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HENRY JAMES'S "THE ART OF FICTION"

HAFİZE GÜL KOPARANOĞLU

Danışman
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ÖZET

Henry James roman sanatının dünya çapında en önemli ustalarından birisidir. Hem İngiltere hem de Amerika'da roman türünün sanat olarak pek önemsenmediği bir dönemde romanı yüksek sanat dalı olarak görmüştür. O, sadece büyük bir yazar değil, aynı zamanda yetenekli bir eleştirmendir de. İlgilendiği eleştiri dalları ondokuzuncu yüzyıl İngiliz, Fransız ve Rus yazarlarının roman, tiyatro ve şiirlerini kapsamaktadır.

Henry James'in roman alanında en etkili eleştirisel çalışması "Roman Sanatı'dır" (1884). Bu eserinde Henry James romanı "en geniş anlamda yaşamın doğrudan doğruya ve kişisel bir izlenimi" (Edel, 1984: 50) diye tanımlar. James için bir eser gerçekçi ve yaşamın doğrudan sunumu olmalıdır. Ama sadece gerçekçi olması bir romanı başarılı kılmaz. Roman aynı zamanda ilginç de olmalıdır. James'in vurguladığı bir diğer konu romanın kendi hayatı olan yaşayan bir organizma olduğudur. Son olarak James ahlakın da önemini vurgular.

Henry James'in roman hakkındaki bu fikirleri kendi romanı olan Bir Kadının Portresi 'ne uygulandığında da görülebilir. Bu roman, "Roman Sanatı"'ndaki beklentileri gerçekçilik bakımından karşılar. Evrensel insani değerleri ele alan bir klasik olması onun ilginç bir çalışma olduğunun da bir göstergesidir. Romanın organik bütünlüğü birbirini izleyen olayların örülüşünde görülebilir. Henry James'in ahlaki değerleri karakter sunumu ve olay örgüsünde de açıktır.

Sonuç olarak bu açıdan, Henry James'in "Roman Sanatı"nda belirttiği roman yaratımındaki standartları kendi eserinde olan Bir Kadının Portresi'nde en güzel şekilde buluşmuştur.

ABSTRACT

Henry James is one of the most important and widely known masters of fiction. He considered fiction as a higher form of art when fiction was not presumed as an art form either in America or in England. He is not only a great novelist but also a talented critic. His area of critical interests includes fiction, drama, and poetry of major writers of nineteenth century England, France and Russia.

Henry James's most influential critical work on fiction is "The Art of Fiction" (1884). In this work, Henry James states that "a novel in its broadest definition is a personal, direct impression of life" (Edel, 1984: 50). For James, a text must first be realistic, a true representation of life. In other words, the writer should write from experience. Nevertheless, being realistic does not suffice to make a piece of writing successful fiction: it also has to be interesting. Also, James points out that a work of art is an organic unit, a living organism which has a life of its own. Lastly, James emphasizes the importance of morality in fiction.

These ideas that James holds essential to a work of fiction can be seen in application in his novel The Portrait of a Lady. This novel answers the expectations in "The Art of Fiction" from the perspective of verisimilitude or realism. The fact that it is a classic that deals with universal human dilemmas and values testifies to its quality as an interesting piece of work. Next, that the novel is "organic" can be seen in its tightly inter-woven plot line. James's moral concerns may also be observed in his character portrayal and subtle movements of the plot.

In conclusion, James's standards for fictional creation are well met in his own work, The Portrait of a Lady, in this instance.

CONTENTS

HENRY JAMES'S "THE ART OF FICTION"

INTRODUCTION

Henry James has enjoyed a large posthumous success, both among practicing fiction writers and in the academy, and his fiction continues to be published, read, and critically explored. Definitive biographies of him have been written; edited volumes of his literary criticism have been produced; his letters have been picked over and published. Until the publication of Leon Edel's invaluable two-set of James's literary criticism in 1985, James's enormous critical output was scattered among the various volumes produced in his lifetime and the hundreds of reviews he authored in dozens of magazines. However, since the publication of Percy Lubbock's The Craft of Fiction (1921), James's critical writings –particularly the Prefaces to the New York Edition- have been carefully read and analyzed. Early interpretations of James's criticism were written in an attempt to systematize and "clarify" James's frequently complex critical pronouncements. Critics such as Lubbock, R. P. Blackmur, Leon Edel, and James E. Miller catalogued, structured, and codified James's criticism, emphasizing elaborate formalist schemas to evaluate the extending body of work.[1]

Interest in James has never decreased. Every major critical school of the twentieth century has had its opinions declared on Henry James's fiction and criticism; in this sense, his work remains vitally important.[2] But while certain areas of James's works have been carefully examined, there is, simply stated, an absence of scholarly studies devoted exclusively to James's literary criticism.[3] In this study, then, there is an attempt to reconfigure the dominant critical patterns concerning James's development as a critic. But it is also an attempt to fill the gap in the field of James studies.

That Henry James is a critic of large value is less known. Even after he begins to devote himself to creative writing, he steadily produced literary essays and reviews, as well as criticism of poetry, fiction, and drama. These important body of

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[1] For classic examples of formalist interpretations of James, see Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (1921); Blackmur, ed., The Art of the Novel (1934; reprinted 1984); Edel, ed., The House of Fiction (1957); and Miller, ed., Theory of Fiction: Henry James (1972).

[2] Early works in James studies include: Matthiessen, Henry James: the Major Phase (1944); Holland, The Expense of Vision (1964).

[3] Sarah B. Daughtery's The Literary Criticism of Henry James (1981) and Vivien Jones's James the Critic (1985).

critical works unquestionably changed the course of American literature, and continues to practice a serious influence today. Scholars like Armstrong, Matthiessen, and Blackmur agree that James was one of the most important American literary critics of his period. It is well known that his achievements on criticism are vital.

For instance, if "The Art of Fiction" (1884) is taken as a case in point, it can be easily observed that when we have a look at James's whole life, "The Art of Fiction" stands out as the major essay and a turning point for his literary career. Ideas first introduced and articulated in 1884 remained central to James for the rest of his career, and were expanded upon, revised, and complicated in the Prefaces. Beginning with the "The Art of Fiction", his moral attitudes, like his critical perspective in general, became infinitely more complex, refined, and analytical. This absolutely central critical announcement constitutes the true entry into his own criticism. Meanwhile, it also marks a change in the very kind of the critical aspect he was engaged in.

In "The Art of Fiction," James not only defined fiction as a fine art, he also introduced French aesthetics to a hostile Anglo-American audience. After this article, James turned from reviewing to essay writing and, consequently, began to look forward to a new audience and a new relationship between himself and that audience. Now he simply did not want to evaluate and judge individual works of fiction for the consumer. His inspirational "ideal reader" was a reader for fiction, who might be aware of the seriousness of prose fiction as an art form and harmonize the technical strategies of its presentation. He tries to show that the art of the novel is the art of representation. For example, for the setting, James thinks that it is not enough to report what it seems to the author to be in minute detail. The great thing is to get into the novel not only through the setting but somebody's sense of the setting.

Before the appearance of "The Art of Fiction," James wrote approximately two hundred reviews almost entirely on individual works. During the same period he wrote about twenty essays on more expensive topics, literary figures, schools, or movements. After the appearance of "The Art of Fiction", he wrote only six reviews but published almost one hundred critical essays. It was in these essays and

prefaces that James voiced his major aesthetic, critical, and theoretical concerns. I can also propose that, "The Art of Fiction" should also be read as a manifestation of James's early work, as a highest representation of the critical works he had completed between 1865 and 1884. For too many critics, "The Art of Fiction" serves as a point of departure, rather than the very notable mid-point of a much longer journey.[4]

In order to study James's critical works, one needs only read the table of contents of such volumes as Morris Robert's The Art of Fiction and Other Essays (1948) and Leon Edel's The House Of Fiction: Essays on the Novel by Henry James (1957) to see that the most influential editors have typically favored James's middle (1884-98) and late (1899-1916) critical work in their edited selections. On the other hand, the Prefaces are collected in Blackmur's The Art of the Novel (1934) and Lubbock's The Craft of Fiction (1921). One noteworthy exception is James E. Miller's excellent edited volume Theory of Fiction: Henry James (1972) which, if it presents mostly brief excerpts of James's essays arranged in an insistent formalist scheme, nevertheless exemplifies an impressive variety of James's criticism.

This study attempts to cover Henry James's career as a critic, from his earliest reviews to his late essays. It also attempts to identify the concepts, themes, and argumentative strategies that James employed throughout his career by focusing on his famous critical work "The Art of Fiction". Also, another attempt here is to provide examples from James's famous novel The Portrait of a Lady in order to reflect his ideas which are represented in "The Art of Fiction". So in Part One, James's criticisms related to poetry, drama, and most importantly fiction thru analyzing his selected reviews or essays. In Part Two of this study, his famous critical work "The Art of Fiction" will be analyzed by providing examples from his famous novel The Portrait of a Lady

[4] I address this particular topic in much greater detail in Chapter Two of this study.

Part 1

1. VERSATILE CRITIC: HENRY JAMES

1.1. POETIC CRITICISM

James has written on a few poets like Walt Whitman, Baudelaire, and Gautier and while discussing these poets, his poetical predilections, views, and formulations have been in a natural way introduced. It becomes a curious thing to know the poetical ideas and attitudes of a writer who is not himself a poet but a novelist. There are both advantages and disadvantages in this respect. Advantages in the term that a novelist will express his views on poetry in an unburdened fashion; and disadvantages as he is likely to bring to us little as he is apparently unattached to this particular field.

When compared with his critique on novelists and novels, Henry James's criticisms on Poets and Poetry are small in number. But this does not mean that his poetic criticism is poor in quality. There are four pieces of criticism in the form of reviews or essays on some collections of poems or poets. These are 'Alfred De Musset' and 'Theophile Gautier' included in French Poets and Novelists, and two Reviews 'Walt Whitman' and 'Baudelarie' in Selected Literary Criticism edited by Morris Shapira.

If we take James's essay on Walt Whitman as an example, we can say that it is actually a review on Whitman's book, 'Drum Taps' like his essay on Baudelaire is a Review on Baulaire's collection of poems 'Fleurs du Mal'. One of his early case in point concerns the poetry of Walt Whitman. James's only review of Whitman came with the 1865 publication of Drum-Taps. The Whitman review is possibly James's single sharpest dismissal of any writer. "We look in vain," he complains, "for a single idea. We find nothing but flashy imitations of ideas. We find a medley of extravagances and commonplaces. We find art, measure, grace, since sneered at on every page, and nothing positive given us in their

stead." Whitman's "spurious poetry" is not only pretentious, it is "an offense against art" (Edel, 1984; 629-34).[1]

In his review on Drum Taps, James points out his poetic stand. Drum Taps does not seem to James as poetry or good poetry. It is only patriotic war poetry for him. James informs that "Whitman or anybody does not become a poet simply by telling the glories or chivalry of soldiers fighting in the battlefield, or by serving in a hospital himself in war time, or becoming a staunch patriot" (Edel, 1984; 630).

James informs us that Whitman in Drum Taps is not a good poet as Whitman writes in a propagandist and sentimental form. James gives a number of convincing reasons for his negative ideas of Whitman as a poet. He finds the temper of Whitman's mind just the reverse of poetic temper. He says:

> It has been a melancholy task to read this book and it is still more melancholy to write about. ...It exhibits the effort of an essentially prosaic mind to lift itself, by prolonged muscular strain into poetry. Like hundreds of other good patriots Whitman has imagined that a certain amount of violent sympathy with the great deeds and sufferings of our soldiers, and of admiration for our national energy, together with a ready command of picturesque language, are sufficient inspiration for a poet. If this were the case, we had been a nation of poet. ...He only sings them worthily who views them from a height. Every tragic event collects about it a number of persons who delight to dwell upon its superficial points – of minds which are bullied by the accidents of the affair. The temper of such minds seems to us to be the reverse of the poetic temper; for the poet, although he incidentally masters, grasps, and uses the superficial traits of his theme, is really a poet only in so far as he extracts its latent

[1] James would eventually regret his hard dismissal. In a 1903 letter to Manton Marble, he refers to his view of Drum-Taps as "the little atrocity !... perpetrated (on W.Whitman) in the gross impudence of youth" (10 Oct 1903; Selected Letters 348).

