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THE NOUVELLES OF HENRY JAMES:

A PHENOMENO-GENERIC APPROACH

by

Antony Jan Bijker

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Supervisor: Dr. N.W. Visser

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A Note on the Text:

All references to James's Notebooks and Prefaces are to the editions by F.O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock, eds., The Notebooks of Henry James (New York: George Braziller, 1955) and R.P. Blackmur, ed., The Art of the Novel (New York: Scribner's, 1962). They are included in brackets after corresponding quotations and are abbreviated as N and P respectively, followed by the page number. References to the commentary by Matthiessen and Murdock in the Notebooks and to the "Introduction" to the collected Prefaces by Blackmur are included in separate footnotes to distinguish them from James's texts. As not all the works by James that are discussed or referred to are included in the New York Edition, citation of passages from James's fiction are included in the notes at the end of each chapter.

Methodological Introduction

The present work is about the nouvelles of Henry James and not about phenomenology. That is to say that I am more concerned with James's use of the form of the nouvelle than with the illustration of a method. But, as Roland Barthes has pointed out: "How can we tell the novel from the short story, the tale from the myth, suspense drama from tragedy... without reference to a common model? Any critical attempt to describe even the most specific, the most historically orientated narrative form implies such a model."¹ Hence, because phenomenology is somewhat alien to the Anglo-American critical sensibility, I must temporarily reverse this emphasis and discuss the phenomenological "model" that underlies my investigation of James and the nouvelle form. Elsewhere phenomenological theory will take precedence only when it throws light on what is a highly elusive genre.

The notion of the literary work of art as an intersubjective intentional object is central to Roman Ingarden's application to aesthetics of the epistemological apparatus developed by Edmund Husserl.² The phenomenological approach to literature is "an essentially descriptive examination of the noetic and noematic structures of the intentional activity of reading, in terms of which linguistic investigations, 'close reading' (whatever that means), comparative and generic studies, structuralist, psychoanalytical and sociological approaches each can be given their proper position in the general enterprise of reading literature."³ Phenomenology is a method of investigating reality only as far as it is meant, recalled, anticipated, projected, or conceived. It is concerned with acts of experiencing

(the noesis), which always involve consciousness of something, and with that which is experienced (the noema) through such acts. All conscious acts have a fundamental directional character--they point towards some object, whether objectively real or not. Consciousness, then, is intentional in that it has as its essential character this projective or directional activity.⁴

The literary work as such is a purely intentional formation which has the source of its being in the creative acts of consciousness of its author and its physical foundation in the text set down in writing or through other physical means (for instance, the tape recorder). By virtue of the dual stratum of its language the work is both intersubjectively accessible and reproducible, so that it becomes an intersubjective intentional object, related to a community of readers. As such it is not a psychological phenomenon and is transcendent to all experiences of consciousness, those of the author as well as those of the reader.⁵

The experience of a literary work of art is a temporally constituted succession of intentional acts, each one directed upon the work in question, the intentional object. In this case, the work as intentional object is "the temporally unified and unifying transcendental pole of the various subjective acts" of a community of readers.⁶ But insofar as the work has physical status (the text), it is, finally, an intersubjective object that on the basis of its most concrete stratum may be constituted into an aesthetically pleasurable noematic totality.

The literary work can be fully realized only through the noetic and noematic dialectic of text and consciousness, involving a movement from presentational process through to presented world, a sequence developing from what is immediately given

towards its most abstract implications. It is in these terms that the literary work presents itself as stratified. But its formal structure is, furthermore, "two-dimensional." On the one hand, there is the formation of its individual strata--the sounds of the words, the meaning of sentences into which the words are combined, the schematized aspects of the presented objects, and the presented objects themselves--which extends simultaneously in an inner connection; on the other hand, there is the ordered sequence of its parts that gives it a peculiar quasi-temporal extension from beginning to end and affords the possibility of dynamic development.⁷ The literary work of art, then, is both multi-stratified and multi-phased. These features are the specific criteria for the literary work of art qua work of art. A consequence of the structure and of the properties of its strata is their organic unity. On each stratum of the literary work positive aesthetic qualities may appear whose totality creates a multi-faceted harmony of qualities depending on the genre and artistic value of the work.

The literary work, while displaying an essential mode of existence, displays, too, certain "individual" features in the composition of its essential strata, enabling it to be conceived as an example of a certain determinate class or genre. Hence a specific work reveals its "own" structure whereby we may determine its "type" insofar as it shares aspects of its "own" structure with other literary works, as well as its essential and characteristic mode of existence that establishes it as a literary work of art and not a scientific work or, for that matter, a musical composition, a painting, etc.⁸

Ingarden's first stratum is of particular importance since without it there would be no work at all.

... the phonetic stratum, and in particular the manifold of word sounds, forms the external, fixed

shell of the literary work, in which all the remaining strata find their external point of support or - if one will - their external expression. The constitutive foundation proper of the individual literary work certainly lies in the stratum of meaning units of a lower and higher order. But the meanings are essentially bound to the word sounds....

Yet precisely because the phonetic stratum forms the external, indispensable shell for the stratum of meaning units and thereby for the whole work, it plays an essential role in the apprehension of the work by a psychic subject... the essential accomplishment of word sounds lies in the fact that they "determine" the attendant meanings as soon as the coordination of word sounds and meanings is established. This means that, when a determinate word sound is apprehended by a psychic subject, the apprehension leads directly to the execution of an intentional act in which the content of a determinate meaning is intended. Here, this meaning is not given as an object (of thought) but is rather set into a function; and, for its part, this setting-into-function brings about the fact that the corresponding objectivity which belongs to the word meaning of the sentence is intended, and thereby the subsequent strata of the literary work are revealed.⁹

The phonetic stratum, then, is an essential constituent of the literary work since meaning units necessarily require a word-sound material. The phonetic stratum is closely connected to the role of the meaning units and in various respects supplements and supports their performance. The meaning units lead to a predetermination of manifolds of aspects in which the presented objectivities will appear, and in this the phonetic stratum plays an essential role. The meaning content of sentences is the decisively determining factor for the objects and their vicissitudes which are presented in the work

and which belong in essence and immanently to it. Their existence as well as their collective essence has its direct or indirect source in the derived intentionality of the meaning contents of sentences and is essentially determined by them.¹⁰ The sounds of the words, the units of meaning conjoined by the verbal network of the second stratum have, then, a determinant influence on the two "higher" strata of schematized aspects and the objects presented.

A literary work is first and foremost a linguistic construct. Its basic structure comprises a twofold linguistic stratification: on the one hand the layer of phonemes and linguistic sound-phenomena; on the other hand the meanings of the words and sentences, in virtue of which the higher-level units of meaning emerge and from them the representational content of the work and the aspects in which the subject matter is presented.... [I]n a literary work there are completely determinate sentences arranged in a definite order possessing an established sense and precise syntactical formation. These are composed of words which possess a fixed sound and which belong to a given language and are chosen out of the vocabulary of that language in such a way as to create an individual linguistic style peculiar to the author or even to the particular work.¹¹

The word sounds stabilize the primary meaning of the text as well as determine the sequential order with which we discern the material of the text. The literary work of art, however, as H.G. Ruthrof points out, is not merely a linear sequence, but a construct "in which the meaning units merely fixate 'that which has been imagined' and that which is to be imagined."¹² The word sounds are grouped into the larger meaning units of the sentence and its "higher integers" as sentences form paragraphs, paragraphs form chapters, and chapters "books" or "parts," but the successivity of syntactic constructions, as the Russian Formalist

Roman Jakobson has indicated, is also hierarchically arranged.¹³ The process of concretization on the part of the reader transforms the "linear sequence" of sign and signal of the text into a poetic "pluridimensional sequence."¹⁴

The term concretization refers to the process of construing a coherent mental world from the given phenomena of the text, a process which realizes the complex interrelationship between the various strata comprising the literary work as well as the significance of each stratum.¹⁵

In the reality of their experience, which many authors hope to reproduce without adulteration, all objects and processes are "generally and precisely fixed," that is, at no point and at no moment are they empty or unqualified. In a literary work, on the other hand, the objects presented manifest a large number of "indeterminate areas." Such a work always consists of a finite number of words; the infinitely manifold nature of an object's mode of existence can only be realized by means of high selectivity. Every object presented in literature must thus remain a "schematic construct with various kinds of indeterminate areas." This circumstance reveals a certain kind of disadvantage in the literary presentation of an object, as compared to a real object. At the same time, however, it is precisely this schematization which offers the possibility of genuine artistic formation. This more than compensates for the relative lack of definiteness of the fictional object. In the act of reading the imagination of the reader reendows the fictional object, despite numerous indeterminate areas, with sufficient general definiteness and unity. In such a "concretization" of the literary work not only the discursive meaning of the individual words and sentences is transmitted into the reader's

imagination; the potential for expression at the level of sounds and images in the work is also activated and thus affects the fictional world.¹⁶

