess, visiting Millbank prison and collecting London argot: see a letter to Perry, Harlow, p.319: 'You see I am quite the Naturalist'; and NB, p.69. James reflects Zola's 'experimental' approach to character in an article on the actor Tommaso Salvini: 'Signor Salvini's exhibition of this character has in it something of psychological research. Given a simple, well-meaning, generous, hot-blooded, uncultivated, and above all affectionate Sicilian . . . how will [he] have been affected by years of suffering, by the sting of disgrace?' ('Tomasso Salvini', SA, p.182); and the 'experimental' method is similarly echoed in the preface to The Princess: 'the question of what the total assault, that

of the world of his work-a-day life and the world of his divination and envy together, would have made of him, and what in especial he would have made of them' (AN, pp.61-2). The last phrase suggests the difference between James and Zola.

⁶⁶ Hemmings, p.156.

⁶⁷ 'Émile Zola', Chroniques etc., p.82.

⁶⁸ Grover, HJ and the French Novel, chap. 4.

⁶⁹ James's view is shared by both Zola, Les Romanciers Naturalistes, pp.133-6, and Émile Faguet, Flaubert (Paris: Hachette, 1899), p.31.

⁷⁰ Cf. Flaubert's comment to George Sand: 'Quant à la sympathie . . . jamais on n'en a assez' (Correspondance Sand/Flaubert, p.126).

⁷¹ Correspondance Sand/Flaubert, pp.444, 441.

⁷² For Flaubert's denial of any association with a literary movement, see, for example, Correspondance Sand/Flaubert, p.456: 'Et notez bien que j'exècre ce qu'on est convenu d'appeler le réalisme, bien qu'on me fasse un des pontifes'; and Zola, Les Romanciers Naturalistes, p.136: 'Lui . . . me criait . . . chaque écrivain était indépendant'.

⁷³ Although their judgments of the novels differ, both Zola and James explore Flaubert through the man/artist contrast and both conclude, in Zola's words: 'on le verra peu à peu s'absorber dans la forme, réduire son dictionnaire, se donner de plus en plus au procédé, restreindre davantage l'humanité de ses personnages. . . . Lentement, des jambes à la taille, puis à la tête, Flaubert devenait un marbre' (Les Romanciers Naturalistes, pp.150-1).

Both attribute this to a lack of critical proportion (Zola, p.138; ELE, p.143); both emphasise the difficulty Flaubert had in reconciling his ideal of style with modern subject-matter (Zola, pp.104-5; ELE, p.153, NN, pp.63, 74). This kind of material was of course available to both James and Zola from personal acquaintance and in Flaubert's correspondance, but a general similarity of attitude suggests that James knew Zola's essay and remembered it while writing his own.

⁷⁴ See Faguet, chap. 3 et passim; Correspondance Sand/Flaubert, p.196; Maupassant, 'Préface' to Lettres de Flaubert à George Sand, Chroniques, etc., p.111; Zola, Les Romanciers Naturalistes, pp.104-5.

⁷⁵ Correspondance Sand/Flaubert, p.155; and see above, p.77.

⁷⁶ Flaubert, letter to Sainte-Beuve defending Salammbô, 'Appendice', NL, IV, 439. Sainte-Beuve, in his review of Salammbô, had complained that, 'le caractère des personnages, le génie du peuple . . . sont sacrifiés ici ou entièrement subordonnés au côté descriptif exorbitant' (NL, IV, 86).

⁷⁷ Maupassant, 'Préface' to Lettres de Flaubert à George Sand, Chroniques, etc., p.110.

⁷⁸ Letter, August 30 [1892], Lubbock typescript, Houghton Library, Harvard.

⁷⁹ Introduction to Pierre Loti, Impressions (London: Constable, 1898), p.7. Cf. James's objections to the Goncourts' revelations about literary figures, his emphasis on this aspect of their Journal leading him to ignore completely the important theoretical speculations it contains ('The Journal of the Brothers de Goncourt', ELE, pp.195-232); and his letter to Gosse describing Daudet's article

on the death of Edmond de Goncourt: 'a little miracle of art, adroitness, demoniac tact and skill, and taste so abysmal, judged by our fishlike sense, that there is no getting alongside of it at all' (Lubbock, I, 255). Daudet's article, 'Ultima', appeared in the Revue de Paris, August 15 1896, pp.681-708.

⁸⁰ Impressions, p.8.

Chapter Three

¹ 'There is that in the walk and conversation of the average self-respecting Briton which denotes the belief that it is a sign of inferior, or at best of foreign, breeding to indulge, in the glow of conversational confidence, the occasional impulse to extemporize a picturesque formula, or to harmonize fact with fact by the plastic solvent of an "idea".'

² Ralph Barton Perry, The Thought and Character of William James (London: Humphrey Milford OUP, 1935), I, 390. Cf. a letter of 1880 to Charles Eliot Norton: 'I am attached to London in spite of the long list of reasons why I should not be; I think it on the whole the best point of view in the world' (Lubbock, I, 74); and one of 1877 to Grace Norton: 'I find myself a good deal more of a cosmopolitan than the average Briton of culture . . . I have become in all these years as little provincial as possible . . . and yet to be so is, I think, necessary for forming, here, many close relations. So my interest in London is chiefly that of an observer in a place where there is most in the world to observe' (Letters, II, 135).

³ Stang, p. 222; Graham, p. 121.

⁴ On the English reception of French naturalism, see Decker, chap. 5; on English theories of organic unity, see Graham, pp. 112-121.

Graham is right in comparing George Moore's appreciation of organic unity with James's, but more typical is an anonymous critic in the Saturday Review (1871): 'No scene should be given in a novel which has not a direct relation to the conduct of the story, or to the development of the characters' (Graham, p. 114).

⁵ These phrases are from James's review of Selected Essays by A. Hayward, Na, December 26 1878, p. 403. Hayward's criticism, which is mainly narrative and anecdotal, is described by James as 'of the old-fashioned English sort', in contrast with the 'going into fine shades' of the 'more recently invented grounds of appreciation'.