> meaning and holds it up to common eyes (Edel; 1984; 629).

James quotes some lines of Whitman's poem 'Shut not Your Eyes' and says that one of the reasons of Whitman's bad verse is because of its not having the qualities of good prose.

> Mr. Whitman's primary purpose is to celebrate the greatness of our armies; his secondary purpose is to celebrate the greatness of the city of New York... The frequent capitals are the only marks of the verse in Mr. Whitman's writing. There is, fortunately, but one attempt at rhyme... As the case stands, each line stands, each line starts off by itself, in resolute independence of its companions, without a visible goal. (Edel, 1984: 631)

James catches a flaw in Whitman's poetry that is very much preoccupied with Whitman's personality whereas it should have strived at impersonality and objectivity. He concludes his criticism on Whitman by stating that writing good poetry amounts to breaking into good expressiveness.

> To sing a right in our battles and our glories it is not enough to have served in a hospital, to be aggressively careless, inelegant and ignorant and to be constantly preoccupied with your self. Your personal qualities – the vigour of your temperament, the tenderness of your temperament, the mainly independence of your nature, the tenderness of your heart - these facts are impertinent. You must be possessed, and you must strive to possess your possession. If in your striving you break into divine eloquence, then you are poet. If the idea which possesses you is the idea of your country's greatness, then you are a national poet; and not otherwise (Edel, 1984: 634).

Theophile Gautier as a poet is another case in point for James. James's criticism on Gautier is an example, in which he states Gautier is a master of style. Gautier's poetry is most perfect or accomplished in its own scale. He says it has

grace, finish and form. James has appreciation for the grace, the finish and the picturesque, descriptive power and frankest portrayal of human body in the poetry of Gautier. James says that Gautier's manner is so light and true, so really creative, his fancy is so alert, his taste is so happy, and his humuor is so genial.

He thinks that Gauiter's best verse is neither sentimental, satirical, narrative nor lyrical. It is generally pictorial and plastic – a matter of images, effects, and colors. Gauiter's passion for nature is important for James and he states that Gautier finds nature supremely entertaining and he always tried to care for nothing but beauty.

> Flesh and blood, noses and bosoms, arms and legs were a delight to him and it was his mission to dialate upon them. We often remain in doubt whether Gauitier is most joyous of painters or the cleverest of poets" (Hanief, 1990: 30).

So, Henry James's ideas on these poets and their poetry, which he criticized though he gave no work of art in poetry, have been clarified

1.2. DRAMATIC CRITICISM

James was interested in drama writing continuously for six years and later, those years gave him power to focus on dramatic criticism. Tony Tanner states that after Henry James lost his parents, he settled in London and this stay in London was to take him through three distinct phases. Having exhausted the international theme, he turned away from his Daisy Millers and Isabel Archers and embarked on what were intended to be serious social novels such as The Bostonians (1886), The Princess Casamassima (1886), and The Tragic Muse (1890). They were considered as failures and James's fame started to decrease. In order to gain his fame, he started to interest in drama writing which was very popular in those years.

This need for being very popular gave him a desire for achieving success as a dramatist which he was not destined to have. Although the dramatization of The American had little success, his second play[1] when staged appeared to be a failure. James once said that he had been sitting there to catch hold of the trail of an idea, of a subject for a tale, or a play. He further reported he was not crushed by the collapse of his hopes of working for the theatre he rather felt a rebirth of new energy. He had improved immensely and was bursting with ides and subjects. An idea murmured in his mind that "produce again; produce better than ever and all will get well" (Mathiessen, 1977: 37). Later James wrote a play named "Summersoft" but the play had not been printed.

Although James did not get the desired success as a dramatist and he had to leave this field, his experiences of writing dramas gave him a power in good stead. It taught him valuable lessons and revealed to him numerous secrets of this art. He himself once said that theatre had given him 'a mastery of

[1] Leon Edel in his Literary Criticism; Essays on Literature, American English Writers, states that James's second play Guy Domville opens January 5 at St. James's Theatre. At play's end James is greeted by a fifteen minute roar of boos, catcalls, and applause. After that James feels he can salvage something useful from playwriting for his fiction. (1424)

fundamental statement,' and his novels were influenced by the lessons he learned in the time of writing for the stage.

In The Notebooks of Henry James, published by Leon Edel, James has written about his passion with drama. And what he has written about is interesting and worth quoting:

> After a long years of waiting, of obstruction, I find myself able to put into execution the most cherished of all my projects – that of beginning to work for the stage. It was one of my earliest – I had it from the first. None has given me brighter hopes – none has given me sweeter emotions. It is strange nevertheless that I should never have done anything – and to a certain extent it is ominous. I wonder at times that the dream should not faded away. It comes back to me now, however, and I ache with longing to settle down at last to a sustained attempt in this direction. I think there is really reason enough for my not having done so before: the little work at any time that I could do, the uninterrupted need of making money on the spot, the inability to do two things at once, the absence of opportunities, of openings. I may add to this the feeling that I could afford to wait, that look at as I look at it, the drama is the ripest of all the arts, the one to which one must bring most of the acquired as well as most of the natural, and that while I was waiting, I was studying the art, and clearing off my field (Mathiessen and Murdock, 1955: 37).

If one of his dramatic criticisms is studied, for example, Shakespeare's The Tempest, it is clear that James points out that this drama is the 'rarest work of art', and is 'masterly' from various points of view. James finds in this work, 'the divine creative flame' of Shakespeare very much burning. And the style in The Tempest, according to James is an active force in the sense that it is enforced by the content. James says that in The Tempest and other plays Shakespeare, the man is locked in the artist, and assumes varying masks, and gets expressed

through varied characters. This being a positive point is the proof of objectivity very much needed in a drama.

James dwells upon the particular and general qualities of the play.

> There may be other things as exquisite, other exhalations of beauty reaching as high a mark and sustained there for a moment... but nothing surely, of equal length and variety lives so happily and radiantly as a whole: no poetic birth ever took place under a star appointed to blaze upon it so steadily. The man himself, in the plays... positively nowhere: we are dealing too perpetually with the artist, the monster and magician of a thousand masks. The man everywhere , in Shakespeare's work is so effectually locked up and imprisoned in the artist (Edel, 1984:1205).

James put emphasis on the fact that The Tempest is not only 'one of his supreme works of all literature', but also the finest flower of Shakespeare's experience.

> It has that rare value of the richly mature note of a genius. It has plenitude and the majesty. Nothing so enlarges the wonder of the whole time question in Shakespeare's career as the fact of this date, in easy middle life, of his time climax (Edel, 1984: 1208).

The Tempest has, according to James, the first and rarest of Shakespeare's gifts. James puts emphasis on the particular and general qualities of the play:

> The Tempest affects us taking its complexity and its perfection together as the rarest of all examples of literary art. The man everywhere, in Shakespere's work is so effectually locked up and imprisoned in the artist (Edel, 1984: 1208).

James also writes that a work of art cannot be generally analyzed without reference to the author.

> The genius is a part of mind, and the mind a part of behaviour; so that, for the attitude of inquiry, without which appreciation means nothing, where does one of these provinces and the other begin? We may take the genius first or the behaviour first, but we inevitably proceed from the one to the other (Edel, 1984: 1209).

As having produced critical essays on various literary types and works, Henry James also dealt with drama. In spite of the fact that he criticized the plays of such dramatists as Alfred de Musset, Gabrielle D'annunzio, Henrik Ibsen, these names are pronounced only to point out James's view on drama and dramatist in general. Yet, Shakespeare has been mentioned in this study particularly so that James's criticism on drama could be emphasized.

1.3. FICTIONAL CRITICISM

Henry James's body of Fictional Criticism is larger than his criticism of other forms of art. His third, fourth, and fifth published book reviews appeared in January 1865, in the North American Review. In one, James criticizes Harriet Elizabeth Prescott Spofford's novel Azarian for its "incoherent and meaningless" verbal pictures. "Words" James declares, "possess a certain inherent dignity, value, and independence, language being rather the stamped and authorized coigne which expresses the value of thought" (Edel, 1984; 604). He goes on to ridicule Spofford's thin characters, which are "more than an offence against art. Nature herself resents it." (Edel, 1984; 606). He says an exact representation of a character's "humanity," as opposed to her physical characteristics, ought to be the writers aim. The novel's "foremost claim to merit, and indeed a measure of its merit, is its truth."

James distinguishes Spofford's "descriptive manner" and "the famous realistic system" currently coming into vogue, in which to be "real" is not merely to "describe" but to "express" or "convey" (Edel, 1984: 607). James claims emotive, real people as characters, not flat caricatures. A few pages later in that same January issue, James addresses the charge of immorality in Anne Moncure Crane Seemüller's novel Emily Chester. James argues Seemüller's novel is immoral not because it depicts a young wife tempted by adultery, but because the novel itself is guilty of a "false representation" of human nature (Edel, 1984: 592).

James's early reviews are expected as the reflection of his youth, self confidence, and witty prose writing. The most outstanding aspect of his literary skill is his rhetoric. His reviews on Spoofed and See Muller, for instance, reflect James's literary misery and apprenticeship whereas the same works reveal his highly significant moral terms. What comes to the readers' mind is Henry James's understanding of morality. Usually this question is related to form and content of his art. Since the beginning of his literary career, James believed that "writing" meant a moral practice. So, his writing depicted morality not as the work of art itself. Instead, the language that he employed in his writing, the

perfectness of the portraits of his characters, and the objective of the portrayal became his major moral apparatuses.

In the Spofford review, James turns to Balzac for a counter-example. In contrast to Spofford's flat characterization, loose form, and description for its own sake, Balzac's work "was clearly done because it was scientifically done. " Balzac rendered things "as they stood. He aimed at local color; that is, at giving the facts of things" (Edel, 1984: 609). In this passage, it is seen that first mention of topics fundamental to James's literary aesthetic, which would always serve as the basis for his critical judgments. Descriptions of things are maintained "only in so far as they bear upon the action"; "the soul of a novel is its action"; and the principle that a novelist should "only describe those things which are accessory to the action" (Edel, 1984: 608). Selection is the principle at the heart of this aside on Balzac, and selection is really at the heart of his critique of Spofford. Henry James preaches the virtues of careful revision and selection, and warns against sloppy, loose writing in the conclusion part (Edel, 1984: 611-13).

His one the first significant effort came in July 1865, again in the North American Review, with a review of Matthew Arnold's Essays in Criticism. Young Henry James tries to explain what Arnold means by criticism. Dietmar Schloss in his book Culture and Criticism in Henry James states "James clearly perceives that Arnold's primary concern is not the interpretation of literature and art but the interpretation of the world" (Schloss, 1992: 37) .

In Arnold, James discovered a model that would fundamentally shape his sense of the critic's role. James finds Arnold "sensitive and generous" as a critic, and, most importantly, "sympathetic" (Edel, 1984: 712). James confesses to having a "keen relish" for "the science and the logic" of Arnold's method, and wonders the critic's proper role: "It is hard to say whether the literary critic is more called upon to understand or to feel. It is certain that he will accomplish little unless he can feel acutely..." Yet James remains unsure; unwilling, perhaps, to let go of his traditional sense of the critic: "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." James notes that some of the critics, who make comments on Arnold, find his work too sentimental. This is different for James, Arnold's sentimental sound provides "his greatest charm and his greatest worth" (Edel, 1984: 713). Clearly, James is wrestling with this new sense of what roles a critic can and should perform.

