Henry James was born an American and died an Englishman. He might never have formally transferred his allegiance had it not been for the war and the long delay in espousing the Allied cause. He became a British subject in July 1915.

In recent years, James has been ranked with the greatest of the English novelists by critics like Lionel Trilling and F.R. Leavis. He has enjoyed a remarkable comeback among the intellectuals after the great world war. As early as 1918, the two names which inevitably cropped up when one referred to contemporary American novelists, were those of Henry James and William Dean Howells. James left behind him a steadily amassed oeuvre of short-stories, nouvelles, articles, plays, travel books, and novels that represent an achievement of the solid order, had begun to be an unread and 'irremediably unpublished author', in his own lifetime. Surprisingly enough, soon after his death, he was totally eclipsed by a new spirit in Literature, as no writer has ever been. In recent years, his pure and perplexing style, his 'ambiguity' his peculiar method of 'dramatizing the mental impressions' have been discussed and written about, talks have been broadcast and his works made available in new editions. James, whom many found unreadable in his lifetime, has now kicked off the "various tombstones" to occupy his long due, distinguished position in the history of the English novel.

James was a post-Romantic, a Victorian, an early modern, an
American between two contrasted worlds represented by America and Europe. In his letter of 1888, to his brother, James has insisted that his eventual aim was to write in such a way that,

... "it would be impossible for an outsider to say whether I am at a given moment an American writing about England, or an Englishman writing about America."

James began to write his short-stories between the two periods of his novel writing- The first from Roderick Hudson to The Tragic Muse (1875-1890) and second The Spoils of Poynton to The Sense of the Past (1896-1917). In his stories we find his tendency always to subordinate incident to character, to subordinate character as such to situation or the relations among the characters, and in situation or character, to prefer something rather out of the ordinary, some aspect or type not too obviously interesting but calling for insight and subtlety in the interpretation. Good examples in the short-story, of this predilection are, The Pupil, The Real Thing and The Altar of the Dead all appearing in the early nineties, and a little later, The Beldonald Holbien and The Turn of the Screw, most haunting of ghost stories.

Each tale of James is thus an initiation into some social or artistic or spiritual value, not obvious to the vulgar. And each tale is a quiet picture, a social study, rather than the smart anecdote prescribed by the doctors of the 'short-story'. James is not rigorous in his limitation of the short-story to the magazine length, so that his tales are likely to
take form of the more leisurely 'nouvelle' as of the brief and sketchy Conte. And so it was not surprising to find a tale intended originally for a magazine, short-story enlarging itself by insensible degrees into what is practically a novel. Such was the case with The Spoils of Poynton, one of his finest stories, which has the length of a novel, together with the restricted subject matter, the continuity and economy of the short-story.

But these traits, it is clear, had already grown to be James's ideals for a narrative of whatever length. They were the ideals of many of the foreign novelists whose personal influence had swayed him in Paris, and to a considerable extent those of George Eliot, whose influence upon him must have been in mediate working through her French imitators, as well as emanating directly from her work.

The stories of James tend to be records of seeing rather than of doing. The characters are more like patients than agents, their business seems to be to register impressions, to receive illumination rather than to make up their minds and set about deeds. But this is a way of conceiving human business, by no means confirmed to their stories, is it not more or less characteristic of the whole period in which James wrote? One pauses by insensible degrees from the world of Renan to that of Pater and Swinburne, and thence to that of Oscar Wilde and of writers yet living, in whom the cult of impressions has been carried to lengths yet more extreme.
Among all these names the most significant seems to be that of Walter Pater, whose style and tone of writing—corresponding to his intellectual quality and bias—more nearly anticipate the style of James than do those of any other writer, English or French. It does not matter that Pater’s subject is the art of the past and James’s the life of the present. No two writers were even more concerned with mere "impressions" and impressions mean for them discriminations, intimate impressions, subtle and finely sympathetic interpretations. These two writers were both averse to that raising of the voice, that vehement or emphatic manner, characteristic of the early Victorians and supposed to be associated with strong feelings and firm principles. These reasonable and well-bred writers, if they ever had strong feelings or firm principles could be trusted to dissimulate them under a tone of quiet urbanity. They abhorred abrupt transitions and violent attitudes. They proceed even in their discourse smoothly and without marked inflection. There is a kind of hierarchic gentleness and fastidiousness— and yet withal a hint of breathless awe, of restraint enthusiasm in the manner in which they celebrate the mysteries of their religion of culture, their religion of art.