⁶ Trollope, An Autobiography (London: Blackwood, 1883), I, 164. In spite of Stang's objections to it being seen as typical, Trollope's pragmatic tone is that of English criticism in general (Stang, p. 29). Cf. Trollope's article, 'Novel-Reading', Nineteenth Century 5 (1879), 24-43, which bases its assessment of novels on their moral effects: 'I am inclined to think that the lessons inculcated by the novelists at present go deeper than most others. To ascertain whether they be good or bad, we should look not only to the teaching but to that which has been taught, - not to the masters only but the scholars' (p.25).

⁷ Trevor Creighton, Ethics of Some Modern Novels (London: Leadenhalle Presse, 1884), p. 16.

⁸ 'Count Leo Tolstoi', Essays in Criticism (2nd. ser.), in The Last Word, Vol. XI of The Complete Prose Works (Ann Arbor, 1977), p. 292.

⁹ 'Count Leo Tolstoi', p. 285. On the irrelevance of usual Western concepts of the self-conscious novel to Tolstoy, see John Bayley, Tolstoy and the Novel (1966; rpt. London: Chatto and Windus, 1968), pp. 62-6.

¹⁰ Mrs. Oliphant, 'Three Young Novelists', Blackwood's Mag. 136 (1884), 296; Charles Dudley Warner, 'Modern Fiction', AM 51 (1883), 469, 464-5, 472, et passim.

¹¹ Leslie Stephen, 'The Moral Element in Literature', Cornhill 43 (1881), 41, 38, 48, and cf. similar arguments in his earlier essay, 'Art and Morality', Cornhill 32 (1875), 91-101.

¹² W.S. Lilly, 'The New Naturalism', Fortnightly Review (1885); rpt. in Documents of Modern Literary Realism, ed. George J. Becker (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), p. 290.

¹³ Saintsbury, 'The Present State of the French Novel', Essays on French Novelists, p. 27.

¹⁴ On parallels between Ruskin and James, see Alwyn Berland, 'Henry James and the Aesthetic Tradition', Journal of the History of Ideas 23 (1962), 407-19.

¹⁵ James expressed his respect for Stephen in a letter to William of 1877: 'I lunched yesterday with poor Leslie Stephen, whom, however, rendered more inarticulate than ever by his wife's death, I find an impossible companion, in spite of the moral and intellectual confidence that he inspires' (Letters, II, 101).

¹⁶ 'Art and Morality', p. 94.

¹⁷ Leslie Stephen, 'Balzac's Novels', Fortnightly Review 15 (1871), 17-39; see e.g. p. 39: 'Now Balzac, though he shows some powers which are unsurpassed or unequalled, possessed a mind which, to put it gently, was not exactly well regulated'; Leslie Stephen, George Eliot, English Men of Letters (London: Macmillan, 1902), pp. 102-4; on Stephen's editorial relationship with Hardy, see John Paterson, 'An Attempt at Grand Tragedy' in Hardy: The Tragic Novels,

ed. R.P. Draper, Casebook (London: Macmillan, 1975), p. 114.

¹⁸ 'The Moral Element in Literature', pp. 43, 38.

¹⁹ The Letters of John Keats 1814-1821, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), I, 193; T.S. Eliot, 'On Henry James', Little Rev. (August 1918); rpt. in The Question of Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. F.W. Dupee (London: Allan Wingate, 1947), p. 125.

²⁰ 'The Moral Element in Literature', p. 41.

²¹ See, for example, the review in the New Quarterly Magazine 10 (1878), 455-6, which noted that James's 'artistic eye . . . accepts Balzac and Turgénieff as the best exponents of that subdued and chastened realism which seems most worth attaining in our age', and contrasted his 'healthy and sensible writing' with the 'over-subtle analysis' which benefits only a few readers. Even the Philistine Graphic 17 (1878), 355, felt able to 'cordially recommend Mr. James's criticisms to every student of modern French literature'. Both the New Quarterly and George Saintsbury in the Academy 13 (1878), 337-8, recognised James's qualification, as a practising novelist, to judge the work of others, but only the Athenaeum (March 16 1878), pp. 339-40, commented on the significance of a critical work devoted to French literature, 'into whose genius and meaning the English critic cannot be said to have displayed much insight as yet' (p. 339).

In examining the critical reaction to French Poets and Novelists I have found no evidence for Donald M. Murray's claim, echoed by Edel, that these reviews were 'really as much gratuitous abuse of French realism as they were evaluations of James as a critic'. See Donald M. Murray, 'Henry James and the English Reviewers, 1882-90', Am. Lit. 24 (1952), 3; Leon Edel, The Life of Henry James (1953-72;

definitive ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), I, 514.

²² 'Henry James', Literary Essays, p. 306.

²³ Cf. above, pp. 49-50. One might compare, for example, James's understanding of Taine's 'Balzac aime sa Valérie', FPN, p. 143, with the English reviewer of Taine's Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise who took him literally: 'one can only say that Balzac's taste was strange. . . . A really great artist will not only show his characters correctly, but will judge them correctly, and love and hate them according to their deserts, and lead the reader to do so too'; 'Taine's Contemporary English Literature', Saturday Rev. 19 (1865), 22. In his analysis of Madame Bovary, James alludes to this critical attitude: 'The reader may protest against a heroine who is "naturally depraved". You are welcome, he may say, to make of a heroine what you please, to carry her where you please; but in mercy do not set us down a young lady of whom, on the first page, there is nothing better to be said than that. But all this is a question of degree. Madame Bovary is typical, like all powerfully-conceived figures in fiction' (FPN, pp. 261-2).

²⁴ James to Perry: 'The necessary complement of my Longman article should be another, of the same length, which I haven't time to write now (I am awfully driven) but shall write when I can' (Harlow, p. 317).