The "filling out" of the schematic aspects of the objectivities of the presented world is, however, by no means totally dependent on the work's language only. It is also, significantly, impossible for the text itself to fill out the lacunae of indeterminacy¹⁷ between the schematized aspects--all that the text does, through its syntactic arrangement, is to indicate where they occur. Furthermore, these lacunae offer a variety of interpretations for the specific way in which the various views can be connected with one another by the reader and the reader's response in this respect is both determined by the textual patterns he perceives as well as by the extrinsic information from his "stockpile of typifications" that he brings to bear on the text during the reading process.¹⁸

The fundamental area of literary studies forms the characterology of various literary works. Its purpose is the descriptive characterization of the work, thus the description of its essential qualities and components.¹⁹

In contrast to the aesthetic concretization of the literary work of art is its pre-aesthetic cognition which focusses on those properties of the work that are independent of the aesthetic experience. The results of this cognition allow us to oppose the literary work of art to its varied concretizations, in particular its aesthetic concretizations.²⁰ They provide objective knowledge of the individual work, which remains identical--"the same unchanging skeleton, clothed, as it were, in the garb of various [concretizations]"²¹--in its schematic structure in all concretizations. As Ingarden points out, pre-aesthetic cognition of a literary

work can only be carried out "objectively" after an aesthetic concretization has, more or less been achieved:

This cognition can begin only when the work in question has already been read in the ordinary attitude of a literary consumer. In carrying it out, we take into consideration the results of this first reading, aided by a renewed reading, which usually takes place only in individual fragments. But it is also more than a mere reading, insofar as special deliberations, comparisons, and analytic and synthetic reflections are carried out which do not appear in ordinary reading. Fragments of the various possible aesthetic concretizations of the work must also be taken into consideration here. Thus it is generally a very complicated procedure, which does not dispense with the reading - indeed it always consults it - but necessarily goes beyond it.... The preaesthetic investigation of a literary work of art is usually undertaken in order, as we say, to gain "objective" knowledge of it. The concept of "objectivity" of knowledge is well known to be very ambiguous,... It will perhaps suffice to say here that the knowledge we are attempting to characterize is "objective" when it is successful in discovering the properties and structural characteristics appertaining to the literary work itself, which as such are independent of the modifications which the cognitive procedure undergoes under various circumstances, depending on who carries out this cognition and under which²² external conditions it occurs.

The individual strata of the literary work of art of positive value contain special qualities that are either actual (artistic) or potential (aesthetic)²³ and that lead to a polyphonic harmony of aesthetically valent qualities²⁴ when the work is

concretized as an aesthetic object through assuming an aesthetic attitude.

There are, however, special dangers attendant on a faithful aesthetic concretization of a literary work of art, which essentially consists of a reader's imaginative determination of certain lacunae of indeterminacy. These are precisely aspects of parts of the presented world and its individual elements that are not "specifically determined by the text." The reader of a work may, of course, merely identify such lacunae and leave them indeterminate in order to apprehend the work in its characteristic structure in a pre-aesthetic cognition of the work. At the other extreme, however, the reader may also, as Ingarden notes, go beyond the text in various points without being clearly aware of it:

We do so partially under the suggestive influence of the text but partially, also, under the influence of a natural inclination, since we are accustomed to considering individual things and persons as completely determinate. Another reason for this filling-out is that the objects portrayed in the literary work of art generally have the ontic character of reality, so that it seems natural to us that they be clearly and completely determined just as genuine, real, individual objects are. The tendency to apprehend literary works of art in an aesthetic attitude works in the same direction of filling out places of indeterminacy. 25

However, there is not in every aesthetic attitude, as Ingarden points out, this dominant tendency to have direct intercourse with concrete, completely determined objectivities. In James's works, with their emphasis on the dramatization of consciousness, the abstract, the realm of feeling, the process of introspection, and the "incomplete" are often the objects of aesthetic experience and aesthetic evaluation.

In an aesthetic attitude, the reader fills out the lacunae of indeterminacy with "elements chosen from among many possible or permissible elements" in contrast to a naturalistic attitude in which the elements chosen are "instinctive" and may not always be permissible in terms of the work:

Usually the "choice" is made without a conscious, specially formulated intention on the part of the reader. He simply gives his imagination free rein and complements the objects with a series of new elements, so that they seem to be fully determined.²⁶

However, while the reader must go beyond what is specifically determined in the stratum of presented objectivities if he wants to achieve an aesthetic concretization, he must at the same time consult those boundaries "set by the text itself" to achieve a faithful aesthetically valuable concretization. He may also, nevertheless, give free rein to his imagination and, as Ingarden acknowledges, yet achieve an aesthetically valuable concretization that lies outside the boundaries set by the work itself. But of prime interest to the literary critic or researcher are the concretizations of the literary work of art that are faithful to the work as well as their relative aesthetic value once the prior question of validity has been satisfactorily resolved.

Some of the central values (besides its importance to generic classification) of Ingarden's conceptual scheme are that it cuts across the unhappy polarity between "form" and "content," it concedes the possibility of several valid concretizations of one and the same work and the possible diversity of their aesthetic value, it provides an ontic basis for the determination of the necessary interconnections among the aesthetically valuable qualities of a literary work which alone can give us an understanding of the structure of the aesthetic object, it clarifies

the distinction between artistic and aesthetic object, it clarifies the distinction between artistic and aesthetic values, and it provides "a scientifically tested basis" for literary evaluation and so effectively limits pure subjectivism in the field of literary scholarship.²⁷

This is far from being an exhaustive description of Ingarden's aesthetics and will perhaps be somewhat confusing to the person who has read neither The Literary Work of Art nor The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art, just as it will certainly appear inadequate to anyone who has completed these works. Its function, nevertheless, is to provide an immediately accessible directive to the phenomenological terminology used throughout the present work and not to serve as either a substitute for or a supplement to Ingarden's works. Critical essays on Ingarden and the phenomenological approach to literature may be found in my Select Bibliography of secondary sources. While my present emphasis is on Ingarden's theory, this is not to deny or overlook the valuable contribution to phenomenology and literature of critics and theorists such as H.G. Ruthrof, Wolfgang Iser, Robert Magliola, Michael Murray, Maurice Natanson, Donald B. Kuspit, Georges Poulet, and others.²⁸ Indeed, I am indebted to many of their insights throughout the present work. Furthermore, the present work does not rely entirely on phenomenological premises alone. I have made constant use of other critical approaches (for example, structural, historical, biographical approaches) when I have found them to be particularly expedient and often necessary.

E.D. Hirsch has argued that "all understanding of verbal meaning is necessarily genre bound."²⁹ Martin Swales has commented on this claim:

This vindication of the genre concept involves a dialectic of extrinsic and intrinsic in the sense that we can only define the intrinsic

genre - "that sense of the whole by means of which an interpreter can correctly understand any part of its determinacy" - with reference to the extrinsic genres that are literary modes and conventions. Reference to the extrinsic genre concept is also part of the historicity (and individuality) of any given work of literature.³⁰

Such a "dialectic of extrinsic and intrinsic" factors informs in particular my first chapter. Here I have attempted to present a diachronic view of the generic characteristics of the nouvelle with reference to the various traditions and theories of the form and with emphasis on James's particular use of the form. I have also attempted to outline the way in which phenomenology may be usefully applied to genre study, with recourse to Wittgenstein's notion of "family resemblances," in the attempt to show that the genre itself is an open concept. It is only the concept of the Jamesian nouvelle that I have attempted to close. Underlying this attempt, then, is Robert C. Elliott's awareness that:

... real definitions like satire, tragedy, the novel are impossible. These, as Morris Weitz has pointed out ("The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XV (Sept., 1956), 27-35), are what philosophers call open concepts; that is, concepts in which a set of necessary and sufficient properties by which one could define the concept, and thus close it, are lacking.³¹

My second chapter views the nouvelle in terms of James's own critical and theoretical outlook. The third chapter attempts to outline the genesis of the Jamesian nouvelle by analysing The Turn of the Screw and introduces certain fundamental phenomenological premises. The fourth chapter is the most phenomenologically orientated and the final chapter briefly and synchronically synthesizes the central features of the Jamesian nouvelle that distinguish its status as a specific genre.

Notes

¹ Roland Barthes, "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative," New Literary History, VI (Winter 1975), p. 237.

² In Logical Investigations, trans. J.N. Findlay (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970).

³ H.G. Ruthrof, "Reading Works of Literary Art," Journal of Aesthetic Education, VIII (October 1974), p. 89.

⁴ Maurice Natanson, Literature, Philosophy, and the Social Sciences: Essays in Existentialism and Phenomenology (The Hague: Mouton, 1962), p. 16.

⁵ Roman Ingarden, The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art, trans. Ruth Ann Crowley and Kenneth R. Olsen (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 14. Hereafter cited as CLWA.

⁶ David Michael Levin, "Foreward" to The Literary Work of Art by Roman Ingarden, trans. George B. Grabowicz (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. xxi. The Literary Work of Art hereafter cited as LWA.

⁷ Theodore Fiedler, "Taking Ingarden Seriously: Critical Reflections on 'The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art' Part I," Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology, VI, 2 (1975), p. 132.