James's plots are usually an outgrowth of character, and his two basic plot patterns parallel the two basic character types. In the first pattern everything in the movement of the plot works against the character causing his self—exposure. Jamesian examples of this form
are The Sacred Fount, The American and The Portrait of a Lady and a few other short-stories. The second major plot pattern consists of the integration of the protagonist into an existent society or into one of his own making, as we find in The Pupil and The Middle Years.

Scenic presentation and balance of characters are James's fundamental methods of organizing a plot. James writes in the Preface to The Portrait of a Lady that when he had found characters he had to,

"Find for them the right relations, those that would most bring them out to imagine, to invent and select and piece together the situations most useful and favorable to the sense of the creatures themselves."  

James's plot ultimately becomes an "ado" a grouping of persons carefully designed to expose and set off the positive and negative aspects of the protagonist. He arranges the characters as in a director's diagram and we never lose sight of them on stage.

T.S. Eliot observes that James's,

"General scheme is not one character, nor a group of characters in a plot or merely in a crowd. The focus is a situation, a relation, an atmosphere ....The real hero, in any of James's stories is a social entity of which men and women are constituents."  

And James himself emphasizes the importance of the social world in his work. He writes to William Dean Howells,

"It is on manners, customs, wages, habits, forms, upon all
these things matured and established that a novelist lives —
they are the very stuff his work is made of."

The real antagonist in many James's works is the world, and the
ingeny of society is a spirit within that society. The fathomless depths
of equivocation to which a sophisticated society is by nature
committed can easily produce ugliness. Even the most seemingly
beautiful form and manners can enclose a vicious and corrupt morality.
If James is well aware of the destructive aspects of society he also
appreciates its potential for good. While criticizing the society of his
time James also uses it as an arena in which individual human values
are invested with meaning.

James's short-stories are triumphantly secular, celebrating the
creativity of merely human beings in a merely human society in which
there is no recourse to any divine justice or omnipotent God. Indeed,
James was well aware of the shift from a basically religious society to
one in which traditions were crumbling and values seem to be
disappearing. He looked back with fondness at the stable traditional
norms which were failing, and forward with anticipation toward a new
system of values. What is most important, he looked inward, placing a
great burden upon the individual consciousness and moral sense of his
major characters. With no spiritual representation of the moral norm
and with no acceptable public philosophy to turn to the Jamesian
protagonist must personally create his own values and norms.
James's style is one of utmost importance in relation to his world. View has not been given anything like a comparable attention, though its complexity and obscurity have often been wondered at and admired grudgingly. Whilst his imagery and symbolism as constituents of his prose style are a favorite quarry for the purposes of establishing the archetypal themes, the style as a complex of semantic and verbal structures or patterns yielding a polyphony, integrally related, to the music of minds and the style as a stance of the Jamesian psyche.

In James, the style is not merely a tool or a medium, a dress or a mask, an excrescence or an extravagance. It is truly organic and poetical having a cognitive function much in the same way that Shakespearean style has. It is in this sense that a Jamesian nouvelle, short-story could be regarded as "an expanded metaphor." The style then becomes the mode of quest for reality. Its built-in complexity assumes a compulsive quality and also could render the Jamesian meaning. Any simplification or effort as reduction would not only destroy its beauty, but also its strength, in fact the whole Jamesian dialectics. Just as the bare rugged, skeletal and gaunt sinewy style of Hemingway is essential to the truth of his experience, the rich, ornate, textured, formalized and teasing style of Henry James is essential to the truth of his vision.

The question of style in James is not simply a question of the choice of words and their arrangement, and their interlarding with
graces and mannerisms, it is a question of the stance or disposition of the artist's being as well. It's the integrity of this inner connection between the music of words and the aroma or aura of the writer's personality, which gives the Jamesian style its inevitability. Though not wholly successful in individualizing the idiom of his characters finding an 'objective correlative' in speech for their style and stance-most of the characters in James as even in D. H. Lawrence express themselves in their author's idiom rather in their own - the disposition or placement of the character is related to the weight he or she places upon a word or the interplay of ideas resulting from it. No discussion of James's style can be complete without a reference to the functional and organic role of imagery in his work.