²⁵ PP, p. 109: 'The Vicar's nature is thoroughly analysed and rendered'; Century Mag., July 1883, p. 388: 'The Vicar's nature is thoroughly understood and expressed'. PP, p. 106: 'if we hesitate to call it a picture it is because the idea of composition is not the controlling one and we feel that the author would regard the artistic, in general, as a kind of affectation'; Century Mag., p. 387:

'we hesitate to call it a picture only because the author gives us an impression of not possessing in any appreciable degree that temperament which is known as the artistic'. In the latter revision, James defines what he means by the artistic nature Trollope lacks, and his tone in describing Trollope's attitude is less harsh, in keeping with the generous and objective tone of the essay as a whole. (There is a manuscript version of 'Anthony Trollope' in the Houghton Library, Harvard, which agrees with the Century version.)

²⁶ James's copy of the first volume of Trollope's An Autobiography is in the Bancroft Library, Berkeley, and James's markings reflect his continuing ambivalence towards Trollope. James notes, for example, Trollope's scorn of waiting for inspiration, his view of writing as a profession involving a regular commitment; his accounts of moral objections from readers; and his conscious aim for popularity. See James's copy of An Autobiography (London: Blackwood, 1883), I, 162, 243, 250, 235. James described An Autobiography to Perry as 'one of the most curious & amazing books in all literature, for its density, blockishness & general thickness & soddenness' (Harlow, p. 314).

²⁷ James originally intended to include the essay in the collection which became PP. See his letter to James R. Osgood suggesting the volume, Letters, II, 412-3.

²⁸ It is used in this sense by, for example, George J. Becker in his introduction to Documents of Modern Literary Realism, and by Bernard R. Bowron Jr., 'Realism in America', Comparative Lit. 3 (1951), 268-85, who restricts 'true realism' to the 'new realism' of this century and writers like Crane, Norris and Dreiser.

²⁹ Eric Auerbach, Mimesis, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1953); J.P. Stern, On Realism (London: Routledge

and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 28: 'We are inclined to think that there must be something common to all examples of realism, and that this common property is the justification for applying the term 'realism' to the various writings; whereas realistic writings form a family the members of which have family likenesses'.

See also Harry Levin, 'What is Realism?', Comparative Lit. 3 (1951), 193-9; Alice R. Kaminsky, 'On Literary Realism' in The Theory of the Novel: New Essays, ed. John Halperin (New York: OUP, 1974), pp. 213-32; George Levine, 'Realism Reconsidered', in The Theory of the Novel, pp. 233-56.

³⁰ Roger Gard, ed., Henry James: The Critical Heritage (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 90. Cf. Hutton, one of James's most sympathetic reviewers, on The Portrait of a Lady: 'If you let your story land itself in a wreck, or fade away into a blank and pallid apathy, - that is true art to this author' (Gard, p. 96); and he objected to the 'unpleasant subject' of Eugenia's possible divorce in The Europeans (Gard, pp. 49-50). See Gard, *passim*, for the dominant attitudes of contemporary reviewers to James's novels.

³¹ Th. Bentzon, 'Les Nouveaux Romanciers Américains: Henry James', Revue des Deux Mondes 53 (1883), 121.

³² 'Henry James, Jr.', Century Mag., November, 1882; rpt. in Gard, pp. 126-34. James described the article's 'painfully overcharged appreciation' in part of his letter to J.A. Symonds of February 22 1884 omitted in Lubbock, I, 106-8. The letter is in the Houghton Library, Harvard.

³³ Gard, pp. 129, 134, 132-3. James's essay on Trollope has been seen as an endorsement of Howells's position, but it in fact suggests the critical distance between the two in its combination of

generous acknowledgment of Trollope's genius with reminders of more modern approaches.

³⁴ Letter to Howells, March 20 [1883], Houghton Library, Harvard (quoted in Edel, I, 681); 'American Novels', Quarterly Rev. (January 1883), Gard, p. 136; Arthur Tilley, 'The New School of Fiction', National Rev. 1 (1883), 268.

³⁵ For accounts of this debate, see Graham, pp. 49-61, 102-12, and Donald M. Murray, and cf. James's attack on equations of a 'good' novel with incident, suspense, satisfying endings and virtuous characters ('The Art of Fiction', PP, p. 382).

³⁶ 'A Gossip on Romance', Longman's Mag. (November 1882); rpt. Memories and Portraits (1887), The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson, Vailima Edition, Vol.XII (London: Heinemann, 1922), pp. 192, 196, 198.

³⁷ Gard, pp. 130-1: 'Looking back to those early stories, where Mr. James stood at the dividing ways of the novel and the romance, I am sometimes sorry that he declared even superficially for the former. His best efforts seem to me those of romance; his best types have an ideal development . . . But doubtless, he has chosen wisely; perhaps the romance is an outworn form, and would not lend itself to the reproduction of even the ideality of modern life'. In spite of his appreciation of romantic elements in James's work, Howells's assumption that the two forms can be so easily separated differentiates him from James.

³⁸ Oscar Cargill, 'Henry James's "Moral Policeman": William Dean Howells', Am. Lit. 29 (1958), 371-98. Cargill makes much of an apparent break in the James/Howells correspondence following Howells's article, but the unpublished correspondence in the Houghton Library, Harvard, shows no such break. (It is typical of Cargill's inaccurate

eagerness to support his case that he should see James's article 'William Dean Howells' of 1886 as 'taking advantage' of Stevenson's distinction between James and Howells in 'A Humble Remonstrance'. But the last paragraph of 'A Humble Remonstrance' in which the distinction appears was added only when the article was reprinted in Memories and Portraits in 1887. It is more likely that Stevenson is quietly helping James to separate his name from that of Howells. For the paragraph in question, see 'A Humble Remonstrance', Memories and Portraits, Works, XII, 222-3.) It is certainly true that James was sceptical of Howells's critical method - both with reference to himself and in general. In 1887, for example, he wrote to William of a tribute Howells had recently made to him in Harper's Monthly: 'It gives me pleasure, but doesn't make me cease to deplore the figure that Howells makes every month in his critical department of Harper's. He seems to me as little as possible of a critic and expresses himself so that I wish he would "quit", and content himself with writing the novel as he thinks it should be, and not talking about it: he does the one so much better than the other. He talks from too small a point of view' (Thought and Character of William James, I, 399). That approval of Howells as a practitioner is typical. James respected Howells the novelist and there are many letters to friends in which he records enthusiasm for Howells's latest novel. An unpublished letter to Grace Norton, for example, December 9 [1885], Houghton Library, Harvard, praises Silas Lapham: 'Every one here admires extremely the truth and power of "Silas Lapham", including myself'.