⁸ See Roman Ingarden, Investigations into the Ontology of Art: Music, Painting, Architecture, the Film (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1975).

⁹ LWA, pp. 59-60.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 187.

¹¹ Roman Ingarden, "Artistic and Aesthetic Values," British Journal of Aesthetics, IV, 3 (1964), p. 206.

¹² H.G. Ruthrof, "Narrative Language," Language and Style, X (Winter 1977), p. 44.

¹³ Roman Jakobson, "Parts and Wholes," Selected

Writings II: Word and Language (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), p. 280. See also Ruthrof, "Narrative Language," p. 43.

¹⁴ E. Stankiewicz, "Poetic and Non-Poetic Language in Their Relation," Poetics, ed. Donald Davie, Roman Jakobson, et al (The Hague: Mouton, 1961), pp. 13ff. See Ruthrof, "Narrative Language," p. 43.

¹⁵ LWA, pp. 252, 268-70, 305, 332-58.

¹⁶ Franz Stanzel, Narrative Situations in the Novel, trans. James P. Puskas (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), p. 8.

¹⁷ "Unbestimmtheitsstellen" - variously translated as "spots of indeterminacy," "places of indeterminacy," "areas of indeterminacy," and "lacunae of indeterminacy." I have consistently used the last translation, except in quotations, as the most precise in meaning.

¹⁸ See H.G. Ruthrof, "Aspects of a Phenomenological View of Narrative," The Journal of Narrative Technique, IV, 2 (1974), pp. 91-97.

¹⁹ Roman Ingarden, Studia z estetyki (Studies in Aesthetics), 3 vols. (Warsaw, 1947-70), vol. I, p. 248, as quoted in translation by K.M. Dolgov, "Roman Ingarden's Phenomenology of Literature," Dialectics and Humanism, (Spring 1975), p. 103.

²⁰ Concretization plays an analagous role to the reader's cognition of the stratum of schematized aspects which, however, must be actualized rather than objectified prior to concretization since aspects are only held in potential readiness in the work. Only then "do they exercise their proper function, that of bringing to appearance an object which has just been perceived." (CLWA, p. 56.) Objectification and concretization are both phases of the composite cognitive operation of aesthetic concretization which is the result of an "active" reading of a work undertaken in a co-creative attitude; that is, the notion of the author and reader as co-creators of the literary work of art as an object of aesthetic experience.

- 21 CLWA, p. 234.
- 22 Ibid., pp. 234-35.
- 23 Ingarden, "Artistic and Aesthetic Values," p. 206.
- 24 This refers to the aesthetically valuable and metaphysical qualities arising from the content and interrelationship of the various strata of the literary work of art. See LWA, pp. 369-72.
- 25 CLWA, p. 52.
- 26 Ibid., p. 53.
- 27 See CLWA, p. 414n. "If we take 'science' [Wissenschaft] , in the narrow sense of the word, then, of course, literary scholarship can never be 'science' in that sense; nor does it aspire to be. There is no longer ground for argument here. There is simply no justification for holding the narrow sense of 'science' to be the only possibly or admissible one."
- 28 For complete citation of works by these authors please refer to the Select Bibliography at the end of this thesis.
- 29 E.D. Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 76.
- 30 Martin Swales, The German Novelle (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 12.
- 31 Robert C. Elliott, "The Definition of Satire: A Note on Method," Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature, XI (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 22.

Chapter 1 : The Nouvelle as Genre

During a creative life that spanned half a century, Henry James wrote one hundred and twelve short stories and nouvelles. More than half of these "tales", as he collectively called them, were published after 1888 -- the year in which, after completing, The Tragic Muse, James wrote to Robert Louis Stevenson proclaiming: "I propose, for a longish period, to do nothing but short lengths. I want to leave a multitude of pictures of my time, projecting my small circular frame upon as many different spots as possible and going in for number as well as quality, so that the number may constitute a total having a certain value as observation and testimony."¹ This "wish and dream" was reiterated nearly a year later in the Notebooks on May 19, 1889, when he expressed "the desire that the literary heritage, such as it is, poor thing, that I may leave, shall consist of a large number of short things, nouvelles and tales, illustrative of ever so many things in life" (N, p. 101). Three days short of a year later, the wish had become something of a fixation and he wrote to his brother, William James, that "The Tragic Muse is to be my last long novel. For the rest of my life I hope to do lots of short things with irresponsible spaces between."² By "short things" he meant "things of from 7000 to 10000 words" as he stipulated in the Notebooks on February 22, 1891 (N, p. 102). However, his desire to represent an ever more intricate consciousness led him to write much longer works despite a resolution to achieve concise form by making "a la Maupassant... my constant motto" (N, p. 92). Earlier James had noted of Guy de Maupassant that, out of "a hundred short tales and only four regular novels... the tales deserve

the first place in any candid appreciation of his talent."³ Another year passed and James, in a further Notebook entry, justified his new position from the standpoint of the "artistic... par excellence" which was "simply the consideration that by doing short things I can do so many, touch so many subjects, break out in so many places, handle so many of the threads of Life" (N, p. 106).

James's devotion to shorter forms of prose narrative had an ulterior motive. It would enable him to devote time to another beloved but comparatively short-lived experiment: his disastrous attempts to write plays and see them produced. But unlike his abortive efforts in drama, James's devotion to shorter forms of prose fiction did not result in failure and the literary achievement of his tales, many of the best of which were written during the time of his theatrical experiments (1889-1895), makes him as great a master of the shorter prose narrative as he is generally, and all too exclusively, regarded as being of the modern novel. But it is of the nouvelle, James's preferred form and one that is somewhat neglected in English literature (as he realized only too well), that James achieved a unique mastery during the years between 1888 and 1895. Even prior to then he had achieved remarkable control in the mastery of the form as early as 1869 with the romantic and highly melodramatic Gabrielle de Bergerac, followed by Madame de Mauves (1874), the then controversial and highly successful Daisy Miller: A Study (1878), An International Episode (1878-79), The Siege of London (1883), and Lady Barbarina (1884),⁴ all of which constitute the earliest and most successful works in the genre and foreshadow James's "International Theme". However, it was after 1888 that James expressly discarded the novel and dedicated himself to "a masterly brevity." In yet another letter to Stevenson on March 19, 1892, James declared that "I am busy with the short -- I have forsworn the

long."⁵ The culmination of his devotion to shorter forms of narrative is reached in a letter to William Dean Howells in 1895: "I shall never again write a long novel; but I hope to write six immortal short ones - and some tales of the same quality."⁶

Notably, in August, 1893, James had revised slightly his original desire of 1889 and supplanted it by

the desire to escape from the cramp of the too intensely short... making me ask myself whether I am not creating myself needless difficulties. God knows how dear is brevity and how sacred today is concision. But it's a question of degree, and of the quantity of importance that one can give. That importance is everything now. To try and squeeze it into a fixed and beggarly number of words is a poor and a vain undertaking - a waste of time. (N, p. 135)

The full treatment of his subject in balance with the suitably concise quality of its importance and the right degree of brevity led James to prepare the way for the more extensive treatment that the nouvelle and the short novel would lend him. By January, 1899, however, he had retreated considerably from his resolve to limit himself to the short alone, and prepared the way for the three longest, and greatest, of his novels of the "late period":

How, through all hesitations and conflicts and worries, the thing, the desire to get back only to the big (scenic, constructive, 'architectural' effects) seizes me and carries me off my feet: making me feel that it's a far deeper economy of time to sink, at any moment, into the evocation and ciphering out of that, than into any other small beguilement at all. Ah, once more, to let myself go! (N, p. 269)

The interaction of these two apparently opposing standpoints resulted in a mutually complementary formal relationship, the potential for which was

present from virtually the beginning of James's artistic career. Central to this relationship stands the intermediate form of the nouvelle which bridges the gap between the short story or the "concise anecdote," as James preferred to call it, and the novel, while maintaining a distinct generic identity as a literary form. As Walter Isle points out, the nouvelle and its neighbour in the generic continuum, the short novel, exerted a particular influence on James's later long novels which, despite his wishes, have drawn the bulk of his subsequent critical acclaim.