James was deeply impressed by Arnold's didactic aims as a critic. In his review, James cites a lengthy passage from Arnold's, in which the English critic argues that the business of criticism is "simply to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and, by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas" (Edel, 1984: 715). Sarah B. Daughery has observed that James learned from Arnold to be not a "narrow formalist" but a "cultural, social, and moral critic," and to consider an author's purpose when criticizing her/her work. In Matthew Arnold, James found an English critic worthy of emulation; but James was also an observant student of French literature and criticism, and two French critics in particular: Edmond Schérer and Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve played crucial roles in helping James to develop his sense of moral criticism.

In October 1865, James published a review of Edmond Schérer's recently published Nouvelles Etudes sur la Littérature Contemporaine. Here, James develops his Arnoldian principles. James notes, Schérer has "no doctrines, and that in default of these he is prompted by as excellent a feeling as the love of liberty". The Frenchman has "plenty of theories, but no theory.– 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 liberal." James goes on to praise the "intellectual eclecticism" of Schérer's work:

> The age surely presents no finer spectacle than that of a mind liberal after this fashion; not from a brutal impatience of order, but from experience, from reflection, seriously, intelligently, having known, relished, and appropriated the many virtues of conservatism; a mind inquisitive of truth and knowledge, accessible on all sides, unprejudiced, desirous above all things to examine directly, fearless of reputed errors,

> but merciless to error when proved, tolerant of dissent, respectful of sincerity, content neither to reason on matters of feeling nor to sentimentalize on matters of reason, equitable, dispassionate, sympathetic. M. Schérer is a solid embodiment of Mr. Matthew Arnold's ideal critic (Edel2, 1984: 803).

According to James, Schérer stands as a sample of a critic with the quality of intellectual integrity. Furthermore, James asserts that Schérer's integrity is achieved and developed through his independence of mind. The reason why James insistently describes and re-describes Schérer's virtues is that he makes Schérer an ideal model of critic that James himself wants to become.

For James, Schérer is the embodiment of the moral practices that are required for criticism. By saying that "His subject and his stand-point are limited beforehand" he gives the idea that the critic is controlled by the text presented by the primary author. The creative act of criticism thus becomes the effort to assert one's independence from this paradigm by resisting both author and pre thought critical principles. The critic must necessarily rely on an inspiration mediated by one's conscience and moral sense. James claims the critic's intellectual freedom. He would always resist the idea that a critic was completely subservient to an author, text, or critical principle; the virtue of criticism, for James, was in the resistance to that kind of thinking. Vivien Jones says that Henry James's practice of criticism was therefore a kind of artistic act: a creative, open-ended form that ultimately afforded the critic to articulate his own personal viewpoint. What kept a critic from treating an author unfairly was the critic's conscience and moral sense (Jones, 1985: 88) .

James felt that what held true for the creative artist also held true for the critic. In other words, a critic's morality must never be explicitly or dogmatically asserted. James admires Schérer:

> 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 (Edel, 1984: 806).

James is only too happy to note that while Schérer has liberally looked into every topic, his own moral understanding remains true. James's thoughts on Schérer point to the development of one of James's important critical criteria. Schérer influenced James on the points that one's critical axioms are irrefutably linked to one's moral sensibilities; and that a critic must trust and develop his moral sensibilities, rather than rely on pre made critical standards. In other words, one's moral sensitivities create one's critical standards. And, of course, James would always argue a critic should read deeply and with "perception at the pitch of passion" (Saphira, 1981: 811, 98). Early in his critical career, he insisted morality which is in the form of a generous, sympathetic attempt to understand a writer on his/her own terms, would be the source of any critical endeavor.

The influence of James's developing critical aesthetic is further demonstrated in his 1868 review of Rebecca Harding David's Dallas Galbraith:

> The day of dogmatic criticism is over, and with it the ancient infallibility and tyranny of the critic. No critic lays down the law, because no reader receives the law ready made. The critic is simply a reader like all the others – a reader who prints his impressions. All he claims is that they are honest... Public opinion and public taste are silently distilled from a thousand private affirmations and convictions. 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 (Edel, 1984: 223).

In this passage, James clearly lays out his developing sense of criticism and its relationship to morality. First, he says that the critic is unique, a free man who is independent of pre existing critical theories. Second, he mentions that if

true criticism is inherently subjective or personal, it is nevertheless morally rigorous. The critic's practice variously described as "honest", "pure and incontrovertible", and "thoroughly firm and uncompromising." These thoughts illustrate James's developing sense of criticism which James promoted throughout his career. James would always define criticism, like art, as a personal attempt, and he would always value the individual's subjective contribution to the larger practice. Also, James would always labor to remove all forces on critics, explaining, independence and freedom of the critic.

Although Schérer influenced James greatly, he had another example as his ideal critic. This was Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve who had, James considered, the most fully-developed sense of the ideal critic. Sainte-Beuve's most important contribution to James's idea of criticism was that truth is always relative. How Henry James was influenced from Sainte-Beuve is stated in Vivien Jones as: "It was the Sainte-Beuve model which initially helped James to escape the narrowing effects of prescription, and self-interest, and the generous urbanity of tone in his later criticism" (Jones, 1985: 1).

James's early criticism demonstrates a gradual movement from sarcasm, arrogance, towards a more sympathetic and flexible critical practice. His reading of Arnold, Schérer, and Sainte-Beuve persuaded him to rethink and reshape his critical method, and his notions of the critic's role. And, as his critical faculties deepened and matured, his understanding of the morality in art and criticism matured too. Morality was always at the heart of James's critical endeavors, though its terms and the implications of his arguments became increasingly subtle and subjective.[2]

[2] For more on the topic, as well as James's debt to Saint-Beuve, see Vivien Jones's work in James the Critic (1985). For more discussions of James's critical foundations, see Van Wyck Brooks, "Henry James as a Reviwer," in Sketches in Criticism (1932); Sarah B. Dougherty, The Literary Criticism of Henry James (1981); Cornelia Pulsifer Kelley, The Early Development of Henry James (1930; rev. ed. 1965); and Morris Roberts, Henry James's Criticism (1929).

Yet, there were always limits to James's sympathies, limits as to how open he could be. Invariably, it was in his study of French literature that he most frequently explained his critical and aesthetic boundaries. His reviews of Théophile Gautier present a striking case in point. James saw in Gautier's criticism much to be admired. In 1873, James wrote of Gautier:

> Rigid critic he was none; it was not in his nature to bring himself to fix a standard. The things he liked to speak 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 – phrasable, as we may say – often led him to fancy merit where it was not, but more often, probably, to detect it where it lurked. He was constructive commentator; and if the work taken as his text is often below his praise, the latter, with its magical grasp of the idea, may serve as a sort of a generous lesson (Edel, 1984: 371).

A year earlier, in a review of Théatre de Théophile Gautier, James had noted that "a man's supreme use in the world is to master his intellectual instrument and play it in perfection. Gautier is therefore to be praised for what he accomplished." James echoes this notion in an 1874 review: "In his own way, Gautier was simply perfect" (Edel, 1984: 376).

However, James's appreciation for Gautier as the fiction writer, as opposed to the critic, had some limits. James accuses a "grossly unilluminated" Gautier of "moral aridity" and "a moral levity as transcendent and immeasurable as to amount to a psychological curiosity" (Edel, 1984: 355). He finds "the human interest in [Gautier's] tales inferior to the picturesque. Gautier's figures are altogether pictorial; he cared nothing and knew nothing in men and women but the epidermis." In fact, James frankly notes, "Nothing classifies Gautier better than the perfect frankness of his treatment of the human body. We of English

speech pass (with the French) for prudish on this point." Gautier's "unshrinking contemplation of our physical surfaces" obviously presents a challenge to James's critical openness (Edel, 1984: 366-67).

The reviews of Gautier both mark a new phase for James as a critic, and effectively serve as a kind of transition between his earlier, harsher criticism and the more sympathetic, mature criticism that followed. On the one hand, Gautier's frank, objective depictions of whores and starving dogs in Paris represent fictional material that James simply cannot embrace, and his praise for Gautier's work as both critic and artist is always tempered with reservation. On the other hand, James finds a kind of integrity in Gautier's example as both critic and writer; he values the geniality and eclecticism in Gautier's criticism, and he admires the artist who, in James's opinion, never tried to do more than his faint intellect and modest talents allowed. In short, it is in the Gautier reviews that James first goes toward the principle that a critic must grant writer his donnée which is one of several ideas he would develop in greater detail in "The Art of Fiction."

Henry James's sharp tone shows itself in Dickens. Henry James begins his 1865 review of Our Mutual Friend by pointing out that Our Mutual Friend is, to our perception, the poorest of Mr. Dickens's works. And it is poor with the poverty not of momentary embarrassment, but of permanent exhaustion. It is wanting in inspiration. " If the novel is "so intensely written," it is also "so little seen, known, or felt." At the heart of James's strong dislike is Dickens's characterization: "every character here put before us is a mere bundle of eccentricities, animated by no principle of nature whatever." And while James recognizes that Dickens's characters are grotesques, or types, he refuses to grant them any reliance.

Dickens's world in Our Mutual Friend is simply unbelievable because it is so shallow; ultimately, Dickens is "the greatest of superficial novelists" because "one of the chief conditions of his genius [is] not to see beneath the surface of things" (Edel, 1984; 853-56).

James's reviews were frequently sharp-edged, overly judgmental, dismissals of writers he found inferior, as in Gautier, or with whom he disagreed regarding methods of characterization, as with Dickens.[3] After several years James's tone grew up and he adopted a more generous critical practice, which he learned from his European mentors, and the author himself/herself became his central donnée.

In the early years of criticism James emphasized that criticism had to have a moral quality. However he did not assert that it was educative or didactic. He also pointed out that a moral critic had a personal and heavy duty since he was supposed to read Arnold, Schérer, and Sainte-Beuve closely and well. By acquiring an artistic form moral criticism appeared to be a matter of aesthetic appreciation. In this way, the writer's own moral critical approach became his donnée of reading and feeling deeply. Criticism, in this sense, was to have an active role in the difficult and personal process of artistic creation. James's practicing this artistic process was remarkably reflective, reasoning, elective, and deep. In general terms, James's aesthetic criticism is directed inwardly: James criticism in other words, was a self-critique to create and sustain an audience for his own art work.

Henry James has a deep interest in European writers so, the large number of James's literary criticism exists in the form of critical reviews and career-spanning assessments of European writers, most notably the French. His first major volume of criticism was French Poets and Novelists (1878). A careful examination of James's work on selected French authors between 1865-83 demonstrates James's developing sense of moral criticism and morality in art.

[3] James's response to Dickens is a more complex example; James seems to have had a certain reverence for Dickens, and the apparently second-rate nature of Our Mutual Friend seems, in part, to have disappointed him. Also, one senses the anxiety of influence: a young author eager to "kill off" the most esteemed novelist of the preceding generation.

In his 1876 essay on Charles de Bernard and Gustave Flaubert (entitled "The Minor French Novelists"); James declares that de Bernard "had no morality. ...I mean that he had no moral emotion, no preference, no instincts – no moral imagination, in a word. ...He doesn't care, he doesn't feel, and his indifference is not philosophic" (Edel2 1984: 166). In contrast, James found Flaubert a "potential moralist," and went on to explain that "Every out-and-out realist who provokes curious meditation may claim that he is a moralist, for that, after all, is the most that the moralists can do for us" (Edel2, 1984: 169). In essence, it is a question of form. In moral fiction, James argues, "that tale and the moral" must hang well together. This requires "a definite intention" on the part of the author, "those intentions of which artists who cultivate "art for art" are usually so extremely mistrustful" (Edel2, 1984: 170). According to these criteria, James declares that "Realism seems to me with 'Madame Bovary' to have said its last word" (Edel2, 1984: 171).

James greatly exaggerated the end of Realism in his review. Yet his view of constituting moral fiction is worth noting. If moral fiction, James states, is supposed to promote "curious meditation" it becomes the reader's responsibility to determine the meaning of what she reads. This require the reader to participate in the work and to be involved in the process of reading totally. This is where James's creative aesthetic becomes apparent, which is considered an open-ended and indeterminate story structures as in The Portrait of a Lady, The Turn of The Screw, and The Wings of Dove. His novels and his stories as well, deal more with questions, not answers.