³⁹ Gard, pp. 129, 129-30.

⁴⁰ Walter Besant, The Art of Fiction (London: Chatto and Windus, 1884), p. 9, my emphasis. Page references will hereafter be included in the text.

⁴¹ John Goode, 'The Art of Fiction: Walter Besant and Henry James', in Tradition and Tolerance in Nineteenth-century Fiction, ed. David Howard, John Lucas, John Goode (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 243-81; and cf. the commercial bias in Besant's later handbook for aspiring authors, The Pen and the Book (London: Thomas Burleigh, 1899).

In spite of differences of interpretation, my account of the James/Besant controversy is indebted to Goode's article, and to Mark Spilka, 'Henry James and Walter Besant: "The Art of Fiction" Controversy', UTE 4 (1972); rpt. in Towards a Poetics of Fiction, ed. Mark Spilka (Bloomington and London: Indiana Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 190-208.

⁴² Cf. Besant's realist creed in favour of ordinary life: 'adventure, pathos, amusement, and interest, are far better sought among lives which seem dull' (Art of Fiction, p. 30).

⁴³ 'The Value of Fiction', Belgravia 16 (1872), 50.

⁴⁴ Andrew Lang, 'The Art of Fiction', Pall Mall Gazette, April 30 1884, p. 2.

⁴⁵ For James's account of the row over 'An International Episode', see Letters, II, 209-10, 212-3.

⁴⁶ Spectator, May 24 1884, p. 675.

⁴⁷ See, for example, The Art of Fiction, pp. 10, 29; PP, pp. 395, 403. Lang's account suggests that Besant mentioned Zola in his lecture but only to attack him: 'Mr. Besant . . . had scarcely words enough to express his aversion to M. Zola' (Lang, p. 1).

⁴⁸ For the general level of realist discussion, see Graham, pp. 20-8. Even George Eliot and G.H. Lewes, the two most important

theorists of realism before James, tended to restrict their discussion to recommending and defending everyday life as subject-matter, and to the unexamined concept of the novelist's 'accuracy' about his chosen subject. See, for example, G.H. Lewes, 'Realism in Art: Recent German Fiction', Literary Criticism of George Henry Lewes, pp. 87-90; George Eliot, 'The Natural History of German Life', Westminster Review (1856), rpt. in Essays of George Eliot, ed. Thomas Pinney, pp. 266-99; and cf. Nina Politi, The Novel and its Pre-suppositions (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1976), pp. 36-9.

49 'The Art of Fiction', Longman's Mag. 4 (1884), 503.

50 Spilka, p. 207.

51 The phrase is from James's contribution to The Art of Authorship, ed. George Bainton (London: James Clarke, 1890), p. 208.

52 'The Present State of the Novel', I, Fortnightly Rev. 42 N.S. (1887), 415-6.

53 'Realism and Romance', Contemporary Rev. 52 (1887), 684, 687.

54 'A Humble Remonstrance', Longman's Mag. (December 1884); rpt. in HJ & RLS, pp. 86-100.

55 See a letter from Stevenson to James, thanking him for acknowledging 'A Humble Remonstrance': 'This is a very brave hearing from more points than one. The first point is that there is a hope of a sequel. For this I laboured. Seriously, from the dearth of information and thoughtful interest in the art of literature, those who try to practise it with any deliberate purpose run the risk of finding no fit audience' (HJ & RLS, pp. 102-3).

56 'A Note on Realism', The Mag. of Art (November 1883); rpt. Literary Papers, Works, IV (London, 1922), 422.

57 'A Note on Realism', p. 416.

58 James's copy of Virginibus Puerisque (London: C. Kegan Paul, 1881), Houghton Library, Harvard, pp. 34, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 66, 70-1, 243-4; cf. PP, pp. 150-2.

59 Comments on p. 32 of the publisher's advertisements and the following unnumbered page in James's copy of Virginibus Puerisque.

60 James marks, for example, details revealing Alan's sensitivity about his size, David's stubborn pride, and the stages in the development of the quarrel in chap. 24. James's copy of Kidnapped (London: Cassell, 1886), Houghton Library, Harvard, pp. 177, 248, 241, 243, 245, 247.

61 Letter to Gosse, August 26 [1888], Lubbock typescript, Houghton Library, Harvard; and cf. 'Robert Louis Stevenson', NN, p. 9: 'He was supremely suited in short at last - at the cost, it was to be said, of simplifications of view that, intellectually, he failed quite exactly (it was one of his few limitations) to measure'.

62 See, for example, HJ & RLS, p. 173: 'You are too far away - you are too absent - too invisible, inaudible, inconceivable. Life is too short a business and friendship too delicate a matter for such tricks - for cutting great gory masses out of 'em by the year at a time. Therefore come back'.

63 Letter, January 21 [1887], Lubbock typescript, Houghton Library, Harvard.

64 Letter, October 19 [1886], Houghton Library, Harvard.

65 For private expressions of admiration, see above, n. 38.

66 See also James's letter replying to Howells's objections to Hawthorne, Letters, II, 268; letter, July 22 [1879], Houghton Library,

Harvard: 'Continue to Americanize and to realize; that is your mission; - & if you stick to it you will become the Zola of the U.S.A. - which I consider a great function'.