There is no violent break between the earlier novels and those of the nineties, but there are some basic differences which should be noted.... The long, "panoramic" novels of the 1880's, with fairly extensive variety in character and setting, are followed by novels that are much shorter, more compact, perhaps even more restricted in setting and numbers of characters. The experimental novels are much closer to what we generally consider "the short novel" (however we may define that elusive term). This is true even of the longer works of the period - What Maisie Knew and The Awkward Age.... The novels of the nineties often strike one at first as extended nouvelles (which may be accounted for in part... by James's initial conception of most of them as short tales). There has been a drastic concentration in character, time, action, and scene, more concentrated even than in some of the earlier short works. Usually only a handful of characters are involved or even mentioned; the action is limited in duration (except in the first parts of What Maisie Knew, a special case).⁷

Fifteen years after its first publication in The Yellow Book, James, in one of the prefaces to the New York Edition of his novels and tales, wrote of The Coxon Fund:

A marked example of the possible scope, at once, and the possible neatness of the nouvelle, it takes its place for me in a series of which the main merit and sign is the effort to do the complicated thing with a strong brevity and lucidity - to arrive, on behalf of the multiplicity, at a certain science of control. Infinitely attractive... the question of how to exert this control in accepted conditions and how yet to sacrifice no real value; problem ever dearest to any economic soul desirous to keep renewing, and with a frugal splendour, its ideal of economy. Sacred altogether to memory, in short, such labour and such lights. Thus "The Coxon Fund" is such a complicated thing that if it still seems to carry itself - by which I mean if its clearness still rules, or still serves - some pursued question of how the trick was played would probably not be thankless. (P, p. 231)

To James, the nouvelle was a small reflector capable of illuminating or representing a great deal of material;⁸ the problem of its economy and tight form was for him both coercive and delightful and The Coxon Fund, by his own admission, is central to the genre with which he concerned himself during the years under discussion. First published in 1894, it comes at the height of his creative exertions to master the brevity and lucidity of shorter narrative forms. James himself invites his readers to pose "some pursued question of how the trick was played," and so invites the approach to the nouvelle through genre.

James's admiration for Henry Harland, who started The Yellow Book, a quarterly magazine, in 1894, appears to be founded largely on Harland's indifference to the prescription of length, for his recognition of "shades and differences, varieties and styles" instead of the "blank misery" in the Anglo-Saxon world of the measured and undefined tale, the rule of the word-count.

I was invited, and all urgently, to

contribute to the first number [of The Yellow Book] , and was regaled with the golden truth that my composition might absolutely assume, might shamelessly parade in, its own organic form. It was disclosed to me, wonderfully, that - so golden the air pervading the enterprise - any projected contribution might conform, not only unchallenged but by this circumstance itself the more esteemed, to its true intelligible nature. For any idea I might wish to express I might have space, in other words, elegantly to express it - an offered license that, on the spot, opened up the millennium to the "short story." One had so often known this product to struggle, in one's hands, under the rule of prescription at any cost, with the opposition so offered to its really becoming a story, that my friend's emphasized indifference to the arbitrary limit of length struck me, I remember, as the fruit of the finest artistic intelligence. We had been at one - that we already knew - on the truth that the form of wrought things, in this order, were all exquisitely and effectively, the things; so that, for the delight of mankind, form might compete with form and might correspond to fitness; might, that is, in the given case, have an inevitability, a marked felicity. Among forms, moreover, we had had, on the dimensional ground - for length and breadth - our ideal, the beautiful and blest nouvelle; the generous, the enlightened hour for which appeared at last to shine. It was under the star of the nouvelle that, in other languages, a hundred interesting and charming results, such studies on the minor scale as the best of Turgenieff's, of Balzac's, of Maupassant's, of Bourget's, and just lately, in our own tongue, of Kipling's, had been all economically, arrived at - thanks to their authors', as "contributors," having been able to count, right and left, on a wise and liberal support. It had taken the blank misery of our Anglo-Saxon sense of such matters to organize, as might be said, the general indifference to this fine type of composition. In that dull

view a "short story" was a "short story," and that was the end of it. Shades and differences, varieties and styles, the value above all of the idea happily developed, languished, to extinction, under the hard-and-fast rule of the "from six to eight thousand words" - when, for one's benefit, the rigour was a little relaxed. For myself, I delighted in the shapely nouvelle - as, for that matter, I had from time to time and here and there been almost encouraged to show. (P, pp. 219-20)

James's expressed preference for the nouvelle as a form above all other forms was undoubtedly sparked off by his great admiration for Turgenev whom he met in Paris during his year-long sojourn there in 1876.⁹ As a young man in his early twenties, James's first book reviews for the Nation and the North American Review had revealed an already intense involvement in French literature, gained largely through the Revue des Deux Mondes.¹⁰ He had been closely reading Sainte-Beauve, Taine, Schéerer, and Montégut, and had re-read and studied the works of the French masters as well as several minor writers - Honoré de Balzac, George Sand, Gustave Flaubert, Edmond About, Prosper Mérimée, Octave Feuillet, Victor Chéribuliez--equipping himself with the critical tools, the theory, and the standards of form, style, and subtlety that were so alien to the still brief history of the American novel.¹¹ From the very beginning of his literary career, at the age of seventeen, the influence of the French was paramount. James's first published tale (unsigned), "A Tragedy of Error," in the February, 1864, issue of the Continental Monthly, is a pastiche in the strongest manner of French romantic melodrama. As Leon Edel points out:

The imprint of France was strong upon Henry James's early writings, both in the critical pieces and the fiction. At every turn French craftsmanship and French example are invoked in the reviews. The young

Henry James had more theory in his head and a wider embrace of European models than any novelist then writing in the United States - and he had not yet written a novel himself.¹²

In Paris, James was introduced, by Turgenev, to Flaubert, to whom he took "a great fancy":

I shall always be so glad to have known Flaubert; a powerful, serious, manly, deeply corrupted, yet not corrupting nature. There was something I greatly liked in him, and he was very kind to me. He was a head and shoulders above the others, the men I saw at his house on Sunday afternoons - Zola, Goncourt, Daudet, etc. (I mean as a man - not as a talker, etc.) I remember in especial one afternoon (a weekday) that I went to see him and found him alone. I sat with him a long time; something led him to repeat to me a little poem of Th. Gautier's - Les Vieux Portraits (what led him to repeat it was that we had been talking of French poets, and he had been expressing his preference for Théophile Gautier over Alfred Musset - il était plus français, etc). I went that winter a great deal to the Comédie Française - though not so much as when I was in Paris in '72... I saw a great deal of the little American 'set' - the American village encamped en plein Paris. They were all very kind, very friendly, hospitable, etc.... But ineffably tiresome and unprofitable. Their society had become a kind of obligation, and it had much to do with my suddenly deciding to abandon my plans of indefinite residence, take flight to London and settle there as best I could. (N, p. 26)

While James detested what he called the "American Paris" and avoided it as far as social obligation would allow, he revelled in meeting with the French and other European literary personages of the day, especially the cosmopolitan Russians among whom he appeared to be happiest.

Between 1866 and 1876 James wrote critical essays on Alfred de Musset, Baudelaire, Balzac, George

Sand, Charles de Bernard, Flaubert, the Goncourt brothers, and Mérimée, all of which were published in American periodicals of the time and were republished (with the exception of that on the Goncourt brothers) in book form in 1878 as French Poets and Novelists. In 1888, another volume, Partial Portraits, appeared, which included articles on Alphonse Daudet and Guy de Maupassant; and five years later, Essays in London and Elsewhere contained articles on Flaubert, Pierre Loti, and the Goncourt brothers. In 1902, James wrote an introduction to an English translation of Madame Bovary which was later republished, together with the essays on Balzac and Zola written in the same year, in Notes on Novelists (1914). A further essay on Zola appeared in 1903 in the Atlantic Monthly; and two years later "The Lesson of Balzac" was published in the same periodical.

From these essays and from the Notebooks and James's letters, it is possible to determine those features of French literature which either attracted him or caused him critical consternation. His early attitude towards the French writers, which appears to have been formed by 1876, remained his attitude in most cases, with only slight modification, throughout his life.

James was impressed but somewhat overawed by the boldness of Zola (indeed the Gallic frankness of the French realists invariably had this effect on him) whom he first met at one of the Sunday afternoon meetings at Flaubert's house, a meeting he describes in an essay on Zola with every indication of the stimulation that he gained from these occasions. It was Zola's crudity, his "brutal indecency," that initially provoked a violent reaction from James. He considered Zola to be "the most thoroughgoing of the little band of out-and-out realists. Unfortunately, the real, for him, means exclusively the unclean, and he utters his crudities with an air of bravado which makes them doubly intolerable."¹³ While James

respected and admired Zola's artistic striving and theory, he was opposed to its application which was, he believed, completely lacking in "the most human faculty we possess"--taste: Zola's deterministic view of man impaired his artistic effort.

There is simply no limit, in fine, to the misfortune of being tasteless; it does not merely disfigure the surface and the fringe of your performance - it eats back into the very heart and enfeebles the sources of life. When you have no taste you have no discretion, which is the conscience of taste, and when you have no discretion you perpetrate books like *Rome*, which are without intellectual modesty, books like *Fécondité*, which are without a sense of the ridiculous, books like *Vérité*, which are without the finer vision of human experience.¹⁴

However, James's late essays on Zola clearly indicate that he considered him finally to be a great writer, both "prodigious" and "magnificent," and also that he became reconciled to Zola's expression of sexual content, particularly given the comparative sterility of the Anglo-Saxon novel; but he still saw the insensitivity of the early novels and the mechanical formulation of the later novels as pitfalls in Zola's technique.