It is in his early critical work on French realists and naturalists that one finds James first thinking through these aesthetic questions in their various dimensions. James did have strong opinions on Flaubert's depiction of an adulterous French woman drawing in romantic illusions and its moral implications. In his earlier 1874 essay on Flaubert, James bluntly states

> "Madame Bovary," we confess, has always seemed to us a great work, and capable really of being applied to educational purposes. It is an elaborate picture of vice, but it represents it as so indefeasibly commingled with misery that in a really enlightened system of education it would form exactly the volume to put into the hands of young persons in whom vicious tendencies had been distinctly perceived, and who were wavering as to which way they should let the balance fall (Edel2, 1984: 290).

Clearly, James saw the didactic possibilities of realist fiction, even if, with the passing years, he infrequently nodded in this direction. The comment, in fact, points to a powerful tension running through all of James's French criticism. On the one hand, James sought to ally himself; theoretically, with the freedom and frankness of the French authors he read and criticized. On the other hand, he could never completely let go of his Anglo-American sense of morality and decency.

At his most liberal, however, James repeatedly stressed that morality in fiction was essentially a question of aesthetics and execution that "intelligent realism, in art, is sure to carry with its own morality" (Edel2, 1984; 271). James saw morality in art chiefly as questions of execution and of form. The artist's goal was twofold; first, a scene must be established. "The new fashion of realism has indeed taught us all that in any description of life, the description of places and things is half the battle," he wrote in 1882. The artist must demonstrate both "the faculty of feeling as well as seeing" (Edel2, 1984: 217). Second, the scene must be peopled with accurately-drawn characters. In an 1868 review, James criticizes Octave Feuillet's "decidedly thin and superficial" characters and states that "Men and women, in our conception, are deeper, more substantial, more self-directing; they have, if not more virtue, at least more conscience; and when conscience comes into the game, human history ceases to be a perfectly simple tale" (Edel2, 1984: 285). Feillet's book fails – James is reviewing a translation of Camors – because its author does not possess the "freedom and generosity of mind"

required "to write with truth and eloquence the moral history of superior men and women" (Edel2, 1984: 285).

This combination of accurately depicted places, and vivid and complex characters, must then be joined with a fully blooming aesthetic form in which the reader sense the author's depth of feeling. Again, the moral and the tale must hang together and create "curious meditation." And while the author should not necessarily judge overtly in her work – Flaubert's objective portrayal in Madame Bovary would always remain a high point of realism for James - James nevertheless felt an author should have subjective moral opinions on the subjects she treats, and that those opinions will inform a work and be "felt" by the attentive reader. It is on the basis of such subjective and imprecise criteria that James suggests Madame Bovary is rich in didactic possibilities.

James's work on George Sand offers a case study of how he employed these critical criteria. James takes issue first with the depiction of character. Sand's novels, James states, "contain no living figures, no people who stand on their feet" (Edel2, 1984: 713). Her novels "are neither exact nor probable; they contain few living figures; they produce a limited amount of illusion. ... [Sand's] people are usually only very picturesque, very voluble, and very 'high toned' shadows (Edel, 1984: 707). Thin characterization points to a larger problem, in James's opinion. Sand "lacks exactitude, lacks the method of truth. ...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" (Edel, 1984: 733).

One notes the distinction James employs between the sentimental writer and the moral writer, he continues, noting that Sand was, in his opinion, a mix of optimist and romancer, a mix that is "not the making of a moralist." Her writing was beautiful for many reasons, but ultimately lacked "that tender appreciation of actuality which makes even the application of a single coat of rose-colour seems an act of violence" (Edel2, 1984: 734). Sentimental optimism, an impediment to realist fiction, is a fault ultimately manifested in aesthetics: "It has been said that what makes a book a classic is its style. We should modify this, and instead of

style say form" (Edel, 1984: 730). James finally resents Sand's optimistic didacticism, arguing that wrong characterization weakens the total effect of her work and prevents it from being moral in the truest sense. James could neither recognize nor grant her moral agency when her novels were, in his opinion, all style and no form. For if a novel lacks proper form, in James's view, it cannot be moral.

In Turgenev, it seems, James found the perfect counterpoint. Turgenev's fiction "takes its starting point in character" (Edel2, 1984: 977); Turgenev "feels the Russian character intensely" (Edel2, 1984: 975). The emotional tone of Turgenev's fictional vision is anything but sentimental: "his temper is that of a devoutly attentive observer, and the result of this temper is to make him take a view of the great spectacle of human life more general, more impartial, more unreservedly intelligent, than that of any novelist we know" (Edel, 1984: 972). But such a tone does not prevent emotional investment in the work:

> He has an eye for all passions, and a deeply sympathetic sense of the wonderful complexity of our souls. ...He has a passion for shifting his point of view, but 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. ...In a word, he is universally sensitive (Edel2, 1984: 973-74).

James continues to discuss the Russian author; Turgenev "almost invariably appeals at the outset [of a story] to our distinctively moral curiosity, our sympathy with character" (Edel2, 1984: 988). In a mature artist, James notes, one looks for "some expressions of a total view of the world they have been so actively observing. This is the most interesting thing the work offers us" (Edel2, 1984: 992).

Turgenev offers a decisive and vivid vision of the world, something unique – something, as James would phrase it famously a few years later, direct and personal. And this vision convinces James for two principle reasons. First, Turgenev's focus is on vivid and believable characters, the rendering of which constitutes the dramatic center of his fiction. Second, James values the skill with which Turgenev conjoins form and moral meaning. For example, James praises the inconclusive, oblique ending of A Nest of Noblemen (alternately titled Liza): "The moral of his tale... is that there is no effective plotting for happiness, that we must take what we can get, that adversity is a capable mill-stream, and that our ingenuity must go toward making it grind our corn." This picture of the lovers "accepting adversity" demonstrates how the story's "moral interest" outweighs whatever sentimental potential the scene has (Edel2, 1984: 981-82). In James's opinion, the open-endedness of the work's form reinforces the work's moral meaning. And again, it is a lesson James took deeply to heart.

James, however, is ultimately uncomfortable with what he sees in Turgenev's style. "His sadness has its element of error," James declares, though "it has also its larger element of wisdom" (Edel2, 1984: 998). In the final instance,

> 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. ...We value most the "realists" who have an ideal of delicacy and the elegists who have an ideal of joy (Edel2, 1984: 997).

James, of course, frequently strode a "middle course" when assessing an author and the line of tension really typifies the whole of his work on French authors. James always finds himself torn between, on one hand, wanting to grant the European writers their theoretical and artistic freedom, and, on the other hand, defending his Anglo-American sense of taste and decorum. Nowhere is this tension more observable, than in his 1880 review of Zola's Nana.

James begins his review by noting that the French naturalist novel does not bother with distinctions between "Decency and indecency, morality and immorality, beauty and ugliness." (Edel, 1984: 866). But if Zola believes he is offering a truthful depiction of "nature," James begs to differ:

> On what authority does M. Zola represent nature to us as a combination of the cesspool and the house of prostitution? On what authority does he represent foulness rather than fairness as the sign that we are to know her by? On the authority of his predilections alone.... Never surely was any other artist as dirty as M. Zola! (Edel2, 1984: 866-67)

Despite these feelings, James thinks that "Zola's attempt is an extremely fine one; it deserves a great deal of respect and deference."(Edel2, 1984: 867) James quarrels not with Zola's naturalist theory, but with his "application" of it. Nevertheless, James frames his critique of Zola in terms of realism's moral credibility:

> Reality is the object of M. Zola's efforts, and it is because we agree with him in appreciating it highly that we protest against its being discredited. In a time when literary taste has turned, to a regrettable degree, to the vulgar and the insipid, it is of high importance that realism should not be compromised. Nothing tends more to compromise it than to represent it as necessarily allied to the impure (Edel 2, 1984: 867).

James is, in this part of the essay, principally addressing questions of taste. The sense of his critique is that Zola has done as a novelist what James had warned critics not to do is to import a pre-figured theory and to insist upon it, rather than remaining open to the material. Vivien Jones implies that James, as critic, and novelist, is an anti-totalist, always preferring multiplicity and endless possibility. The idea of a novel being written according to a formula and Zola believed his work was "scientific" in its observation of human nature. And this was an anathema to James (Jones, 1985: 45).

In a clear conclusion, James directly addresses the particular concerns of the Anglo-American author: the writing of English fiction "is mainly in the hands of timid women" and the English novel "is almost always addressed to young unmarried ladies. ...It may be said that our English system is a good thing for virgins and boys, and a bad thing for the novel itself.... But under these unnatural conditions and insufferable restrictions a variety of admirable works have been produced" (Edel, 1984: 868). Another point is that if the French accuse the English novel for not being "serious", James responds, "There are many different ways of being serious" (Edel 2, 1984: 868-69).

Despite the paradoxical conclusions to his essays on Turgenev and Zola, it remains clear that James valued several things about each author. And at the heart of each critique is James's important sense of the moral quality of the work. In both instances, James is willing to set aside certain hesitations on his own part: for Turgeniev, it is the problem of excessive melancholy; for Zola, a question of poor taste in subject matter. James seeks to extract and to articulate some clean, hard, indissoluble essence; in each case, the search leads him to an appreciation of the overwhelming force and power of each author's vision of the world.

Another French example is Balzac an author to whom James would often turn at important moments in his career. In his 1875 overview of Balzac, James characteristically mixes praise with blame. He finds Balzac "morally and intellectually superficial. The moral, the intellectual atmosphere of his genius is extraordinarily gross and turbid; it is no wonder that the flower of truth does not bloom in it." Balzac wrote not with a great conscience but a "great temperament – a prodigious nature." He "had no natural sense of morality and this we cannot help thinking a serious fault in a novelist" (Edel 2, 1984: 47). Yet this weakness is also the source of Balzac's "magnificent" portrayals which are powerfully rendered. And, in keeping with James's earliest conceptions of realist fiction, both place and character are the essential areas of focus. As regards place, "The place in which an event occurred was in his view of equal moment with the event itself; it was a part of the action; it was not a thing to take or to leave, or to be vaguely and gracefully indicated; it imposed itself; it had a part to play; it needed

to be made as definite as anything else" (Edel2, 1984: 49-50). As for characters, Balzac's are supreme:

> Behind Balzac's figures we feel a certain heroic pressure that drives them home to credence – a contagious illusion on the author's own part. ...They seem to proceed from a sort of creative infinite and they help each other to be believed in ... This is altogether the most valuable element in Balzac's novels; it is hard to see how the power of physical evocation can go farther. (Edel2, 1984: 53)

Clearly, what James loves about Balzac is the weight and density of the illusion, the "irresistible force" of the prose (Edel 2, 1984: 53). For James, this irresistible force is in and of itself a moral quality: a measurement of the total effect of the art. In Gautier, in Zola, and again in Balzac, James notes but ultimately looks beyond the graphic depiction of argumentative subject matter to articulate his sense of the aesthetic moral value of the work. James promotes such readerly openness, such a willingness to immerse one's self in the world of a writer regardless of "distasteful" subject matter for one simple reason: he desires the same from the readers of his own fiction.

So, Henry James's works of criticism are numerous. The area of his criticism cannot be limited as he has written on a number of nineteenth century English, French and Russian novelists and novels, as well as drama and dramatists, poets and collections of poems. And having influenced by the important names stated above, his thoughts are developed. His most important essay in this respect is "The Art of Fiction" which will be analyzed in the next chapter.

Part 2.