⁶⁷ Howells's criticism from Harper's Monthly was reprinted in Criticism and Fiction (London: Osgood, McIlvaine, 1891), and this very uneven volume is full of examples of that 'small' critical point of view which James disliked (see above, n. 38). On Scott, for example, Howells writes: 'He can still amuse young people, but they ought to be instructed how false and how mistaken he often is, with his medieval ideals, his blind Jacobitism, his intense devotion to aristocracy and royalty' (p. 22), and he later rejects romance completely: 'I can hardly conceive of a literary self-respect in these days compatible with the old trade of make-believe' (p. 104). George Arms, 'The Literary Background of Howells's Social Criticism', Am. Lit. 14 (1942), 260-76, argues that James encouraged Howells's socialism. This is true as far as practice went - James accepted Howells's ideas within the self-justifying form of his novels - but he could not accept Howells's restrictive application of his own method to the novel in general. We should beware of underestimating Howells, as Lionel Trilling warns, 'William Dean Howells and the Roots of Modern Taste', The Opposing Self: Nine Essays in Criticism (London: Secker and Warburg, 1955), pp. 76-103, but his criticism is certainly naive and its main justification is its contemporary impact in championing realism. See Criticism and Fiction and Other Essays, ed. Clara Marburg Kirk and Rudolf Kirk (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1959), p. xiii; Becker, p. 18.

⁶⁸ Section of letter to William James, May 16 1890, Houghton Library, Harvard, omitted in Lubbock, I, 164.

- ⁶⁹ Thomas Sergeant Perry, 'William Dean Howells', Century Mag. 1 N.S. (1882), 683.
- ⁷⁰ 'The Modern Young Man as Critic', Universal Rev. (March 1889); rpt. Gard, p. 188.
- ⁷¹ Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', Nineteenth Century (January 1889), rpt. in The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 290-320; J.A. Symonds, Essays Speculative and Suggestive, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1890), esp. 'On the Relation of Art to Science and Morality', I, 148-67, and 'Realism and Idealism', I, 168-98; Arthur Waugh, 'Reticence in Literature', Yellow Book 1 (1894), 201-19. See also Clarence R. Decker, 'The Aesthetic Revolt against Naturalism in Victorian Criticism', PMLA 53 (1938), 844-56.
- ⁷² Henry Havelock Ellis, The New Spirit (London: George Bell and Sons, 1890), p. 31. For an idiosyncratic but suggestive examination of the process of change in the fiction of the period, see William Bellamy, The Novels of Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy: 1890-1910 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971).
- ⁷³ On William Archer's anthology and the English reception of Ibsen in general, see Michael Egan, ed., Ibsen: The Critical Heritage (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972); Decker, The Victorian Conscience, chap. 6.
- ⁷⁴ George Bernard Shaw, The Quintessence of Ibsenism (1891), The Works of Bernard Shaw, XIX (London: Constable, 1930), 32-4.
- ⁷⁵ The Sanity of Art (1895), Works, XIX, 329.
- ⁷⁶ Letter to William James, August 20 1895, Houghton Library, Harvard.

⁷⁷ Hubert Crackanthorpe, Last Studies (London: Heinemann, 1897), pp. xviii-xix; letter to Gosse, June 26 1902, Lubbock typescript, Houghton Library, Harvard. For an exhaustive study of James's relationship with Conrad, see Elsa Nettels, James and Conrad (Athens, Georgia: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1977), and on James and Stephen Crane, see Edel, II, 400-9.

⁷⁸ Cf. Theatre and Friendship: Some Henry James Letters, with a commentary by Elizabeth Robins (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932), p. 176: 'He positively could not, he said, read anything, now, for the sake of the story. He had "lost his innocence". If a book interested him he wanted to rewrite it'.

⁷⁹ Letter to Gosse, Egan, p. 151. For a full account of James's changing attitude to Ibsen, and what he learnt from him, see Michael Egan, Henry James: The Ibsen Years (London: Vision Press, 1972).

⁸⁰ 'Candour in English Fiction', New Rev. 2 (1890), 6-21, contributions by Walter Besant, Mrs. Lynn Linton and Hardy; 'The Science of Fiction', New Rev. 4 (1891), 304-19, contributions by Paul Bourget, Besant and Hardy; 'The Science of Criticism', New Rev. 4 (1891), 398-411, contributions by James, Andrew Lang and Edmund Gosse. Hardy's articles are reprinted in Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings, ed. Harold Orel (London: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 125-33, 134-8.

⁸¹ Personal Writings, p. 137.

⁸² Personal Writings, pp. 126, 127.

⁸³ Stevenson's comment is from part of his letter of December 5 1892, omitted in HJ & RLS, p. 219, and supplied by Dan H. Laurence, 'Henry James and Stevenson Discuss "Vile" Tess', Colby Library Quarterly, 3rd. ser. (May 1953), p. 167. Laurence suggests that James was initially

so positive about Tess only because he knew that Stevenson admired Hardy.

⁸⁴ See Ian Gregor's sympathetic analysis of Tess in Ian Gregor and Brian Nicholas, The Moral and the Story (London: Faber, 1962), pp. 123-50, in which he notes Hardy's use of several different narrative modes and his contradictory treatment of nature. This last point is taken up by David Lodge in 'Tess, Nature, and the Voices of Hardy', The Language of Fiction (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 164-88. In his chapter on Tess in The Great Web: The Form of Hardy's Major Fiction (London: Faber, 1974), pp. 173-204, Gregor suggests that where Lodge sees confusion there is in fact an intended, rich ambivalence and that a rigidly Jamesian concept of unity is inappropriate to a novel 'which comes over to us more as a process than a stasis' (p. 177).

⁸⁵ Gard, p. 186, quoted from F.E. Hardy, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy.

⁸⁶ Concerning Jude the Obscure (1896; rpt. London: Ulysses Bookshop, 1931), pp. 8, 9, 29.

⁸⁷ 'Jude the Obscure', Saturday Rev. 81 (1896), 153.

⁸⁸ Lodge, p. 164.

⁸⁹ W.B. Yeats, Autobiographies (London: Macmillan, 1955), p. 283.

⁹⁰ The Complete Plays of Henry James, ed. Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davies, 1949), p. 643.

⁹¹ For Wells's comments on James's array of hats and sticks for different occasions, see the extract from Experiment in Autobiography, HJ & HGW, p. 47; this phrase from a letter to William James, November 17 1906, Houghton Library, Harvard, is typical of the

unfortunate way James expressed his genuine admiration for Wells's talent and energy.