Another thing to take note of is the peculiar beauty and nature of the Jamesian dialogues. Normally, the dialogue is used by a writer to express the style of a character, and to authenticate the experience of communication. But Henry James uses it in a variety of ways to reinforce the theme as also to suggest the fundamental inability and failure of communication. The style of the dialogues is at times opposite to the long passages of 'indirection' that precede or follow them, at times it is in sharp contrast to them. The dialogues then become exercises in parenthesis. They reveal as much as they conceal. Concealment is thus both a device and a necessity.

James employs the age old convention of first-person tales, oral
narration adapting it to suit his unusually sophisticated, compositional concerns and rigors. Except in two early tales—*A Light Man* and *The Diary of a Man of Fifty*—he almost never uses the first-person narrator primarily as an auto-biographer. More often than not, the Jamesian narrator is a biographer, a raconteur, or a perceptive reporter of things that have happened to others. In a way, James denied himself the gripping immediacy of an autobiographical narrative, where the autobiography concerns not so much the external events as the internal reflections of the narrator hero, his lonely conversations with himself about himself. Of course, this is not to deny or underestimate the peculiar pitfalls and challenges of this narrative mode, but James never fully faced-them. In his tales as well as in *The Sacred Fount* James never really conceded the ‘double privilege’ to his narrators.

By way of illustration one may look at how James decided upon the narrator of the story *The Next Time*. He begins by ruminating over,

"The idea of the poor man, the artist, the man of letters, who all his life is trying ... to do something vulgar to take the measure of the huge, flat foot of the public."

Thereafter he has reminisced about his own experience with White law Reid of the New York Tribune, he goes on to develop the idea further,

"A little drama, climax, a denouement, a small tragedy of might not one oppose to him some contrasted figure of
seated vulgarity, is always trying to be refined, which does not in the least prevent him — or her from succeeding. Say it's a woman."

By now the subject is clear to James. And then he comes to the problem of its presentation,

"Mightn't she be the narrator, with a fine grotesque in conscience? So that the whole thing becomes a masterpiece of close and finished irony? There may be a difficulty in that, so that the necessity may be for the narrator to be conscious or semi-conscious, perhaps to get the full force of certain effects."

Apart from indicating the intimate relation of the Jamesian narrator to his subject, James's first person narrator is generally a conscious, sometimes a semi-conscious but almost never a fully 'unconscious' person. It seems that James was so apprehensive of "wasting his material and missing his effect" that he seldom employed an unconscious narrator. Not to take James's narrators in the absence of clear internal evidence as reliable personae would therefore force us into perverse readings of almost all his first person tales. She feels surprised, for instance why H — of The Madonna has not been taken to task by someone as the person responsible for the death of Theobald, or why should not the narrator of The Four Meetings be castigated as a tempter of poor Caroline, or why is The Author of Beltraffio not blamed for the death of Dolcino? Why should the governess alone be suspect?

The truth seems to be that all of James's narrators are made to
conceal their detachment as outsiders behind a convincing pretence of personal involvement in the action. Where ever they precipitate the Catastrophe, an irony is produced because their intentions are almost always unquestionable – the only exception to the formulation would be, not the governess, but the narrator of The Aspern Papers. It does not mean that the personae should be identified completely with James himself, but that their individual traits, insofar as they have any, should not be confounded with the generic traits they owe to their employment as James’s deputies.

If the choice of the person is partly determined by the subject – although it would be very hard to generalize or to lay down a rigid formula about what kind of subject is suitable only to the first person narrative – the persona, once chosen, has an even more decisive influence on the tone, structure and style of the James’s first person narratives. On the basis of the tales discussed in the foregoing chapters, it can be said that the tone is generally light – even when the subject is serious or painful – that the structure often corresponds to a chronological succession of events interspersed by the narrator’s persuasive comments and conjectures, and that the style is much less involuted as contrasted with the omniscient – narrator tales. The precise manner in which the Jamesian narrator functions varies from tale to tale, depending upon the particular theme, the intended emphasis, the desired scope.
Thus in the stories of artists, the narrator himself an artist of sorts, is employed mainly in the interest of what James called an "operative irony" which,