2.1. HENRY JAMES'S "The ART of FICTION" IN a CRITICAL CONTEXT

On 25/4/1884 Royal Institution in London gathered to hear the noted English novelist Walter Besant's[1] discourse on The Art of Fiction. Besant's essay, subsequently published in pamphlet form, was briefly reviewed by *Pall Mall Gazette* and *The Spectator* in London, while in the United States, *The Nation, The New York Times*, and *The New York Tribune* fleetingly noted Besant's ideas (Spilka 101). Besant's lecture provoked ripples more than waves, but James saw an opportunity; his own "Art of Fiction" appeared in *Longman's Magazine* in September 1884.[2]

Henry James develops and introduces some important ideas on the nature of the novel in his essay entitled "The Art of Fiction" which is a good material of how not only America's but also England's most creative writer feels about fiction. This essay is said to be a model for James's entire critical attempt. As Vivien Jones states "The Art of Fiction" should also be read as a manifestation and a culmination of the critical works he had completed between 1865 and 1884. "The Art of Fiction" has served as a point of departure, rather than the very notable mid-point of a much longer journey. "The Art of Fiction", which was written as a response to Walter Besant's lecture having the same title, transformed into a literary theory upon which the novel was grounded.

In the essay, James carefully categorized and summarized Besant's arguments. This allowed the reader to follow his own argument. James is careful to affect modesty from the first sentence while using Besant as a starter of the argument.

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[1] Walter Besant (1836-1901), English novelist and historian, delivered the lecture at the Royal Institution April 25, 1884.

[2] Mark Spilka notes Besant's and James's essays were eventually published side-by-side in both England and the United States

> I should not have affixed so comprehensive a title to these few remarks necessarily wanting in any completeness upon a subject the full consideration of which would carry us far, did I not seem to discover a pretext for my temerity in the interesting pamphlet lately published under this name by Mr. Besant's lecture at the Royal Institution –the original form of his pamphlet- appears to indicate that many persons are interested in the art of fiction, and are not indifferent to such remarks, as those who practice it may attempt to make about it. I am therefore anxious not to lose the benefit of this favorable association, and to edge in a few words under cover of the attention which Mr. Besant is sure to have excited (Edel, 1984: 44).

What he wants to emphasize in the second paragraph is that in a country, which owns great novelists as Dickens, and Thackeray, novel writing is not counted as a respected art form. He also assumes that the topic of the English novel is of interest to the public at large.

> Only a short time ago it might have been supposed that the English novel was not what French called discutable. It had no air of having a theory, a conviction, a consciousness of itself behind it –of being the expression of an artistic faith, the result of choice and comparison. 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 completeness (Edel, 1984: 44).

In "The Art of Fiction" James uses a brilliant rhetorical strategy that allows him to follow up on Besant even while introducing his own aesthetic counter-arguments. James continues, noting that the English novel "was, however, *naif* (if I may help myself out with another French word); and evidently if it be destined to suffer in any way for having lost its naiveté it has now an idea of making sure of the corresponding advantages" (Edel, 1984: 44). By subtly introducing French rhetoric, notes Mark Spilka, "James was helping himself out with more than

French words. He was quietly invoking a novel more discussible than the English, a theory more sophisticated" than Besant's (Spilka, 194). Yet James is careful not to ridicule or denigrate Besant in any way. James understood Besant's displayed position as "a register for the national mind" (Spilka, 1977: 193).

Also, Besant had indeed done every literary novelist a favor when he called for England "to consider Fiction as one of the Fine Arts" (Spilka, 1977: 193) an idea which carried immense cultural weight. James continues his argument: "Art lives upon discussion, upon experiment, upon variety of attempt, upon the exchange of views and comparisons of standpoints," and while "The successful application of any art is a delightful spectacle, ...the theory too is interesting. ...Discussion, suggestion, formulation, these things are fertilizing when they are frank and sincere. Mr. Besant has set an excellent example in saying what he thinks for his part" (Edel, 1984: 45). In other words, James states that in the old days, the novel was not a concept to be easily discussed but later James adds that "The era of discussion[3] would appear to have been to a certain extent opened" (Edel, 1984: 44).

James seeks to promote "a serious, active, inquiring interest, under protection of which this delightful study may, in moments of confidence, venture to say a little more what it thinks of itself. It must take itself seriously for the public to take it so" (Edel, 1984: 45). Here, James wants others as serious as himself to take up the argument. Both Besant and James think that the public should take fiction seriously as an art; putting it in the same line with "painting, sculpture, music". For example to one friend who wrote him in appreciation of the essay, he replied that it had "not attracted the smallest attention here, there is almost no care for literary discussion here – question of form, of principle, the 'serious' idea of the novel appeals apparently to no one and they don't understand you when you speak to them" (Gard, 1968: 119). But later, Stevenson's reply heartened

[3] For more information about "the era of discussion" refer to the Mark Spilka's essay entitled "Henry James and Walter Besant in which Spilka states "the era of discussion" had begun in 1882 with William Dean Howells' contreversial essay 'Henry James, Jr.', in Century Magazine and Stevenson's 'A Gossip on Romance' in Longmans."

him so much that he wrote a warm letter of thanks, from which began the kind of literary friendship he wanted.

James depicts the complexity of life without spoiling its reality. He believes that this can only be achieved by solving the technical problems. As he informs us in this essay that the form to represent reality is in the second place, since the most important thing is to represent life. Ünal Aytür in Henry James and Roman Sanatı states that:

> Novel is more than life, because life in novels comes out after being purified from the excessive details result in loss of meaning. If art provides such purification the importance of the form and the method that James presents in his novels are not an escape on the contrary they aim at representing life in the most meaningful way" (Aytür, 1977: 15-16).

James's first topic is relatively kind; a quick dismissal of the traditional apologia for the novel, a practice which "is still expected, though people are ashamed to say it." James's argument is simple: rather than "renounce the pretension of attempting really to represent life," he demands the opposite: "The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life" (Edel, 1984: 46).

James introduces an analogy to secure his point, that of the "art of the painter and the art of the novelist," which James stresses is "complete. ...As the picture is reality, so the novel is history." James finds his "artistic faith," leading him to make his famous analogy between the art of the painter and the art of the novelist: "Their inspiration is the same, their success is the same. They may learn from each other, they may explain and sustain each other. Their cause is the same..." (Edel, 1984: 46). For a novel, like a painting, James declares, "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" (Edel, 1984: 50).

While critics have quoted this statement countless times, what is often overlooked is that James goes on to qualify his assertion: Not only must a novel present "a personal direct impression of life", most importantly the novelist must also "trace the implication of things" (Edel, 1984: 53) – the meaning hidden below the surface impression – and fully explore the effects the impression produces on the consciousness of his of her protagonist. They are the effects which in James's fiction usually lead to a more profound grasp of reality. Significantly, the value of the impression is not limited to the intensity of the passing moment; rather the value of the impression depends on its ability to alter the consciousness of the protagonist and thus generate a lasting effect.

The reader, moreover, is granted a privileged position from which to observe this process and is thereby invited to vicariously participate in the figuring out of the received impression – "to guess the unseen from the seen" – an interpretive act that creates the uncanny effect of experience consciously felt, what James aptly calls "the illusion of life" (Edel, 1984: 53). Also, with the introduction of the discipline of history, James actually positions the writing of fiction in a double analogy, which he quickly follows. He states that a novel ought to "speak with assurance, with the tone of the historian" (Edel, 1984: 46).

At this point, James has introduced two crucial ideas in "The Art of Fiction." First, he gently insists that the novel is imitative, as objective in its own way as the work of the historian: "To represent and illustrate the past, the actions of men, is the task of either writer, and the only difference that I can see is, in proportion as he succeeds, to the honour of the novelist, consisting as it does in his having more difficulty collecting his evidence, which is so far from being purely literary" (Edel, 1984: 47). In 1884 this is, of course, a controversial claim; hence James's second crucial idea, which is to construct the "magnificent heritage" of fiction by analogizing it with three of the liberal arts: painting, history, and philosophy. It is a claim James finally makes with some assurance not because he knows it ultimately correct but because the popular Besant has first introduced it.

Besant, James notes, "insists upon the fact that fiction is one of the fine arts, deserving in its turn of all the honours and emoluments that have hitherto been reserved for the successful profession of music, poetry, painting, architecture. It is impossible to insist too much on so important a truth." James, in the wake of the public outcry against him, could not have made such a claim for fear of ridicule or censure, and he knows it. It is excellent that [Besant] should have struck this note," James modestly observes, "for his doing so indicates that there was need of it, that his proposition may be to many people a novelty" (Edel, 1984: 47).

By maintaining Besant's idea, James proceeds to destroy the popular sentiment that fiction harbours "some vaguely injurious effect upon those who make it an important consideration," as well as the misguided dictum that "Literature should be either instructive or amusing" (Edel, 1984: 48). In a carefully modulated critique of readerly expectations, James dismisses the demand for "virtuous and aspiring characters," the "happy ending," and the overly dramatized novel "full of incident and movement." Citing "this conception of Mr. Besant's of the novel as a superior form," James declares fiction "at once as free and a serious a branch of literature as any other" (Edel, 1984: 49). If readerly expectations are beside the point, and if the novel is totally free, then it is the author who shall decide what form a novel shall take. The reader's role, James quietly suggests, is not to pre-judge or to come to book with narrow expectations, but to come prepared to discover just what form the novel has taken. By keeping the focus on Besant as the initiator of his claim, James has managed to introduce one of his most important ideas: that the reader should grant the artist his donnée.

Interestingly, it is at this point that James offers his first criticism of Besant:

> He seems to me to mistake in attempting to say so definitely beforehand what sort of an affair the good novel will be. To indicate the danger of such an error has been the purpose of these few pages; to suggest that certain traditions on subject, applied a priori, have already had much to answer for, and

> that 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 only obligation, to which in advance we may hold the novel, without incurring the accusation of being arbitrary, is that it be interesting (Edel, 1984: 49).

To be sure, James's reasoning takes a curious bend; the chief criterion for a good novel, "which undertakes so immediately to reproduce life," is that it simply be "interesting." So, it can be said that for James, a work of art should be interesting. In The Portrait of a Lady, the idea of being interesting shows itself throughout the novel but especially in the end. Although we, as readers expect Isabel to stay with Caspar Goodwood, she returns to Rome. However, the narrator's voice at the end of the novel avoids giving such a definite perspective to the portrait he completes. It is as if James wants to leave the reader free to make his own interpretations and give his own justifications for her choices and thoughts, depending on the particular angle of vision from which the reader observes or understands Isabel's portrait.

In this respect as James wants the novel should be open-ended, he also offers his readers a liberty, a liberty which he has also given to his heroine in the form of the alternatives to choose from. Moreover, he has also shown the uselessness of rendering a finished picture of consciousness. Ayşe Erbora states that as long as Isabel continues to act out her role in life; as long as the eye of the reader is able to observe her from the different angles of vision, her consciousness will be developing and gaining new experience (Erbora, 1997: 62).

Turning back to the essay, James, who just two paragraphs before this, argued in rather strict formalist terms that "the novel is history" and ought to "speak with assurance, with the tone of the historian," suddenly makes a claim predicated on the most subjective of value judgments. Furthermore, James holds that:

> The ways in which it [the novel] 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 as successful in proportion as they reveal a particular mind, differ from others. (Edel, 1984; 49-50).

Surely this was not the objective of Post-Romantic nineteenth-century historians. James has shifted ground and is no longer arguing for the objective, mimetic novel. Rather, he has begun to articulate its opposite: "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. But there will be no intensity at all, and therefore no value, unless there is freedom to feel and say" (Edel, 1984; 50).

Scholars have offered a variety of compelling explanations for this shift in "The Art of Fiction." Tony Tanner suggests that James's conception of novelistic truth is grounded in the subjectivity articulated in one paragraph of "The Art of Fiction":

> The "truth" of a novel is now its transcribed fidelity to a personal "impression" – that is, a subjective truth, not usually taken to be the same as more objective "historical" truth , though, to be sure, we now feel that these distinctions do not always seem so secure under closer scrutiny. ... James expanded the areas of experience characterizable as "history" until the point that Conrad could aptly describe him as an "historian of fine consciences." James's central intention is I think, to stress the primacy of the receptive and transformative consciousness (Edel, 1984; 34)

Tanner remarks a solid point; James actually introduced this subjective primacy quite early in "The Art of Fiction," during his brief critique of Trollope, whose overuse of the apologia "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)" (Edel, 1984; 46-47). Tanner

remarks, "This off-hand parenthesis is crucial" (Edel, 1984; 33). And surely it is, for it reminds the reader that even as James argues most forcefully for the objective, historical novel, he acknowledges the importance of the subjective[4].