In letters of the time written to Howells and to his mother back in America, James revealed that he found the French provincial and exclusive. "I have seen almost nothing of the literary fraternity, and there are fifty reasons why I should not become intimate with them. I don't like their wares and they don't like any others...."¹⁵ In July, 1876, he wrote to his brother that he had grown weary of the French circle: "I have done with 'em forever, and am turning English all over."¹⁶ For their style and form and theoretical awareness, James held the French in high esteem, but the lack of moral awareness in French works repelled him: time and time again he

wrote of the French writers that they were "morally and intellectually so superficial," that they "had morally no taste," that they were "second-rate" because they "had no morality," or, in the case of the Goncourt brothers, "the moral side of the work is dry and thin."¹⁷

Having studied closely the French and Anglo-Saxon literatures James was faced with the difficult problem of reconciling the "form" of the French novel with the "life" of the English. A fervent admirer of George Eliot in England and of Hawthorne in America he had been obliged to recognize that even the greatest writers of his literary world possessed little sense of form and economy. He had then turned to the French because they knew how to deal properly with the concrete. But he soon noticed that their form developed in inverse proportion to life. The more he saw their "intellectual daylight," the more he cultivated ambiguity; the more they theorized, the more he kept himself disponible; the more he became acquainted with their unsympathetic irony, the more he accentuated his good-natured humour. In this way he put a distance between himself and reality, which enabled him to convey an impression of density and to create three-dimensional characters. The chiaroscuro in which most of his mature work is bathed helped to increase the impression of complexity and to suggest life at its fullest. Like the narrator of The Beldonald Holbein, he found "more life in situations obscure and subject to interpretation than in the gross rattle of the foreground."

... James returned to the Anglo-Saxon tradition, but if he chose again to leave some aspects of reality in "the frigid vague," it was no longer out of ignorance. The French had left their stamp on his art and he was never again to free himself from the torment of form. In his late manner, nothing is left to chance; even his blanks are constructions and his evasions are deliberate. Like Leonardo da Vinci, whom he admired so much,

James covered his mathematical constructions with the most elaborate intertwining of leaves: like him he sought shelter in a still deeper penumbra and left us with a secret to find out and a smile to decipher.¹⁸

James's initial distaste for certain aspects of French literature was not, however, permanent. In 1884, after eight years in England, he visited Paris and met the French writers once again: "Seeing these people does me a world of good, and this intellectual vivacity and raffinement make an English mind seem like a sort of glue-pot," he wrote to William James.¹⁹ Years later, he described the French as "the people in the world one may have to go more of the way to meet than to meet any other."²⁰

The truth was that he greatly enjoyed himself among his young French peers and he saw more of them than he admitted. As for Flaubert and Turgenev, he sought them out as often as was decently possible. He was to acknowledge that the talk of the cénacle had "extreme intensity and variety." He had found at last the male company which he had lacked in Cambridge and in Rome. For all the "narrowness" of the French writers, he seems in the long retrospect - and after the turn of the century - to have cherished their memory.²¹

James did, nevertheless, feel himself to be an outsider and although he had access to Flaubert's circle (indeed, as Leon Edel points out, this made him feel more of an outsider than ever), he preferred to visit Flaubert alone during the week when he could be assured of intimate conversation with the elderly writer.

James had been acquainted with the works of Flaubert before this time; he had read Madame Bovary on its first appearance in America and, in 1874, wrote an unsigned review of the nouvelle La Tentation de Saint-Antoine for the Nation, in which he deplored the realistic treatment of a sacred subject. Soon

after meeting Flaubert, James declared that he was able to "see all round him intellectually"; while he admired Flaubert's concern with technique and form, he also recognized that it was all too frequently apt to stifle sensitivity and vitality. Flaubert's emotional expression was choked by his technical expression: "L'ame française at all events shows in him but ill," James wrote in 1902.²² While James admired the "firm roundness" of Madame Bovary, he deplored the absence of the human element in Flaubert's works, which he accounted for in his limited experience of "felt life," and which he saw as resulting in the definite coldness of his works. In Flaubert's works we "breathe the air of pure aesthetics" but this alone is insufficient to sustain the emotional and experiential intensity of the literary work of art. Flaubert is a "consummate writer... yet there are whole sides of life to which it [his "gift"] was never addressed and which it quite failed to suspect as a field of exercise."²³

James constantly felt the pressure of life on his limited form and tried to combine the expansion of the one with the rigour of the other: Flaubert only knew the nightmare of toil and deliberately kept life at a distance by his flights in the rare and the strange and by his ostentatious irony. But though they did not follow the same paths James and Flaubert reached the same height because of their seriousness and of the great amount of "doing" in their works. It is art indeed, James wrote, "that makes life, makes interest, makes importance... and I know of no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of its process."²⁴

But as James recognized that Flaubert's selection of material "was in some respects narrow," so he recognized that Flaubert's restricted vision was superbly accommodated to the form of the nouvelle: "... he stops not too short to have left us three really 'cast' works... to say nothing of the element

of perfection, of the superlative for the size, in his three nouvelles [Salambô, La Tentation de Saint-Antoine, and L'Education sentimentale].²⁵ It was in these works that his attempt attained "a spirit that gives an extension to the idea of the achievable and the achieved in a literary thing...."²⁶

Flaubert's influence upon James was almost a wholly stylistic one.... Yet there is one other point at which Flaubert may have exercised an influence upon James, and that is in the development of the technique known as the restricted point of view.... J.W. Beach... has advanced two suggestions: that it may have been an outcome of his reading of Stevenson, who uses the common romantic device of the single narrator, or of his ten year's devotion to the short story, a form in which the restricted point of view is natural and common. It is surely significant that the closest parallels with the technique as James employed it are to be found in the novels of Flaubert and Maupassant. The centre of interest in both Madame Bovary and L'Education sentimentale is the consciousness of the central character, and it is clear from James's essay on Flaubert in 1902 that he was aware of this; he reproached Flaubert, however, for having chosen as his central characters persons too slight to bear such a load. He approved of the technical device, but for his own work he preferred to use characters more richly endowed with sensibility. The reason for this preference he has clearly stated: "... the figures in any picture, the agents in any drama, are interesting only in proportion as they feel their respective situations; since the consciousness, on their part, of the complication exhibited forms for us their link of connexion with it."²⁶

James greatly admired Flaubert's protégé, Guy de Maupassant, for his "robust and vivid" concision and

invoked his aid during the writing of The Patagonia-- but to little avail since The Patagonia, first published in August and September, 1888, in the English Illustrated Magazine, developed to just beyond twenty-three thousand words. Nevertheless, he paid continual reverence to "the rigid Maupassant (at extremest brevity) system" although, despite the many attempts that the Notebooks give witness to, he never really mastered it.

While James considered Maupassant's tales to be masterpieces of their form, he was, predictably, perturbed by their brutality and coarseness, although this was somewhat redeemed by Maupassant's last two novels, Pierre et Jean and Fort comme la Mort, which "deal with shades of feeling and delicacies of experience to which he had shown himself rather a stranger."²⁸ But while he found Maupassant philosophically thin (and, as such, well able to adjust to the tight form of the conte), James admired his rigorous control and his selective sense of form and tried to emulate it, although at the same time he wanted to sacrifice nothing. This, understandably, posed problems: he attempted to make "The Real Thing" (1892) "something as admirably compact and selected as Maupassant" (N, p. 104) yet was only able to curtail its development at 10,000 words. He was delighted by the words of Anatole France:

La premiere politesse de l'ecrivain
n'est-ce point d'etre bref? La
nouvelle suffit a tous. On peut y
enfermer beaucoup de sens en peu de
mots. Une nouvelle bien faite est le
regal de connaisseurs et le
contentement des difficiles. C'est
l'elixir et la quintessence. C'est
l'onguent precieux.²⁹

And he resolved to "hammer away at the effort to do successfully and triumphantly, a large number of very short things" which, he realized, "takes time and practice to get into the trick of..." especially as he had "never attempted before to deal with such extreme

brevity" (N, p. 105). The vivid concision of Maupassant, however, was as beyond James as his attempts to imitate the art of the dramatist, which required equal restraint. Yet the obsession with concise form and extremest brevity is revealed in the close organization of James's novels and has its nearest and most satisfactory outlet in the nouvelles in which he could "enfermer beaucoup de sens" within, for him, a relatively low word-span. But, as Jeanne Delbaere-Garant has so accurately pointed out, what James ultimately achieved was exactly the contrary of what Maupassant had done; though, at the same time, his achievement received its initial impulse from the "spirit of Maupassant."