"implies and projects the possible other case, the case rich and edifying where the actuality is pretentious and vain."\(^{15}\)

In all these tales, with the exception of The Figure in the Carpet the narrator is a mouth piece for those points of view which the impersonal author would like to impress upon the reader. If the comments and observations of this narrator strike us as either boring or unpersuasive, the tale is an obvious failure. Similarly in the tales of the supernatural, the narrator must, above everything else, succeed in exploiting that "blest faculty of wonder" that,

"strange passion planted in the heart of man for the benefit of the novelist, a mysterious provision made for him in the scheme of nature."\(^{16}\)

The application of this narrative principle can be seen in tales belonging to any other thematic category, in the international tales. Finally the Jamesian narrator is more or less expansive in accordance with the scope of the given situation. Thus in tales of nouvelle length, one finds him more relaxed, less hard-pressed for space, than in tales of the genuinely anecdotal variety where he is called upon to deal with either a single incident or a single character.

Underlying all these variations, one can recognize a family likeness among all the Jamesian personae. Their outstanding features,
are intelligence, wit, curiosity, skepticism, and above all, an infallible intuitive faculty. These are what have been previously described as the generic traits of the Jamesian narrator, traits that should be understood in their relation to the technical procedures of James and not subjected to psychologists. Of all these traits, the intuitive faculty has evidently given rise to the greatest number of misconceptions. One does not have to invoke Bergson or Proust in order to justify the validity of the narrator's intuitive approach. This approach is not confined to James's first person narrators. Several if not all, of his important characters are addicted to the habit of intuiting, of anticipating one another's thoughts, of divining those events still in the offing. The most important single exemplification of this habit is the charming telegraphist of In The Cage which is not a first-person narrative about whom James remarked:

"My central spirit, in the anecdote is for verisimilitude, I grant, too ardent a focus of divination; but without this excess the phenomena detailed would have lacked their principle of cohesion."  

The point is that the phenomena detailed in In The Cage are not false just because, in the interest of "their principle of cohesion", James has chosen to detail them through the telegraphist's inordinately developed power of divination.

In his first person narratives James solves this problem through a carefully chosen deputy, in his impersonally narrated tales he tackles it
through the agency of the omniscient narrator, who doubtless often identifies himself with the point of view of the principal character. However in cases where this identification is not intended to be complete as in *The Beast in the Jungle* and to a limited extent in *The Bench of Desolation*,

“*There are some gleams of irony, which proceed precisely from the duplicity of the point of view. It needs to be pointed out that a story never can tell itself.*”

The teller is always there, and it is the task of the critic to evaluate the effectiveness of the variety of ways in which the author seeks to become invisible.

In the narrative structure of these tales, there is a far more deliberately controlled alternation of summary and scene that is common with most writers. James attached great importance to what he called “the scenic law.” He saw many of his tales,

“as little constituted dramas, little exhibitions founded on the logic of the ‘scene’ the unit of the scene, the general scenic consistency,”

he saw the passages between one scene and the other as “preparative” and compared the alternations between summary and scene to the various instruments in an orchestra. In some tales depending on such factors as the lapse of time involved and the degree of compression described, summary takes predominance over the scene. The ‘scene’ again is not always to be equated with a dramatized scene in the
anecdotes — and this would cover first — person anecdotes as well — James often resorts to summary more than to scene, particularly where the anecdote happens to be more in the nature of a compressed nouvelle. The same consideration would also apply to a case where the nouvelle is a compressed novel as in Julia Bride.

This raises once again the problem of an opposite description, for James as a writer of short fiction. If we view him as a short-story writer, applying the standards derived from Poe or Maupassant, he is bound to cause dissatisfaction. One must take him primarily as a nouvelliste in his shorter fiction, since most of his great tales fall into the category of,

"The beautiful and blest nouvelle."^{22}

The short-story no doubt represented a persistent challenge to him, so that in The Note Books we hear him invoking Maupassant —

"oh, Spirit of Maupassant, come to my aid,"^{23}

more than any other single writer. He undertook to meet the challenge more than once and wrote an impressive number of anecdotes, several of which, however remain far below the excellence of his nouvelles. He achieved relatively greater success in those anecdotes which lean either to the character sketch or to the parable.