James's argument thus so far in "The Art of Fiction" is more paradoxical than self-contradictory. Dorothy J. Hale, in "James and the Invention of Novel Theory" goes so far as to argue that such paradoxes are evidence of a critical "ambivalence" that demonstrates "how James strives to preserve the relativity of perspective while also retaining a standard by which to judge artistic achievement." The ambivalence first articulated in "The Art of Fiction," she observes, will resurface in the Prefaces, in which James outlines two competing ideals of novelistic authorship: on the one hand, the successful novelist is the one who most transparently expresses his unique "impression" of life; on the other hand, the successful novelist is the one who does not allow his own views to present life from making its "impression" on him. In the first case, the novelist is the best when he projects his views; in the second, when he refuses to project them. "Once we appreciate this tension between projection and perception in James's account of novelistic point of view, we can better understand why James sometimes describes novel writing as a process of self-expression and other times as a process of recording" (Freedman, 1998: 84-85).

Having established the importance of an author's subjectivity in the novel, James concludes the paragraph by arguing that a text must always be read first on its own terms:

> The form, it seems to me, is to be appreciated after the fact: then the author's choice has been made, his standard has been indicated; then we can follow lines and directions and compare tones and resemblances. Then in a word we can enjoy one of the most charming of pleasures, we can estimate quality, we can apply the test of execution. The execution belongs to the

[4] The parenthetical comment Tanner considers "crucial" was added only after Robert L. Stevenson's 1884 criticism of James in which Stevenson argues that art cannot compare with range and diversity of life (Jones 130-31).

> author alone; it is what is most personal to him, and we measure him by that. The advantage, the luxury, as well as the torment and responsibility of the novelist, is that there is no limit to what he may attempt as an executant – no limit to his possible experiments, efforts, discoveries, successes" (Edel, 1984: 50).

In the context of its time, this passage is one of the most radical in "The Art of Fiction." James's demands – that the novel be free and interesting, that "the text of execution" be predicated on what is "most personal" to a novelist – are not only responses to Besant, but to "a whole school of defensively insular critics." In the late nineteenth century, Jones states, "English novel criticism was predominantly pragmatic and insular," not to mention overly prescriptive: "Average Opinion demanded that the novel fulfill certain comfortable conventions." English critics were frequently preoccupied with "the moral effect of a novel on its reader," judging a novel "according to exclusively external criteria to which the created world must conform." Because the novel was generally regarded as "an inherently inferior genre," critics and readers alike expected the idealized plots and happy endings (Jones, 1985: 112-15).[5] A deceptively humble James, proposing his own organic theory of composition, has attracted the very foundations of English novel criticism.[6]

James proceeds, to respond to a list of "laws of fiction" that Besant proposed in his lecture. James can neither dissent nor assent to these laws; rather, he pauses to consider one particular piece of Besant's advice: that a writer should write from his/her experience. Vivien Jones notes that Besant is quite literal, arguing that "a young lady brought up in a quiet country village should avoid descriptions of garrison life," and "a writer whose friends and personal experiences belong to the lower-middle class should carefully avoid introducing his characters into society..." Besant concludes, "This is a very simple rule, but one to which there should be no exception –never to go beyond your own

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[5] For more on James in the context of nineteenth century English criticism, see Jones's James the Critic

[6] Of course, not all the critics would agree with this assessment. Edwin Cady, for instance, reads "The Art of Fiction" as a kind of tentative middle stance that accepts the right of the romance to exist. James is too universally open to exclude any genre. Thus, Cady reads "The Art of Fiction" as, at best, a limited defense of realism (Realists at War 42-43).

experience" (Jones, 1985: 18). Experience, in this case, is a limiting factor –a catalogue of the practical and specific things a writer has done, seen, heard, and so forth. James playfully reconstructs such dogma.

> What kind of experience is intended, and where does it begin and end? Experience is never limited, and it is never complete, it is an immense sensibility, a huge spider-web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every air-bone particle in its tissue. 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 (Edel, 1984: 52).

It is stated in the essay that for James, "the supreme virtue of novel" was to create an "air of reality" (Edel, 1984: 53). And to achieve and finish this process was the "beginning and the end of the art of the novelist" (Edel, 1984: 53):

> It is here, in very truth , that he competes with life; it is here that he competes with his brother the painter, in his attempt to render the look of things, the look that conveys their meaning, to catch the colour, the relief, the expression, the surface, the substance of the human spectacle (Edel, 1984: 53).

Mark Spilka states that what James had originally meant by "competition", in that paragraph, what was generally meant by "representation": that fiction re-presents, or bodies forth, a version of reality which commands our interest as life commands it (Spilka, 1977: 205). So, it is in other words, the artist's personal impression.

Henry James goes on arguing that experience consists of impressions made up of experience. Like an impressionist painter, the novelist takes up "the subject, the idea, donnée of the novel" into the sphere of his keen perception and

observation. Hence "the province of art is all life, all feeling, all observation, all vision... it is all experience" (Edel; 1984: 56).

Jamesian novel is the novel of experience. What is presented in the course of action in the novel is the characters move from innocence to the sense of consciousness and self awareness. The Portrait of a Lady, for example is the rendering of Isabel Archer's journey towards an enlightened mind. On her journey she is directed and formed under the guidance of her aspirations of knowledge and virtue. Isabel, whose prominent features are intelligence, imagination, sensibility and moral insight, provides herself a moral growth as she is exposed to the impacts of experience. As she moves gradually to self-realization, she becomes the generator of her own action due to an ever expanding consciousness and self-realization. Ayşe Erbora states "as Isabel's consciousness occupies the central position in the structure, the pattern of the novel develops in line with her gradual self-realization" (Erbora; 1997: 9).

The Portrait of a Lady in that case, becomes a crucial novel where James considers certain novel techniques which he will use more effectively in the presentation of his story in his later novels. While he is abandoning in this novel certain structural methods of his early phase, like direct definition and authorial voice, he is more and more retreating from the scene as narrator and leaving his place to the recording sensibility of the controlling observer of the action. Although the story is about Isabel's developing consciousness, it is not strictly limited to her focal point for reflection. James uses other character's point of view, like Ralph's and Henrietta's, in observing Isabel's actions.

For example, like a spectator, James's objective view is indirectly voiced by Ralph who is able to see things clearly and comprehend them. He only sits and watch Isabel. He can realistically observe Isabel's tendency to see things as a romancer does. But after having experienced the results of her decision, which is marrying with Osmond, it becomes clear that her enlarging consciousness and the narrator's realistic eye will see the same portrait at the end of the novel.

Another "eye" which looks at Isabel's portrait is Henrietta Stackpole. Henrietta is "a thoroughly good-natured woman" (James, 1963: 81); she seems to Ralph that although she is not a charming woman, she is "at least a very good sort" (James, 1963: 84). In Isabel's opinion, "'she is brave'," and "'she has a great sense of duty';" but "'she is too personal... she walks in without knocking at the door... she thinks one's door should stand ajar'" (James, 1963: 86). Isabel implies here that there is a difference between her and Henrietta. From a perspective Henrietta observes Isabel's change and gives the reader as the narrator allows. For example when she accuses Ralph for his passive part she says:

> You had better stir yourself and be careful. Isabel's changing everyday; she's drifting way – right out to sea. I've watched her and I can see it. She's not the bright American girl she was. She's taking different views, a different color, and turning away from her old ideals... (James, 1963: 111)

Another scene which shows us Isabel's change is given when Ralph observes Isabel's life after two years of her marriage with Osmond. He thinks that she has begun to play the role her husband expects of her. She has become a fixed person which cannot freely express herself but rather represents her husbands' self:

> The free, keen girl had become quite another person; what he saw was the fine lady who was supposed to represent something. What did Isabel represent? Ralph asked himself; and he could only answer by saying that she represented Gilbert Osmond (James, 1963: 363).

Also the most important factor in the structure of The Portrait of a Lady is Isabel's relation to herself, that is, the rendering of her inner consciousness. In the novel Isabel Archer is put in the center, and her relation with the other characters is maintained while the reader observes her experience under the narrator's guidance. So, the point in the novel then becomes to comprehend and define the nature of her consciousness which in effect constitutes the subject

matter of the novel. The other point is her relation to the other characters and this further demonstrates the expansion of her consciousness progressively with the development of the action of the narrative.

In The Portrait of a Lady, epistemological and moral foundations are interdependent: truth and morality are both engendered through experience. James's ethical issues depend on experience within the text. This experience is shaped by social norms that are not *a priori* but rather artificially made, interpreted, and socially maintained. According to James, the socially constructed norms are not considered absolute knowledge nor are they universal moral truths. What produces the value of a norm is the value, attitude and belief of the society in which that norm is constituted. In addition, these codes of experiences, for James, are key elements to understand how the world is dramatized and experienced.

In The Portrait of a Lady, truth may be incomprehensible but, the reader can determine and judge its quality and/or quantity through the discourse within the text. Levels of knowledge exist within and between the lines of the novel, so this discourse is needed in order to grasp the deep structure/underlined meaning of the text. This helps the readers experience the hidden meaning within the text. As readers we are never sure if the novel gives absolute truth or morality. Yet James's characters are supposed to understand and reveal whether there are morals or not in the text. We watch characters whose wonders allow the readers to realize the mysteries of the novel as the art form. Personal expectations should be postponed for a while so that the knowledge of what is going on in the novel could be attained.

It can be said that Isabel Archer's newly-acquired experience takes place in her consciousness as immediate presence that, at the same time modifies the previously-possessed context into a new line of experience. James fiction is the meeting point past and present experiences that are transformed, synthesized, and restructured to produce reality.

Experience, for James, has less to do with the particulars of one's own life; rather, it has everything to do with one's imaginative faculties, with the depths and particular shades of one's subjectivity.

> The power to guess the unseen, to trace the implication of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern, the condition of feeling life in general so completely that you are well on your way to knowing any particular corner of it- this cluster of gifts may almost be said to constitute experience, and they occur in country an in town, and in the most differing stages of education. If experience consists of impressions, it may be said that impressions are experience (Edel, 1984: 53).

James wants to clarify this point, stressing that he does not intend for his ideas on subjectivity to devalue that artist's responsibility to view the world in a truthful, objectively honest fashion.

> I am far from intending by this to minimize the importance of exactness –of truth in detail. One can speak best from one's own taste, and I may therefore venture to say that the air of reality (solidity of specification) seems to me to be the supreme virtue of a novel – the merit on which all its other merits (including that conscious moral purpose of which Mr. Besant speaks) helplessly and submissively depend (Edel, 1984: 53).

All throughout "The Art of Fiction," James is careful to temper his radical calls for artistic subjectivity with his sense of the novelist's objective responsibilities. The two are, James implicitly argues, conjoined (Spilka, 1977: 196).

James defines how the style should be in "the Art of Fiction":

> It would be absurdly simple if he could be taught that a great deal of 'description' would make them so, or that, on the contrary, the absence of description and the cultivation of dialogue, or the absence of dialogue and the

> multiplication of 'incident' would rescue him from his difficulties (Edel, 1984: 54).

The idea in this passage is also apparent in The Portrait of a Lady. James's descriptions of persons and places have a large part in this novel. These descriptions also help the reader to understand how the novel represents reality. James describes Isabel, the main character as:

> She had everything that a girl could have: kindness, admiration, flattery, bouquets, the sense of exclusion, from none of the privileges of the world she lived in, abundant opportunity for dancing, and the latest publications, plenty of new dresses, the London Spectator, and a glimpse of contemporary aesthetics (James, 1963: 33).