Maupassant's objectivity consisted in looking at the world as it stood in front of him and in describing it with perfect coolness, impartiality and absence of passion. He chose the simplest, the most uncomplicated human material so that his stories were also stripped of superfluous elements: what remained was the very kernel and a direct apprehension of life which, for James, also meant the end of it. Though art is simplification it must not simplify too much if it is to render the mystery and the density of life. While Maupassant looked at the bottom, James looked at the top. The portion of life to which, from his window, he directed his field-glass was not the animal life in its utmost simplification but the life of the consciousness in its most elaborate form. Maupassant despised life and quickly reached its kernel. James loved it, and never reached the kernel because he saw depth within depth in its richness and complexity. If, as James himself often assumed in his prefaces, life is all expansion, muddle, waste, and art all economy and composition, if the writer's task consists in drawing a line around his subject and in creating artificial limits to relations which, in reality, stop nowhere, it is easy to understand that the novelist who chooses in

the muddle of life the simplest subject and the simplest relations will encounter less difficulty when putting the picture into its frame than the one for whom a case is never rare enough, a consciousness never large enough....³⁰

"The poison of the 'short story' " had been in James's blood since his schooldays or at least since his first contact with Mérimée, when he learnt "the lesson of a mysterious selection and conviction."³¹ He was introduced to the short stories of Mérimée by John La Farge, the painter, in 1860, who urged him to translate "La Vénus d'Ille" (which thematically prefigures James's early tale "The Last of the Valerii" [1874]) which had struck the young James "as a masterpiece of art" and had "offered to the young curiosity concerned that sharpest of all challenges for youth, the challenge as to the special source of effect."³² Translations of Mérimée's "Tamango" and "Mateo Falcone" followed but all were rejected by the periodicals to which they had been submitted--which led James to suspect that Mérimée must be "distinguished." Years later James was to consider Mérimée's stories "perfect models of the narrative art" and admirable for their "pregnant concision and for a firmness of contour suggesting hammered metal."³³

It was also through La Farge that James was introduced to the works of Balzac and the influence seems to have been immediate. Thomas Sergeant Perry, James's boyhood friend, correspondent, and confidant, testifies to James writing at this time stories "mainly of the romantic kind" in which sophisticated heroines seemed "to have read all Balzac in the cradle and to be positively dripping with lurid crimes."³⁴ Indeed, the early influence of Balzac is to be felt in James's first published tale, "A Tragedy of Error"; and as late as 1905, in the lecture he delivered in America, "The Lesson of Balzac," James claimed that he had learned from Balzac "more of the lessons of the

engaging mystery of fiction than... [from] anyone else."³⁵ But while James admired "the grandsons of Balzac" (Zola, Flaubert, Maupassant, Daudet, etc.) for their formal control, his appreciation of Balzac has a different emphasis. Needless to say, he regretted Balzac's lack of a moral sense;³⁶ and he found his manipulation of form "charmless." In his 1875 essay on Balzac, James expressed admiration for Balzac's vivid delineation of character, his sense of genealogy, and his almost Dickensian grasp of fine detail--"his fine passion for things - for material objects, for furniture, upholstery, bricks and mortar."³⁷ By 1902, however, he viewed this aspect of Balzac's art quite differently: "the artist of the Comédie Humaine," he wrote, "is half smothered by the historian."³⁸ In 1905 he charged Balzac with seeing and presenting too many facts--"facts of history, of property, of genealogy, of topography, of sociology."³⁹ But both despite and in view of this, Balzac is still "the father of us all," for James had shifted the emphasis for his admiration from Balzac's use of detailed setting and characterization to the motive behind that preoccupation:

It is a question, you see, of penetrating into a subject; his corridors always went further and further and further; which is but another way of expressing his inordinate passion for detail. It matters nothing... that this extravagance is also his great fault; in spite, too, of its all being detail vivified and related, characteristic and constructive, essentially prescribed by the terms of his plan.⁴⁰

Balzac's "luxury" was his "intensity"--"the extraordinary number and length of his radiating and ramifying corridors--the labyrinth in which he finally lost himself."⁴¹ It was Balzac's preoccupation "absolutely to get into the constituted consciousness" and his overwhelming sense of the developmental ("No

one begins... to handle the time element and produce the time-effect with the authority of Balzac in his amplest sweeps"⁴²) that set him apart from the rest of the French realists. "His subject is again and again the complicated human creature or human condition...."⁴³ It was this that impressed James above all since it was a subject akin to his own creative endeavours and one, too, that obstinately broke the boundaries of his attempts at "extremist brevity" in the mode of Maupassant and Mérimée. Significantly, he was able to reconcile and bring into close harmony these two impulses in his nouvelles. Mérimée's, even Maupassant's art, in James's metaphor, is "the art of the slate pencil," while, in contrast, Balzac's is "the art of the brush" and, by 1905, when James had returned to "the big (scenic, constructive, 'architectural' effects)," he declared that it was "to the art of the brush the novel must return."⁴⁴

James's great admiration for Turgenev was largely founded on "his depth, his variety, his form, the small, full perfect things he has left" (N, p. 101). His praise for Turgenev in an article published in 1878 is unqualified. For James, Turgenev is "the first novelist of the day" and his impressions of him are "in the highest degree favourable." He is the writer for "people with cultivated taste; and nothing... cultivates the taste more than to read him."⁴⁵ In Turgenev, James appeared to have found the synthesis of all those aspects that he most highly esteemed in the French writers. It is the synthesis of the formal, the moral, and the developmental that he initiated in his own nouvelles, just as he had seen them blended in the nouvelles of Turgenev.

James's reading of Turgenev dates back a long time before their first meeting.⁴⁶ Turgenev published frequently in the Revue des Deux Mondes and James published a critical sketch of his writings in the North American Review in 1874. But the full impact of Turgenev, who was twenty-five years James's senior,

appears to have been felt only after their first meeting. Comparing him to his French contemporaries, James found Turgenev to be vastly superior because, though as acutely observant, Turgenev went much further in his moral investigations and in his concern with the finest complications of human conduct. Turgenev's objection to the French realists was essentially the same as James's, only expressed in stronger language. It proceeds from a humanist and moral viewpoint: as a group, the realists were like "dogs returning to their vomit. God and the devil are no more, and the advent of Man is still far off."⁴⁷ James found Turgenev sympathetic to his belief that a subject must be "morally interesting" and it was Turgenev, too, as James acknowledged in the preface to The Portrait of a Lady, who strengthened him in his initial tenet that "story" was subordinate to "character."

The germ of a story, with him, was never an affair of plot - that was the last thing he thought of: it was the representation of certain persons. The first form in which a tale appeared to him was as the figure of an individual, or a combination of individuals, whom he wished to see in action, being sure that such people must do something very special and interesting. They stood before him definite, vivid, and he wished to know, and to show, as much as possible of their nature. (P, p. 43)

In Turgenev, as in James, "action" and "story" emanate from "character"; they are a consequence of the qualities of the characters.

He saw them, in that fashion, as disponibles, saw them subject to the chances, the complications of existence, and saw them vividly, but then 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 favourable to the sense of the creatures themselves, the complications they would be most likely to produce and feel. 48

Furthermore, as Daniel Lerner points out: "Both the 'central detached observer' and the ficelle, for which James wholly credited Turgenev, function in James's famous method of presenting his story 'through the opportunity and sensibility of some more or less detached, some not strictly involved, though thoroughly interested and intelligent witness and reporter.' "49

In Turgenev James found a strong sense of form without the sacrifice of moral values, the indirect approach, the preference for suggestion rather than statement, obliquity and circumlocution--all the hallmarks of the Jamesian style are prefigured in the works of Turgenev. He felt an affinity with Turgenev that he was only to find again with Paul Bourget, whom he first met in London in 1884. But in this case the role James filled for Bourget, who was younger by several years, resembled the role Turgenev had filled for him--that of critic and mentor.

James's cultivation of indirectness and mystery as a means to get at reality is thrown into relief through a comparison with Paul Bourget, who seems at first sight to have had much in common with the American novelist. Bourget shared James's moral preoccupations and, after having studied the method of investigation of the French realists he parted company with them and applied their method to the analysis of the soul rather than to the concrete and external world. He also differed from them in that he did not confine himself to Paris or even to France but was, like James himself, a modern cosmopolitan at home in London or in Rome as well as in the French capital.50

However, Bourget was finally to carry the reflective

approach too far for James's liking: as Jeanne Delbaere-Garant points out, James found "the superabundance of psychological analysis...prejudicial to the aesthetic value"⁵¹ of Bourget's works:

Your love of intellectual daylight, absolutely your pursuit of complexities, is an injury to the patches of ambiguity and the abysses of shadow which really are the clothing - or much of it - of the effects that constitute the material of our trade.⁵²

Bourget on several occasions suggested subjects for nouvelles to James but none, with the exception of A London Life (1888), appears to have gone far beyond notation and outline in the Notebooks.⁵³

The year spent in Paris--1876--had a profound effect on James and it was followed by many visits to Paris during the years thereafter. There is more than sufficient evidence of the influence of those writers, especially Turgenev, Flaubert, and Maupassant, he came into contact with during this time on his later works, particularly the tales, and it culminates in his conscious adoption of and reverence for the nouvelle as the form that was most suited to his creative endeavours as he conceived them. His explorations of the various potentialities of the genre derive from his reading of French and Russian literature. As Robert Scholes has pointed out, the writing process is generic in the sense that "every writer conceives of his task in terms of writing he knows":

... he must take his departure from things already attempted. Every writer works in a tradition, and his achievement can be most clearly measured in terms of the tradition in which he works. The hack or journeyman - whether writing TV westerns in the 1960s or Elizabethan romances in the 1590s - takes his tradition for granted and cranks out works according to formula. The master, on the other hand, makes a new

contribution to his tradition, by realizing possibilities in it which had gone unperceived, or by finding new ways to combine older traditions - or new ways to adapt a tradition to changing situations in the world around him.⁵⁴

However, if the writer is bound by generic tradition, so, too, is the reader. As we read a specific literary text, we postulate a tentative genre, which we refine upon and define in the course of our reading, as we approach the unique nature of the work by means of its affinities with other works that are similarly structured.⁵⁵ A comprehensive investigation of a genre must, then, take into consideration both sides of the coin.