Both James and Poe, while expressing their dissatisfaction with allegory as employed by Hawthorne, also attempted an extension of
the term, and it is interesting that neither of them altogether banished allegory from his works, even in the sense in which they most strongly disapproved of it. When James published his book on Hawthorne in 1879, he was indirectly at least trying to assess his own indebtedness to that "beautiful, natural and original genius." By then he had properly assimilated the influence of Hawthorne. As Matthiessen has correctly pointed out in his earliest stories James,

"had depended on allegory in the manner of Hawthorne...As he went on to master all the skills of realism, he grew dissatisfied with allegory's obvious devices and yet particularly towards the end of his career, realistic details had become merely the covering for a content that was far from realistic."

This journey from simple allegory in the early tales — The Romance of Certain Old Clothes and Benvolio to complex parable in the late tales — The Great Good Place and Beast in the Jungle is reflected in the spontaneous fusion of images and ideas.

On comparing the omniscient-narrator tales one is bound to notice great differences, in tone, style and structure. Some of these differences cut across the chronological groupings of the early, middle and late periods. The tone of the omniscient-narrator tales is more haunting, their style gets more involuted and nuanced as James probes with greater self-assurance into the inner sanctuaries of his characters, their structures are more dense because they are not structures so much of incidents as of perceptions inwardly attained.
Barring a few exceptions, such as The Turn of the Screw and The Birth Place, James's first person tales are essentially comic in mode and impact, while his major omniscient narrator tales are essentially tragic. An accompanying generalization would be that the first person tales deal with the surface which is not the same as superficial aspects of human affairs, while the omniscient tales illuminate the hidden mysteries of the human condition. From this, however, it does not follow that the first person singular is inimical to a tragic approach. But considering that James employed his first person narrators more or less as objective outsiders, he could not have achieved the inwardness and depth of his omniscient narrator tales. The best of James's first-person tales, according to their own nature and aims, succeed as well as the omniscient narrator tales, the two combine to give us a measure of the great breadth and depth of James's observations of human life.

Thus one finds that the tales of James are as important in their own right as his novels. Thus both the theme and technique occupy a central position along with character, situation, tone and imagery. According to Mark Schorer,

"When we speak of technique ... then we speak of nearly everything."

James was a formidable literary critic as well as a novelist and short-story writer. In the monumental task of preparing his works for
the final New York edition, he spent the years from 1903 to 1906 writing Prefaces, which in their self-criticism and their exploration of the novelist's problems are unique and remarkable documents. In a number of other essays, James expressed himself on the nature of fiction. His views are particularly well illuminated by the controversy between H.G. Wells and him. The two writers after having been close friends despite their contrary views about literature, broke into print to air their differences. For Wells literature was nothing if not useful, here and now in improving people and society by uncovering pretenses and projecting ideas. He ridiculed James's concern with style—a concern which he felt not only slighted literary content but isolated literature from life. He wrote a parody of James (Boon, 1915) in which he said that James's style resembled a hippopotamus trying to pick up a pea. James in replying expressed his conviction that art and life are inseparable. He said that if the novel is to fulfill its highest function of revealing truth it must be embodied in a suitable form,

"It is art that makes life, makes it interesting, important."\(^{29}\)

Henry James did not achieve wide popularity in his life-time, but he was acknowledged by numerous contemporaries as their MASTER. He was responsible in his life-time for one hundred and thirty five works of fiction, of memoirs, of criticism, and of travel accounts—most of it of the highest technical excellence. His best fiction unobtrusively reveals the complex psychological motivations that
animate men, the social situations that mould them, and the moral dilemmas from which they emerge diminished or enhanced.
NOTES


3. Ibid. P.10


5. William Peterfield op. cited P.107


8. Letter to William Dean Howells op. cited P.35


10. Ibid. P.8


13. **Note Books** P.180

14. Ibid. P.180


17. Vaid P.254

18. *The Art of the Novel*, P.253


20. *The Art of the Novel* P.157

21. Ibid. pp. 157-158

22. Ibid. P. 220

23. **Notebooks** P. 89.


27. Mark Schorer, "*Technique as Discovery*" in *Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction* 1920 – 1951, selected by


29. Ibid. P. 458