The first phase of Isabel's adventure is set at Gardencourt which James again gives a detailed description. It is a four-centuries old estate owned by her uncle, a retired American banker. Set upon a hill outside London overlooking the Thames, Gardencourt resembles in its immense privacy and age another hilltop home: the abode of Gilbert Osmond, outside Florence. Comparing the details of the two dwelling whose inner and outer vistas blend into one another:

> The wide carpet of turf that covered the hill-top seemed but the extension of a luxurious interior. The great still oaks and beeches flung down a shade as dense as that of velvet curtains; and the place was furnished, like a room, with cushioned seats, with rich-colored rugs, with the books and papers that lay upon the grass (James, 1963: 6).

Gardencourt – the name itself suggests an integration of the natural and civilized- is also a "garden" in the sense of being the scene of Isabel's childhood innocence. Once she departs from its protective confines, empowered with the double-edged sword of free choice, she will never be able to return with the same familiarity. By contrast, Osmond's villa exhibits a more intentionally forbidding aspect to the world:

> This antique, solid, weather-worn, yet imposing front had a somewhat incommunicative character. It was the mask, not the face of the house. It had heavy lids, but no eyes; the house in reality looked another way – looked off behind, into splendid openness and the range of the afternoon light (James, 1963: 192).

The external appearance of Osmond's dwelling contradicts with its internal atmosphere. The contradiction becomes Osmond's pretentious persona who, like his villa, attracts externally and disappoints internally one who crosses the threshold.

The appearances of the two owners offer useful contrasts as well. The elder Touchett, despite his long stay in England, retains "his American physiognomy," which he has kept "in the best order, so that, if necessary, he might have taken it back to his own country with perfect confidence" (James, 1963: 7). Daniel Touchett is what he is, and his persona has retained its integrity as an expression of his past life. Osmond, on the other hand, has consciously cultivated a European image, and a Renaissance one at that:

> The beard, cut in the manner of the portraits of the sixteenth century and surmounted by a fair moustache, of which the ends had a romantic upward flourish, gave its wearer a foreign, traditionary look and suggested that he was a gentleman who studies style. His conscious, curious eyes, however, eyes at once vague and penetrating, intelligent and hard, expressive of the observer as well as of the dreamer would have assured you that he studied only within well-chosen limits, and that in so far as he sought it he found it (James, 1963: 194).

The artful effect is not lost on Isabel when she first encounters him. After she marries him she notices that Osmond has "a way of looking at her through half-closed eyelids, as if he were thinking of her but scarcely saw her, which seemed to her to have a wonderfully cruel intention" (James, 1963: 388) – a description reminiscent of his villa. Also, after the marriage, Isabel's portrait is

given by descriptions of the life of restriction, depression, and failure. Palazo Roccanera, her husband's house now for her is a total contrast to Gardencourt because "it was a house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation" (James, 1963: 390).

James has also begun to address another of Besant's "laws," namely that English fiction should have a "conscious moral purpose". It is a point James will address much more in the closing pages of his essay. Nevertheless, one notes here that James, in emphasizing from above all, has made a point familiar to readers of his earliest criticism: that morality in art is an aesthetic concern. The issue is seen all throughout his early work on French authors (which, for James, included Turgenev). Indeed, for James, the question is exclusively French. They are the writers who let a work create its own morality through its articulation of form; this is precisely what James valued deeply in Turgenev.

James's "The Art of Fiction" introduces the concerns of French aestheticism to an Anglo-American audience without mentioning their point of origin. So that his discussion would not be over, French novel was not appreciated in England. James is able to counter arguable discussion would be over. There was simply stated, enormous bias in England against the French novel. The French terminology James articulates in his works of fiction is alien to an English-speaking world. This does not mean that James merely translates the French. His use of French vocabulary is an attempt to meet his Anglo-American moral values and to grant French aesthetics. Nevertheless the art of fiction with its well-planned rhetorical strategy plays an important role in Anglo-American literary criticism.

James widens his critique of Besant's rules, arguing against the general idea of constructing "laws of fiction" in favor of a much more open-ended, organic conception of the novel. "A novel is a living thing," James writes, "all one and continuous, like any other organism, and in proportion as it lives will it be found, I think, that in each of the parts there is something of each of the other parts" (Edel, 1984: 54). By stating this, he seeks a unity in the novel. James seems to be objecting to the use of terms like character, description, dialogue, and incident "as if they had a kind of internecine districtness" instead of being melded "parts of

one general effort of expression. He thinks description, dialogue, and incident as complementary active forces within the novel's composition (Edel, 1984: 54).

> I cannot imagine composition existing in a series of blocks, nor conceive, in any novel worth discussing at all, of a passage of dialogue that is not in its intension descriptive, a touch of truth of any sort that does not partake of the nature of incident, or an incident that derives its interest from any other source than the general and only source of the success of a work of art (Edel, 1984: 54).

He prefers to reduce his criteria, in this instance, to the simplest possible test by saying "There are bad and good novels, as there are bad pictures and good pictures; but that is the only distinction in which I see any meaning" (Edel, 1984: 55).

Also, he thinks that incident and character are naturally conjoined in the organic theory of the novel: "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character? What is either a picture or a novel that is not of character?" James provides a quick example: "It is an incident for a woman to stand up with her hand resting on a table and look out at you in a certain way; or if it be not an incident I think it will be hard to say what it is" (Edel, 1984: 55). Every reader of the fiction will recognize this example as quaint essentially Jamesian. And this reminds us again that, for James, "The Art of Fiction" was at heart a deeply personal exercise, a carefully-crafted text for a new aesthetic, an attempt to educate an audience on how to appreciate his fiction.[7] For example, in The Moral and the Story, Ian Gregor argues that nineteenth century novelists shared conventions with their readers and found techniques to convey them, whereas modern novelists have had to invent techniques so as to

[7] In 1884, James's most recent published novel was The Portrait of Lady, in which the protagonist experiences an illuminating discovery while staring into the flickering flames of a fire. It was James's attention to such moments that prompted Frank Norris, in his 1901 essay "A Plea for Romantic Fiction," to degrade realism as "the drama of broken teacup, the tragedy of a walk down the block, the excitement of an afternoon call, the adventure of an invitation to dinner" (1166).

create conventions for their readers: "For the former the problem was to keep an audience; for the latter it is to find one" (Gregor, 1962: 253-254). By this formula it can be said that James by asking readers to grant the artist's subject, he is opening the way for himself and later novelists to create that broad audience.

James rejects some general categories such as "novel of character" or "novel of incident", or "novel" and "romance". James sees no point in criticizing over distinctions between types. For James, it is unnecessary that the novelist should draw a line between novel and romance. James's distaste for rigid categories and critical dogma next prompts him to denigrate the question of genre in fiction:

> The novel and the romance, the novel of incident and that of character – these clumsy separations appear to me to have been made by critics and readers for their own convince, and to help them out of some of their occasional queer predicaments, but to have little reality or interest for the producer, from whose point of view it is of course that we are attempting to consider the art of fiction (Edel, 1984: 55).

The passage is noteworthy for two reasons. First, James's ambivalence regarding genre is not new. This has two reasons. First, "The Art of Fiction" is more closely connected to his earlier critical work, for he would eventually revise this opinion in the 1907 Preface to The American. Second, in this passage James once again emphasizes the writer's point of view (in opposition to that of the critic), returning to a point he had first introduced one paragraph before – namely that the proper consideration of a novel, the "test of execution," must begin with an appreciation of the author's form (Edel, 1984: 50). Further developing the point, James argues that genre is irrelevant, and he cites the French example:

> The French, who have brought the theory of fiction to remarkable completeness, have but one name for the novel, and have not attempted smaller things in it, that I can see, for that. I can think of no obligation to which the "romancer" would not be held equally with the novelist; the standard of execution is equally with the novelist; the standard of

> execution is equally high for each. Of course it is of execution that we are talking – that being the only point of a novel that is open to contention. This is perhaps too often lost sight of, only to produce interminable confusions and cross-purposes. We must grant the artist his subject, his idea, his donneé: our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it (Edel, 1984: 56).

James is bolder and more direct here, clearly arguing that the critic must dispense with prescriptive theories that determine in advance what constitutes a good novel.[8] This is one of the most important and radical arguments in "The Art of Fiction," and the principle would remain central to James's criticism for the rest of his career.

James can admit the limitations of his criteria, allowing for subjectivity on the reader's part, as well. "Nothing, of course, will ever take the place of the good old fashion of "liking" a work of art or not liking it: the most improved criticism will not abolish that primitive, that ultimate test" (Edel, 1984: 57). James uses Zola as a case in point:

> M. Zola 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. I am quite at a loss to imagine anything (at any rate in this matter of fiction) that people ought to like. Selection will be sure to take care of itself, for it has a constant motive behind it. That motive is simply experience. As people feel life, so they will feel the art that is most closely related to it. This closeness of relation is what we should never forget in talking of the effort of the novel (Edel, 1984: 58).

[8] As Vivien Jones notes, this idea "is the centre of James's controversy with Besant in its shift of emphasis from external to internal criteria, invalidating prescription at a stroke" (130).

By mentioning Zola, James clearly points to the French as the practitioners of the avant-garde novel. Yet he invokes Zola, who is one of the specific authors mentioned in this important essay, only as a counter-example. She is an author who, James believes, does not understand the principle of "the good old fashion of 'liking' a work of art or not liking it."

James's using this important name in his essay makes sense because Zola is an easy and effective target when one's principal audience is the English critic of the nineteenth century. James appears to acknowledge English popular opinion regarding Zola by arguing that "experience" will guide a reader naturally to select a literature "most closely related" to life, which is to one's own unique perception of it, predicated on a particular cultural or social viewpoint. If Zola's fiction does not strike a reader as related to life as she knows it, then the reader will naturally reject the work.

However, James implies to reject Zola is not to reject realism. This is James's second and more subtle point. If a reader rejects an author's donneé, the only proper response is to deny by comment. In the preceding paragraph, James emphasizes that,

> We do not judge the artist with fairness unless we say to him, "Oh, I grant you your starting point, because if I did not I should seem to prescribe to you, and heaven forbid I should take that responsibility. ...It isn't until I have accepted your data that I can begin to measure you. ...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" (Edel, 1984: 57).

James's use of Zola as an example proves to be quite intelligent, for while appearing to validate the hostile English response to Zola, James has managed to reject critical prescription and to excuse the author; the ultimate criterion for judging art is internal. A work must be read as an "organic whole; and since in

proportion as the work is successful the idea [the subject] permeates and penetrates it, informs and animates it, so that every word and every punctuation-point contribute directly to the expression" (Edel, 1984: 60), a critic must judge only after granting the artist his/her own terms, or judge not at all.[9]

That does not mean James condones Zola. James was always ambivalent about the radical French authors, always torn between granting them their liberated artistic freedom and preserving his own Anglo-American sensibilities.[10] The question of how to depict sexual passion in the novel, for instance, had come up in several of his early reviews, most often concerning French authors. In these instances, James struggled, to find grounds to accept the work even as he questioned French standards and taste. Mark Spilka notes that such tensions inform his early reviews of Balzac and Zola. In selected instances, James allowed his conservative social tastes to over-rule his otherwise liberal artistic views. For example, James had concluded his 1880 review of Zola's Nana as a real defense for the English novel and the "moral timidity" he criticizes in "The Art of Fiction" (Edel; 1984: 56).

Human morality is also clearly asserted in The Portrait of a Lady. He tends to oppose moral and immoral behaviours in an indirect way. For example Isabel may oppose to Madame Merle but this opposition between good and evil is not consciously explained by James. It arises from the incidents of his novel. James would not for example distinguish his evil characters from his good characters for the reader. Rather he leaves this for the reader to figure out through a process of reading. For example the picture of opposite characters of Madame Merle and Isabel is given with the conversation between them while discussing the significance of material possessions reflects their personalities and ideas. Madame Merle says, "one 's self – for other people- is one's expression of one's self: and one's house, one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps – these things are all expressive" (James, 1963: 186). Isabel

[9] It is an idea that James would repeat throughout his career as a critic. In his 1889 essay on Flaubert, for example, James states that "The only excuse the critic has for braving the embarrassments I have mentioned [i.e., presenting a "difficult" French author to a conservative English audience] is that he wishes to perform a work of recommendation (Edel, 1984: 551-552).