From the perspective of the writer, it is, as Claudio Guillén has persuasively argued, most useful to approach a genre "as a 'traditional model or conventional pattern' exerting an influence on the creation of a work in progress. It belongs to a larger body of poetics, and affects poetry insofar as the actual poem is a dream more or less fulfilled. The dream is generally, if not always, a combination in the memory of the artist of certain already existing prototypes...."⁵⁶

It is in the French writers and in Turgenev that James's prototypes are largely to be found and this is true particularly of the nouvelle. The French nouvelle is a distinct literary form; but it stands in relation to the Italian "novella," the German "novelle," the Spanish "novela," and the English "novelette." Each pertains to a distinct literary tradition in its respective country.

"Novella" is an Italian word most often associated with the stories in Boccaccio's Decameron (written about 1345 but first published in 1471) although they were preceded in publication by Thomasa Guardati's Novellino in 1467. The Decameron invites comparison with Chaucer's Canterbury Tales mainly

because of the framework of storyteller and listeners. The tales of the Decameron are of the length of what today we would call the short story, yet in terms of action portrayed they appear more complete than the typically presented fragment of action of the modern short story (this being largely the effect of the encompassing framework). What they do share with their counterparts in other countries is an emphasis, despite frequently ribald action, on moral exemplum.

The German "novelle" is perhaps the most clearly defined of all the so-called "intermediate" narrative forms. Ronald Paulson sees the greater rigidity of the form as the result of "the German need to classify and the great upsurge of literary criticism in the eighteenth century."⁵⁷ Indeed, the writings of Goethe and Schlegel (who saw the novelle as a vehicle for "indirect and concealed subjectivity") in particular precipitated a close study of the form and the attempt to contain it within certain fairly rigorously defined boundaries.

While the German novelle gets its name from the Italian form, it is characteristic of the later German novellen that, as Walter Silz has pointed out, though the stories are sometimes in a frame or series, they are more often single stories, frequently in frames of their own.⁵⁸ But the German novelle does appear to have certain close links with the Italian form, particularly in its use of symbolism. It is this that gave rise to Paul Heyse's "Falcon theory," an allusion to Boccaccio's novella, The Falcon:

We expect of a Novelle, to which we attribute artistic values, that it should present to us a significant human fate, an emotional, intellectual or moral conflict, and that it should reveal to us by means of an unusual happening a new aspect of human nature. The peculiar charm of this literary form consists in the event being sharply outlined in a restricted framework, just as the chemist

isolates certain chemical elements in order to observe their effect upon one another and the result of their contact, to illustrate thereby some law of nature - herein differing from the wider horizon and the more varied problems of character which the novel spreads out before us. Then: one must ask oneself, whether the story to be related has a strongly marked silhouette, the outlines of which expressed in a few words, would make a characteristic impression, in the manner in which the contents of that story in the Decamerone, narrated in five lines, impress themselves profoundly upon the memory.⁵⁹

Heyse isolates a predominant symbol at the centre of the restricted framework of the form, the "specific thing which distinguishes the story from thousands of others."⁶⁰ As E.K. Bennet points out, Heyse's theory, which is probably the most famous, says little more than that the novelle must have a definite subject matter. Bennet gives the form a minimum of definition which he elaborates on in the course of his A History of the German Novelle:

... a Novelle is a narrative in prose, usually shorter than a novel, dealing with one particular situation, conflict, event, or aspect of a personality; it narrates something "new" in the sense of something unusual or striking. The shortness of a Novelle, indeed of a short story, is a very relative matter.... The most that can be said on this score is that the Novelle, because it does restrict itself to one centre of interest, tends to be shorter than a novel, which has many.⁶¹

Having established this, Bennet goes on to look at descriptions of the novelle in the nineteenth century and earlier, investigating the views of various practitioners and theoreticians of the genre in Germany.

A summary of these opinions upon

the nature of the Novelle gives the following general characteristics of the genre. The Novelle is an epic form and as such deals with events rather than actions; it restricts itself to a single event (or situation or conflict), laying the stress primarily upon the event and showing the effect of this event upon a person or group of persons; by its concentration upon a single event it tends to present it as chance ("Zufall") and it is its function to reveal that what is apparently chance, and may appear as such to the person concerned, is in reality fate. Thus the attitude of mind to the universe which it may be said to represent is an irrationalistic one. It must present some aspect of life (event, situation, conflict) which arouses interest by its strangeness, remoteness from everyday happenings, but at the same time its action must take place in the world of reality and not that of pure imagination. It depends for its effectiveness and its power to convince upon the severity and artistry of its form. Characteristic of its construction is a certain turning point, at which the development of the narrative moves unexpectedly in a different direction from that which was anticipated, and arrives at a conclusion which surprises, but at the same time satisfies logically. It should deal with some definite and striking subject which marks it clearly and distinguishes it from every other Novelle. This striking element in the subject matter is frequently connected with a concrete object, which may in some Novellen acquire a certain inner symbolical significance. The effect of the impact of the event upon the person or group of persons is to reveal qualities which were latent and may have been unsuspectedly present in them, the event being used as the acid which separates and reveals the various qualities in the person or persons under investigation. By its very objectivity as a literary form it enables the poet to present subjective and lyrical moods indirectly and symbolically.

It concerns itself with a small group of persons only, restricting itself to those who are immediately connected with the problem or situation with which it deals. Its origins and home are in a cultured society.⁶²

Walter Silz has also pointed to both the defining criteria of the German novelle and those traditional criteria evolved by successive theorists that are dispensable: the novelle, like the anecdote, spotlights one single event but not so much that it amounts to a point of limited and momentary effect and, unlike the novel, the novelle has less time at its disposal and so has an accelerated pace. "Instead of unrolling past, present, and future in sequence, it seizes upon a fateful moment of dramatic presentness from which the past and the future are illuminated in a flash."⁶³ In addition, the novelle tends towards realism and usually only a limited number of characters are involved in its focal action. However, the novelle does not have to have a "falcon" and the Wendepunkt or turning-point is not its exclusive prerogative. The novelle, in Silz's definition, is

... a narrative of limited size and scope, which because of its nature tends to employ some or all of the devices... that make for compactness and maximum expressiveness.... To the Germans, who tend all too readily to diffuse and formless novels, and who do not take naturally to the witty acuity of the anecdote or the slightness and pungency of the short story, the Novelle has offered a salutary challenge to delimit, to compass infinite riches in a little room, to emulate Goethe's dictum "In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister."⁶⁹

The rise in popularity of the German novelle corresponds with the rise of Romanticism in that country.

In certain respects, the Romantic

achievement merely enhanced the role of the marvellous, the metaphysical, and the fateful, and - except with regard to the artist problem - diminished the social and didactic functions of the genre. As Friedrich Schlegel emphasized in his "Nachricht von den poetischen Werken des Johannes Boccaccio" (1801), the novella was suited for presenting "eine subjective Stimmung und Ansicht, und zwar die tiefsten und eigentümlichsten derselben indirekt und gleichsam sinnbildlich". One detects in this statement the potentialities which Realism was to exploit. On the one hand, the novella was suited for the presentation of the subjective depths which can be explored and elaborated in a case; on the other hand, as a shorter fictional form, it naturally tended toward compression through reliance on significant detail. The Romantic predilection for creating "mood" would obviously contribute to the later psychologizing in the expanded novellas or short novels still popular at the end of the nineteenth century.⁶⁵

The term *novelle* was used in Germany in the eighteenth century of French, Italian, and Spanish tales but it was not until the beginning of the next century that it became acclimatized to its new national context and was used by German critics to describe their own type of tale and so to distinguish it, as C.M. Wieland wrote in the preface to the second edition of his Don Sylvio von Rosalva (1772), "from the long novel by the simplicity of its plan and the smaller compass of its story."⁶⁶ Wieland compared it to the one-act play and its relation to the full-length tragedy or comedy. The *novelle*, as Paulson suggests, "seems to have followed directly from the Italian novella of Boccaccio" and certainly it seems to have a similarity of character.⁶⁷ But it was in Heinrich von Kleist, as Silz points out,

that Germany produced, in the Romantic period, a "Novellendichter" who was the peer of Boccaccio and Cervantes, and who inaugurated the particularly German evolution of this form.