For a wilfully pro-Wells reading of the relationship, see Kenneth Rexroth, 'Henry James and H.G. Wells', in Assays (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1961), pp. 114-7, and for a more balanced psychological emphasis, see Michael Swan, 'Henry James and H.G. Wells: a Study of their Friendship, based on their unpublished correspondence', in A Small Part of Time (London: Jonathan Cape, 1957), pp. 175-204.

⁹² On Wells as a reviewer, see Gordon N. Ray, 'H.G. Wells Tries to be a Novelist', in Edwardians and Late Victorians, ed. Richard Ellmann, English Institute Essays 1959 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1960), pp. 106-59, and 'H.G. Wells's Contributions to the Saturday Review', Library, 5th. ser., 16 (1961), 29-36. For Wells's attacks on Besant, Lang and Trilby, see his reviews 'Popular Writers and Press Critics', 'Fiction', 'The Novel of Types', Saturday Rev. 81 (1896), 145, 209, 23. James wrote an ambivalently fulsome article on his friend du Maurier's novel: 'George du Maurier', Harper's Weekly, April 14 1894, pp. 341-2; his actual opinion of the novel, which enjoyed an enormous popular success, is recorded in a letter to Grace Norton, December 28 1896, Houghton Library, Harvard: 'After Trilby everything, surely, is possible'.

⁹³ 'Certain Critical Opinions', Saturday Rev. (1896), quoted by Gordon N. Ray, 'H.G. Wells Tries to be a Novelist', p. 111; and cf. David Lodge, 'Assessing H.G. Wells', in The Novelist at the Crossroads (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 214-5, on the fascination which the aesthetic approach held for Wells.

⁹⁴ 'Fiction' and 'The Novel of Types', Saturday Rev. 81 (1896), 132, 23.

⁹⁵ See, for example, Wells's review of Conrad's An Outcast of the Islands, Saturday Rev. 81 (1896), 509-10, in which he describes the book as possibly the best novel of the year, but concludes, 'he writes despicably. He writes so as to mask and dishonour the greatness that is in him'. Conrad's comment to Garnett on this critical inconsistency is quoted by David Lodge, The Language of Fiction, p. 27: '"Something brings the impression off - makes its effect. What? the style - Ergo: the style is not dishonourable"'.

⁹⁶ Arnold Bennett and H.G. Wells: A Record of a Personal and a Literary Friendship, ed. Harris Wilson (London: Rupert Hart-Davies, 1960), p. 115.

⁹⁷ Arnold Bennett and H.G. Wells, pp. 95, 124.

⁹⁸ Arnold Bennett and H.G. Wells, p. 47.

⁹⁹ Henry James: Letters to A.C. Benson and Auguste Monod, ed. E.F. Benson (London: Elkin Mathews and Marrot, 1930), p. 79.

¹⁰⁰ Wells cites Bouvard et Pécuchet in 'The Contemporary Novel', HJ & HGW, p. 139; James's bewilderment at Flaubert's last work is expressed, for example, in his 1893 essay on Flaubert (ELE, p. 147)

¹⁰¹ Tono-Bungay, chap. 1; and cf. James to Wells: 'I live for your agglomerated lucubrations' (HJ & HGW, p. 87).

¹⁰² Cf. David Lodge, 'Tono-Bungay and the Condition of England', The Language of Fiction, pp. 214-42.

¹⁰³ Letter to Dr. Percy Ames, March 10 1912, Lubbock typescript, Houghton Library, Harvard.

¹⁰⁴ See 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown', Collected Essays (London: Hogarth Press, 1966), I, 319-37, and 'Modern Fiction', Collected Essays, II, 103-10.

¹⁰⁵ 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown', p. 320: 'in or about December, 1910, human character changed'.

¹⁰⁶ Letter to Quinn, quoted Nettels, p. 18.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, NN, p. 264: 'When full expression, the expression of some particular truth, seemed to lapse in this or that of his earlier novels . . . it was but by a hand's breadth, so that if we didn't inveterately quite know what he intended we yet always felt sufficiently that he knew'.

¹⁰⁸ Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', pp. 307, 320, 293.

¹⁰⁹ 'The Critic as Artist', in The Artist as Critic, p. 401.

¹¹⁰ James's judgment was reinforced by, for example, Ezra Pound in his essay of 1918, 'Henry James', Literary Essays, p. 331; and most notably by Virginia Woolf in 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown' and 'Modern Fiction'. It pervades subsequent mediocre works on the art of fiction, e.g. Robert Liddell, A Treatise on the Novel (London: Jonathan Cape, 1947). Recent attempts to recover the Edwardians include David Lodge, 'Assessing H.G. Wells' and 'Tono-Bungay and the Condition of England', and his reading of the execution scene from Bennett's The Old Wives' Tale in The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), pp. 27-35; Arnold Kettle, 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Woolf', An Introduction to the English Novel, II, 2nd. ed. (1953; rpt. London: Hutchinson, 1967), 75-99; William Bellamy, The Novels of Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy.

Chapter Four

¹ See, for example, NN, pp. 223-4, on D'Annunzio: 'The bad smell has, as it were, to be accounted for; . . . There is no

mistaking it; the leak of distinction is produced by a positive element of the vulgar; and that the vulgar should flourish in an air so charged, intellectually speaking, with the "aristocratic" element, becomes for us straightway the greatest of oddities and at the same time, critically speaking, one of the most interesting things conceivable'; and p. 247, on Serao: 'When we come to analyse we arrive at a final impression of what we pay, as lovers of the novel, for such a chartered state as we have here a glimpse of; and we find it to be an exposure, on the intervention at least of such a literary temperament as the one before us, to a new kind of vulgarity'.

² Cf. NN p. 246, on Serao: 'This element [passion] touches us just in proportion as we see it mixed with other things, with all the things with which it has to reckon and struggle'.

³ James suggests, in fact, that Serao would have been better with the English convention of reticence. He is not seriously advocating Grundyism, since the best artists have built-in taste, but the example is used to illustrate the value of convention to the second-rate naturalist for whom 'fact' can be fatally seductive: 'When we have not a very fine sense [of taste, delicacy] the convention appears in a manner to have it on our behalf' (NN, p. 247).