[10] For more information one can see James's 1880 essay on Zola's Nana.

replies: "I think just as the other way. I do not know whether I succeed in expressing myself, but I know that nothing expresses me. Nothing that belongs to is a measure of me" (James, 1963: 186). Here it can be said that Madame Merle's view suggests conservatism and realism, whereas Isabel's seems to be romantic, optimistic and more idealistic.

James suggests that if it is the artist's donneé that should govern how a reader responds to a work, then the burden is on the author to select only the choicest of topics. The subject of a novel "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" (Edel, 1984:57). Zola," who reasons less powerfully then he presents," has made a mistake both in selecting a poor subject and in "thinking that there are certain things that people ought to like" (Edel, 1984: 58). James thus rejects both prescriptive English criticism and French naturalist theory, shifting the terms of the argument from subject to performance, sublimating moral concerns to the question of form: the exclusively internal criteria of the author.

The same strategy is employed in the closing paragraphs of "The Art of Fiction," wherein James responds to Besant's declaration that English fiction should have a "conscious moral purpose." James gently faults Besant for a lack of clarity in the statement: "it is not very clear whether he be recording a fact or laying down a principle. ...Will you not define your terms and explain how (a novel being a picture) a picture can be either moral or immoral? ...We are discussing the "Art of Fiction"; questions of morality are quite another affair" (Edel, 1984: 62).

Following this line as he addresses Besant's statement that the "conscious moral purpose" of the English novel is "a truly admirable thing and a great cause for congratulation", James turns the question around. What Besant considers "truly admirable" and bold others may consider evidence of a "moral timidity" that provokes only "a cautious silence on certain subjects. ... The essence of moral energy is to survey the whole field, and I should directly reverse Mr. Besant's remark and say not that the English novel has a purpose, but that it has a difference." Noting that the predominant audience for the English novel is "young people," James observes "There are certain things which it is generally agreed not to discuss, not even to mention, before young people. That is very well, but

the absence of discussion is not a symptom of the moral passion. The purpose of the English novel... strikes me therefore as rather negative" (Edel, 1984: 63). It is, perhaps, James's strongest pronouncement on the subject.

James begins his conclusion by noting that

> 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 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 partakes of the substance of beauty and truth. To be constituted of such elements is, to my vision, to have purpose enough. No good novel will ever proceed from a superficial mind; that seems to me an axiom which, for the artist in fiction, will cover all needful moral ground: if the youthful aspirant takes it to heart it will illuminate for him many of the mysteries of "purpose (Edel, 1984: 63-64).

And so James concludes his critique, having once again undercut Besant's position – predicated as it is on critical prescription and a pre-formed sense of what is moral and correct – and substituted for it his own internally-derived sense of standards, shifting the subject as always to internal considerations, to the question of execution. In a final piece of advice, James offers that "the only condition that I can think of attaching to the composition of the novel is, as I have already said, that it be sincere" (Edel, 1984: 64). For James, this is all one can ask of an artist; morality in the art is a question of sincerity in execution: it is a question of form, to be judged after having read the work in its entirety and only after granting a writer her donnée.[11]

[11] As Dorothy J. Hale notes in Social Formalism, James's "projected morality" in a novel is "a function of the artist's sincerity, her fidelity first to her own perspective and second to the "mark" made on her by "experience" (Freedman, 1998: 24).

James wrote his essay hoping to spur something of a great public debate on the topic; and, perhaps, to win himself a new audience of the admirers. But James may have been too subtle for his own good; "The Art of Fiction" is far more demanding, and far more radical in its arguments. James labored to remain modest in rhetoric and tone. A few months after the essay appeared, James lamented the lack of responses to it. In a letter to T. S. Perry written shortly after the publication of "The Art of Fiction," James complained that "my little article has not attracted the smallest attention here and I haven't heard, or seen, an allusion to it. There is almost no care for literary discussion here, - question of form, of principle, the 'serious' idea of the novel appears apparently to no one and they don't understand you when you speak of them" (Jones, 1985: 133). When R. L. Stevenson's response to James, "A Humble Remonstrance," appeared in Longman's in December 1884, James promptly wrote a letter full of thanks to the Scottish novelist for responding to his ideas, initiating a rewarding literary friendship (5 Dec 1884; Edel, 3: 57-8).

What the reader finds in "The Art of Fiction" is a writer on the crest of an ongoing personal discussion that began, for him, with his first published reviews. James's criticism after "The Art of Fiction" would only become more personal, his criteria more esoteric. The culmination of this personal evolution would eventually result in the New York Edition of his works, which would allow James both to revise his own fiction and to craft a series of Prefaces that would, for many critics, stand as his most important contribution to the history of criticism.

3. CONCLUSION

In this work, instead of Henry James's great novelistic character, the main idea is to show Henry James's role as a critic as he is significant and vital in the history of criticism. As a critic, then Henry James had a high regard for European realism and its influence over what he saw as a new phase in American literature. He pointed on broad aesthetic points – such as the need for vivid, believable characters in fiction. He felt a need to articulate aesthetic and critical standards commensurate with this new phase, and set about his projects with diligence and passion.

He has written large body of criticisms on different areas of literature such as poetry, drama and most famously fiction. So, in the first part entitled "Critic on Different Fields: Henry James", his devotion to creative writing has been focused on, his literary essays and criticisms in these fields which are subtitled in Chapter One as Poetic Criticism, Dramatic Criticism, and Fictional Criticism.

In Henry James's Poetic Criticism Part, his criticisms on Poetry was analyzed. James has focused his poetic criticism on poets like Walt Whitman, Baudelaire, Gautier and Musset. Although his criticisms on poetry consists of these four poets, in other words they are small in number, it becomes an interesting thing to know James's views on poetry as he has not given any work of art in this field and he, himself is not a poet but a novelist. In this part, two poets; Walt Whitman and Gautier have been chosen to analyze. It can be said that Henry James is very courageous in his criticism on Walt Whitman since he feels free to reflect his negative opinions on Whitman's poetry. James states that Whitman's poetry is much more like a patriotic war poetry. James points out that "Whitman or anybody does not become a poet simply by telling the glories or chivalry of soldiers fighting in the battlefield, or by serving in a hospital himself in war time, or becoming a staunch patriot" (Edel, 1984: 630). On the other hand, James praises Gautier's style as he has grace and form in his poetry.

Dramatic criticism is another area that Henry James focused upon. He was interested in writing plays for a long time to gain his fame as drama was very popular in those years. Although his plays were destined to be unsuccessful, James admits that working on drama has added a lot of experience to his literary criticism and his talent as a novelist. The example that has been provided for this part belongs to James's criticism on Shakespeare's The Tempest for which James put emphasis on the fact that it is not only one of Shakespeare's supreme works of all literature, but also the finest flower of his experience (Edel, 1984: 1208).

Last part of this chapter is mainly on James's criticisms on Fiction which occurs to be the most important part among the types of criticism that James interested in. It was observed that in James, one finds a struggle to move from an early stance predicated on sharp wit and haughty dismission of inferior work toward a more sympathetic, disinterested viewpoint. James's early essays on Arnold, Sainte-Beuve, and Schérer demonstrate this evolution at work. And his reviews of French and European authors afforded him an opportunity to practice these critical theories. James was intensely concerned with the moral values of the literature he read, but not in a didactic sense. Rather James struggled in his early criticism to articulate a kind of reader-centered model of interpretation and valuation. Morality is crucial to this scheme, but James was principally concerned with justifying his own esoteric tastes and articulating his sense of the overall quality of a given writer's work. As Vivien Jones states "morality in art was, for Henry James, primarily an aesthetic question, and it would largely remain so for the rest of his career" (Jones, 1984: 9).

The question of audience also concerned James. He, a fiercely independent and proud artist, developed an increasingly esoteric, private rhetoric in both his fiction and his criticism. He sought not to find but to create his audience, and in this regard his literary criticism was always an attempt to claim new turf. In James's literary essays and criticism, one senses a deliberate effort to educate the reader, to teach her how to read difficult work; his essays on controversial authors like Gautier, Zola, and Balzac demonstrate this principle. In this respect, James's prose is always inwardly directed.

His body of fictional criticism is larger than his criticism of other forms of art and his most important study entitled "The Art of Fiction" belongs to this part. So, in the second and last part of this study, entitled "Henry James's 'The Art of Fiction' in Critical Context" his essay "The Art of Fiction" which has become the main theoretical basis for the novel was analyzed.

"The Art of Fiction", written as an answer for the respected Walter Besant who has given an essay in the same title before James, can be said to be a milestone in the theory of the novel. James agrees with Besant in the sense that the novel should be considered as one of fine arts. In Henry James's point of view, the art of the novelist and the art of painter are similar. They are both a personal impression of life but at the same time it is the reader who should trace the meaning hidden below the surface.

In "The Art of Fiction," James states that "a novel in its broadest definition is 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"; and that "the only obligation to which in advance we may hold a novel, without incurring the accusation of being arbitrary, is that it be interesting. The ways in which it is at liberty to accomplish this result are innumerable." For James, a text must first be realistic, a representation of life as it is and one that is recognizable to its readers. Good authors are good thinkers who can select, evaluate, and insert the facts or pictures of reality in their work. In the representation of life, James emphasizes the importance of "selection", claiming that "art is essentially selection, but it is a selection whose main care is to be typical, to be inclusive" (Edel, 1984: 58).

In "The Art of Fiction", James states that the writer should write from experience. From his early novels, what concerns him most is the nature of this experience, where it begins and where it ends: "Experience is never limited and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility. It is the very atmosphere of the mind (Edel, 1984: 52).

As it is stated in the essay, one of the most prominent aspects of Jamesian novel is the rendering of experience. Examples are provided from The Portrait of a Lady in which the protagonist Isabel Archer experiences the life in the old world where everything is new for her. Also consciousness is another point that James gives importance. And it is in this novel that James uses his stream of consciousness method very effectively.

James states that the work of art is organic, a living organism which has a life of its own that grows according to its own principles or themes. James asserts that a more direct point of view is essential so that the author shows characters, actions, and emotions to the reader rather than telling us about them. By showing rather than telling us about his characters and their actions, James believes that he creates a greater illusion of reality than if he presents his story through one point of view or one character. This idea shows itself in The Portrait of a Lady which James gives not only the Isabel Archer's but also the other character's points of view in order to reflect his ideas.

Also in "The Art of Fiction" James does not go into detailed classifications about the novel. To criticize a novel as novel of incident or novel of character has no meaning for him. For James there are only good novels and bad novels. The main point that James bases his arguments on while criticizing fiction is human morality. He gives an example from Zola's Nana which he thinks that it is not morally true. In fact, James does not depict sex in his novels.

To conclude, the impact of his most famous essay "The Art of Fiction" would be, in time, tremendous. If Walter Besant began the conversation, James ensured that it would continue. Responses and spin-off discussions were being published as late as 1891. In retrospect, with the whole of James's career for the critic to survey, "The Art of Fiction" clearly stands out as a major essay and a turning point in the work of James. Ideas first introduced and articulated in 1884 remained central to James for the rest of his career, and were expanded upon, revised, and complicated in several later essays and in the Prefaces to the New York Edition of his works.

Today, Henry James is remembered as the critic whose practice was predicted on sympathy and generosity, and who would articulate his vision of that critical aesthetic in decidedly moral terms; "The Art of Fiction" and other essays secured his place in this regard. Also, it is in his words that we can understand how much importance that he gives to the art: "It is art that makes life, makes interest, and makes importance..."

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