⁴ Cf. Walter L. Reed, 'The Problem with a Poetics of the Novel', in Towards a Poetics of Fiction, pp. 62-74; John Bayley, 'Against a New Formalism', Critical Quarterly 10 (1968), 60-71.

⁵ 'Henry James', Aspects and Impressions, p. 18.

⁶ Nostromo, Collected Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad (London: Dent, 1947), pp. xxi-xxii.

⁷ See Typhoon and Other Stories, Collected Edition (London, 1950), pp. v-vii; The Nigger of the 'Narcissus', Collected Edition

(London, 1950), pp. vii-xii.

⁸ See the letter to Howells, Lubbock, II, 102: 'it will be long before I shall want to collect them together . . . and furnish them with a final Preface. I've done with prefaces for ever'.

⁹ In the famous chap. 17 of Adam Bede, 'In Which the Story Pauses a Little'.

¹⁰ Cf. AN, p. 115, where The Awkward Age is described as helping us 'ever so happily to see the grave distinction between substance and form in a really wrought work of art signally break down'; and AN, p. 220, where James refers to 'the truth that the forms of wrought things . . . were, all exquisitely and effectively, the things'.

¹¹ See Mark Schorer, 'Technique as Discovery', Hudson Review (1948), rpt. in The Theory of the Novel, ed. Philip Stevick (New York: Free Press, 1967), pp. 65-84; Wayne Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961).

¹² In 'Morality and the Novel', Phoenix, p. 528: 'The novel is the highest example of subtle inter-relatedness that man has discovered. . . . Morality in the novel is the trembling instability of the balance'.

¹³ See 'The Art of Fiction', PP, pp. 399-404, on the nature of 'subjects' and 'adventures'; pp. 406-7, on the nature of morality.

¹⁴ The Golden Bowl, Part First, 4 (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1966), p. 87.

¹⁵ John Goode, '"Character" and Henry James', New Left Review 40 (1966), 55-75. Goode misinterprets the late Jamesian position by juxtaposing James's use of 'geometry' in the preface to Roderick Hudson with his use of the word in Washington Square in a satirical attack on

Dr. Sloper's treatment of individuals. The juxtaposition is clearly a distortion.

¹⁶ R.W. Short, 'Some Critical Terms of Henry James', PMLA 65 (1950), 667-80.

¹⁷ See C.F. Burgess, 'The Seeds of Art: Henry James's Donnée', Lit. and Psychology 13 (1963), 67-73.

¹⁸ Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (London: Jonathan Cape, 1921), pp. 236-50, 93-119.

¹⁹ 'The Portrait of a Lady', Collected Essays (London: Bodley Head, 1969), p. 55.

²⁰ On the conflict between autobiography and fictionalisation in Sons and Lovers, see, for example, Mark Schorer, 'Technique as Discovery', pp. 73-6; and for a more sympathetic exploration of Schorer's point, H.M. Daleski, The Forked Flame: a study of D.H. Lawrence (London: Faber, 1965), chap. 2.

²¹ 'Henry James', Literary Essays, p. 338.

²² Leavis's famous attack on the late novels is in The Great Tradition (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948), p. 165; he is echoed, though for different reasons, by John Goode in 'The Art of Fiction: Walter Besant and Henry James' and '"Character" and Henry James'; and the extreme statement of this anti-James position is Maxwell Geismar, Henry James and his Cult (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964).

²³ On the amusement to be gained from purposely inserting difficulties into one's material, see AN, pp. 199, 224, 236, 252.

²⁴ See, for example, Ian Watt, 'The First Paragraph of the Ambassadors: An Explication', Essays in Crit. 10 (1960), 250-74; Seymour Chatman, The Later Style of Henry James (Oxford: Basil Blackwell,

1972); David Lodge, 'Strether by the River', The Language of Fiction, pp. 189-213; Tony Inglis, 'Reading Late James', in The Modern English Novel, ed. Gabriel Josipovici (London: Open Books, 1976), pp. 77-94; Nicola Bradbury, Henry James: The Later Novels (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

²⁵ See, for example, James's definition of the fairy-tale, AN, p. 254: 'the case that has purged in the crucible all its bêtises while keeping all its grace'; and of 'adventure', AN, p. 286: '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'.

²⁶ Robert Scholes, 'An Approach Through Genre', in Towards a Poetics of Fiction, p. 44.

²⁷ See 'Crosscurrents in Modern English Criticism', in The Novelist at the Crossroads; Modernism, AntiModernism and PostModernism (Birmingham: Univ. of Birmingham, 1976); and especially The Modes of Modern Writing.

²⁸ Lodge claims James as a modernist in 'Crosscurrents', p. 274, The Modes of Modern Writing, pp. 41-4; and the dialogue with Wells is quoted in The Modern Tradition, ed. Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson Jr. (New York: OUP, 1965), pp. 317-28.

Claims for Jamesian authority for more obviously antimodernist positions include Iris Murdoch, 'The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited', Yale Review 49 (1959), 271; F.R. Leavis, 'James as Critic', SLC, pp. 13-24; Stephen Hazell, ed., The English Novel: Developments in Criticism since Henry James, Casebook (London: Macmillan, 1978), pp. 13-22.

James's ambivalent position is reflected in the ambivalence of

Graham Greene's account of his achievement in 'François Mauriac', Collected Essays, pp. 115-7 (cf. David Lodge, The Modes of Modern Writing, pp. 49-50).

²⁹ 'John Galsworthy', Phoenix, p. 539. It is interesting that Lawrence shared James's admiration for Sainte-Beuve.

³⁰ Ford Madox Ford, 'Editorial', English Review 1 (1908), 158-9, and cf. 'The Old Man' from Return to Yesterday, rpt. in The Question of Henry James, pp. 65-6; Edith Wharton, 'The Criticism of Fiction', TLS, May 14 1914, pp. 230, 229, and The Writing of Fiction (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), pp. 44-5, 117; Joseph Warren Beach, The Method of Henry James (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press and OUP, 1918) and The Twentieth Century Novel: Studies in Technique (New York and London: Century Co., 1932); Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction; and cf. Norman Friedman, 'Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept', PMLA (1955), rpt. in The Theory of the Novel, pp. 108-37.

³¹ Lubbock, p. 6; Edith Wharton, The Writing of Fiction, p. 17.

³² Arnold, 'Count Leo Tolstoi', Complete Prose Works, XI, 292, and see above, p. 150; Lubbock, pp. 236-50.

³³ Lubbock, p. 17.

³⁴ Lubbock, p. 58.

³⁵ Roland Barthes, S/Z, trans. Richard Miller (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), p. 4: 'Why is the writerly our value? Because the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text'.

³⁶ Lubbock, e.g. p. 198; Edith Wharton, The Writing of Fiction, pp. 8-14; Beach, The Twentieth Century Novel, pp. 15-16.

- 37 Arthur McDowall, Realism: A Study in Art and Thought (London: Constable, 1918), p. 24.
- 38 McDowall, pp. 41, 73.
- 39 McDowall, p. 200.
- 40 'Henry James: III. The Letters of Henry James', Collected Essays, I, 284; James's letter to Berry is in Lubbock, II, 225-8. (This essay was written fourteen years later than Woolf's rather less respectful view of James recorded by Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf: A Biography, I, Virginia Stephen: 1882-1912 (London: Hogarth Press, 1972), 122-3.)
- 41 'Henry James's Ghost Stories', 'The Supernatural in Fiction', Collected Essays, I, 292, 295.
- 42 'Phases of Fiction', Collected Essays, II, 101.
- 43 On the importance of character and the novelist's necessary independence from the reader, see 'Phases of Fiction', pp. 99-100; 'On Re-Reading Novels', Collected Essays, II, 129: 'Flaubert will take for his subject an old maid and a stuffed parrot'; cf. PP, p. 395.
- 44 'The Art of Fiction', Collected Essays, II, 53.
- 45 Bell, II, Mrs. Woolf: 1912-1941 (London: Hogarth Press, 1972), 134.
- 46 Bell, II, 134-5.
- 47 Lubbock, p. 58.
- 48 'On Re-Reading Novels', Collected Essays, II, 124-5.
- 49 'On Re-Reading Novels', p. 126.
- 50 'On Re-Reading Novels', p. 127.

51 Collected Essays, II, 56-102.

52 'Morality and the Novel', Phoenix, p. 528.

53 E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (London: Edward Arnold, 1927), p. 107.

54 Mark Schorer, 'Technique as Discovery' and 'Fiction and the "Matrix of Analogy"', Kenyon Review 11 (1949), 539-60; F.R. Leavis, 'James as Critic', SLC, pp. 13, 16.

55 See, for example, Tzvetan Todorov, 'An Introduction to Verisimilitude', in The Poetics of Prose, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), pp. 80-88; and cf. a less methodologically committed and less rigorous examination of similar ideas by Richard Harter Fogle, 'Illusion, Point of View, and Modern Novel Criticism', in The Theory of the Novel: New Essays, pp. 338-52.

56 James acknowledges Tolstoy's genius in, for example, a letter of 1899 to Mrs. Humphry Ward, Lubbock, I, 335-6, and when he wrote on Tolstoy he was always careful to stress his genius, the very quality which made him such a dangerous model for lesser talents: see 'The New Novel', NN, p. 260; 'Turgenev and Tolstoy' (1896), HF, pp. 170-1.

57 I have already compared Schorer's reading of Sons and Lovers with Daleski's more sympathetic approach (above, n. 20); cf. Wayne Booth on the critical shortcomings of Schorer's 'Fiction and the "Matrix of Analogy"' in The Rhetoric of Fiction, pp. 252-3; and for the general critical movement against the restricted approach of the New Critics see, for example, Wayne Booth; Barbara Hardy, The Novels of George Eliot: A Study in Form (London: Athlone Press, 1959) and The Appropriate Form: An Essay on the Novel (London: Athlone

Press, 1964); Douglas Hewitt, The Approach to Fiction: Good and Bad Readings of Novels (London: Longman, 1972); J. Hillis Miller, The Form of Victorian Fiction (Notre Dame and London: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1968).

58 'Book Reviews', New Yorker, September 24 1949, p. 89.

59 D.H. Lawrence, 'John Galsworthy', Phoenix, p. 539.

60 See, for example, some of the essays collected in Anna Karenina and Other Essays (London: Chatto and Windus, 1967); R.P. Bilan, 'The Basic Concepts and Criteria in F.R. Leavis's Novel Criticism', in Towards A Poetics of Fiction, p. 164; F.R. Leavis, The Great Tradition, p. 8.

61 'John Galsworthy', p. 539.

62 On the difference between poetics and criticism, see Tzvetan Todorov, 'Poetics and Criticism', in The Poetics of Prose, pp. 29-41. Todorov is an example of critics eager to bridge the gap between the two - see esp. 'Poetics and Criticism' and 'The Methodological Heritage of Formalism', The Poetics of Prose, pp. 41, 257; and Robert Scholes, 'The Contributions of Formalism and Structuralism to the Theory of Fiction', in Towards a Poetics of Fiction, pp. 122-4 - but his particular studies of, for example, James's short stories are disappointing: see 'The Secret of Narrative', 'The Ghosts of Henry James', in The Poetics of Prose, pp. 143-78, 179-89.

63 Jina Politi, The Novel and its Presuppositions, p. 62.

64 'On Henry James', The Question of Henry James, pp. 124, 125.

65 Lecture, 'Who Writes Novels?', given in Oxford, May 22 1979.

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This list is not an exhaustive record of works read. It includes works most frequently cited in the thesis and those which, though not cited, have been particularly useful. I have not given details of James's many uncollected reviews, a full list of which is available in A Bibliography of Henry James, ed. Leon Edel and Dan H. Laurence. Nor have I listed all the contemporary periodical articles on fiction which I read, details of some of which appear in the notes.

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