With the great impetus given by Kleist, the *Novelle* developed during the ensuing century more rapidly and more richly in Germany than in any other country. It has been said that the *Novelle* and the lyric constituted Germany's chief contributions to literature in the 19th century, paralleling the great novels of England, France and Russia during that era. With Kleist, the German *Novelle* "deepens its draft" and gains a capacity for dealing with major and tragic problems. It ceases to be a mere form of social entertainment and becomes a mature and high art, more concentrated and profound, a better mirror of the Weltanschauung of the age, than either the German drama or novel of the 19th century, taken as a whole, has been.⁶⁸

In contrast, to a fairly large degree, stands the French *nouvelle* in which the emphasis on the symbolic that is the tendency of the *nouvelle* is subservient to an emphasis on psychology. However, certain structural similarities that restrict its "magnitude" link it inextricably to its German and Italian counterparts. But the *nouvelle* does not have the considerable body of theory behind it of the German form.

The form and length of the *nouvelle*, the French equivalent of Boccaccio's novella, have been so congenial to the French that it has remained a characteristic mode of their fiction ever since - explaining why there are more French examples of the genre... than any other nationality. The most famous French nouvelles were Madame de Lafayette's Princess of Cleves (1678), the Abbe Prevost's Manon Lescaut (the last volume of Memoirs of a Gentleman of Quality, 1731),

and Benjamin Constant's Adolphe (1816). The nouvelles have in common the action of a romantic affair and an analytic concern with the psychology of passion. Once past the Princess of Cleves, they slip into the form of the recit personnel or the memoir - the hero intensely reliving one part of his life; and in many cases the narrative has an autobiographical origin. (One can point to modern equivalents, for example, Gide's Immoralist.) But, significantly, the hero looks back on an affair that is over; and the event is often further distanced by the mediation of a friend or an editor who has found the manuscript.⁶⁹

This sense of "looking back," of narrative distance is, as we shall see, greatly reduced in James's use of the form of the nouvelle.

In France, the nouvelle developed with the tales of Margaret of Navarre in the sixteenth century. The French nouvelle is very closely linked to the "conte moral" with its emphasis on a single exemplum. As Gerald Gillespie has noted, the nouvelle did not distinctly detach itself from the conte or recit, on the one hand, and, on the other, from the roman until about the middle of the nineteenth century.⁷⁰ Its emergence as a distinct genre is marked by Baudelaire's definition of the form in an essay on Théophile Gautier. Baudelaire accurately assessed the nouvelle's flexibility in its relation to the novel but considered it to be a purer form because of its artistic restraint:⁷¹

Ce souci permanent, involontaire à force d'être naturel, de la beauté et du pittoresque, devait pousser l'auteur vers un genre de roman approprié à son tempérament. Le roman et la nouvelle ont un privilège de souplesse merveilleux. Ils s'adaptent à toutes les natures, enveloppent tous les sujets, et poursuivent à leur guise différents buts. Tantôt, c'est la recherche de la passion, tantôt la recherche

du vrai; tel roman parle à la foule, tel autre à des initiés; celui-ci retrace la vie des époques disparues et celui-là des drames silencieux qui se jouent dans un seul cerveau. Le roman, qui tient une place si importante à côté du poème et de l'histoire, est un genre bâtard dont le domaine est vraiment sans limites. Comme beaucoup d'autres bâtards, c'est un enfant gâté de la fortune à qui tout réussit. Il ne subit d'autres inconvénients et ne connaît d'autres dangers que son infinie liberté. La nouvelle, plus resserrée, plus condensée, jouit des bénéfices éternels de la contrainte: son effet est plus intense; et comme le temps consacré à la lecture d'une nouvelle est bien moindre que celui nécessaire à la digestion d'un roman, rien ne se perd de la totalité de l'effet.⁷²

While the nouvelle retains the sense of locality of the German and Italian forms, it embraces more definitely than those forms the moral resolution arising out of contrasting sets of behaviour and moral codes. Paulson sees the combination of moral exemplum and local colour in the nouvelle as the reason for the attraction of Turgenev in Russia to the form and, through him, of James.⁷³

There is no specific term for the form of the nouvelle in Russian although there were a number of renowned writers of nouvelles (Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy) during the second half of the nineteenth century.

In Spain today the term "novela" is used to refer to all long prose narratives, novels, whether of recent or ancient date; this despite the fact that Spain was also a country of novella-writers. In sixteenth century and early seventeenth century Spain, the individual novella was considered to be a minor genre. It was not until the success of Cervantes' Novelas ejemplares that its new and more independent

status was established. Cervantes lengthened the Italian novella, thereby providing it with greater significance and at the same time transforming it, in the view of Christóbal Suárez de Figueroa,⁷⁴ into a genre (novelas tomadas con el rigor que se debe) capable of more philosophical weight than the novelas al uso.

...what Cervantes achieved above all in his novelas was to assimilate to his own more philosophical probings Boccaccio's art of storytelling and tolerant acceptance of human nature. Boccaccio had insisted in his Proemio that the casi d'amore told in his novella might have happened in modern times as well as in antiquity, and he had defended in his Conclusione the author's right to speak of ordinary objects and problems of life, as long as he clothed them in onesti vocaboli. In his Don Quixote and his Novelas ejemplares, Cervantes also wrote about simple men and women, not about heroes and heroines or ladies and lords of society, and Werner Krauss perceptively defined his attitude as a "conscious rejection of the values and relationships of the ruling society." It is in this respect in particular that the spirit of Boccaccio and that of Cervantes are happily in agreement. This was felt already by Cervantes' contemporaries. Lope de Vega found the manner of the Novelas ejemplares humbler than that of his own prose narratives: "es grande la diferencia y mas humilde el modo." While praising Cervantes' achievement, he could not refrain from wishing that such novelas had been written by "hombres científicos, ó por lo menos grandes cortesanos." Avellaneda, the intrepid intruder and author of a second part of the Don Quijote, showed greater insight when he called Cervantes' work "casi una comedia" (using the term, of course, in the prevalent meaning of a genre dealing with ordinary people in

ordinary circumstances where
 magic and the marvellous happen
 only when the human mind
 fail to see things as they are).⁷⁵

The impact in France of Cervantes was powerful and as early as 1623 Sorel's Nouvelles francaises appeared which are usually considered as an attempt to emulate the Novelas ejemplares which were translated into French almost immediately upon their first publication.⁷⁶ Cervantes excelled in the whole late Renaissance range of the novella from the "short story" to the extended narrative. His La fuerza de la sangre, one of the tales in Novelas ejemplares, is about thirty pages and his Curioso impertinente, inserted as a tale told within the first part of Don Quixote, is about ninety pages long.⁷⁷ However, as Gillespie has pointed out, although this latter tale is expressly called "la novella del...", the encompassing novel Don Quixote also has the same title within editions of the author's works:

In other words, the Spaniards today ignore the generic differences between the lesser and huge narration; each is subordinated under the broad category of novela. Even the Cervantean romances, Galatea and Persiles y Sigismunda, now come under the ample heading "novel" (novela). The Spanish word romance does exist in the sense of a chivalric novel but, except in restricted application, is looked on as a Gallicism for novela. The reasons for Spanish predilections are not exactly those of the English-speaking countries. The word romance was applied earlier in Spain to poetic compositions, especially the old epics and ballads; and it has remained firmly attached to such ancient materials, or imitations thereof. With a kind of forgetfulness, the Spanish recall works like the Novelas ejemplares with the older application of novela; but, nonetheless, as the

available term for stories of some dimension (romance being already pre-empted), the word novela drifted like its English cousin toward its modern meaning and is now virtually identical. In the modern period, the term "short novel" (novela corta) has even been coined, in order to label those shorter fictions which are yet too long to be mere "stories" (cuentos). Thus the present-day usage offers a clear analogy to English except in one regard; the existence of classical Spanish tales called novelas, and not novelas cortas, is a glaring anachronism that causes little concern and prompts scant reflection.⁷⁸

The English novelette is only vaguely defined, possibly because of its comparatively late recognition in England. It was only distinguished from the novel and the short story as a work of middle length and was also used to cover its counterparts on the continent. This might account for the critical persistence, even up to the present day, in England and America in defining these forms on the sole criterion of length. The novelette, somewhat unfortunately, also became associated with "cheap" literature and "penny dreadfuls" during the Victorian era. James himself referred to the novelette as a "vile word" as early as 1864: "it reminds me of chemisette," he wrote in a letter to T.S. Perry.⁷⁹ Similar notions were rampant during the first thirty years or so of the twentieth century. They still persist today. It is also somewhat idiosyncratic that while the term for the novel in most European languages is "roman," derived from the medieval romance, the English name for the same form is derived from the Italian "novella" (meaning "a little new thing").⁸⁰

In English criticism the nouvelle has persistently been defined in relation to its length, so bypassing consideration of the genre's more formal aspects. H. M. Waidson has commented on this peculiarity:

For practical purposes English and American fiction is often defined by length. A short story may be anything from 1,000 to 20,000 words or more in length, and a novel anything over 40,000 words. German critics sometimes seem slightly taken aback by this manifestation of 'English empiricism'. However, it is established by usage, and, from the point of view of authors and publishers, it works. But it is with regard to fiction of intermediate length that English critics occasionally find themselves embarrassed.⁸¹

Very little of what has been written about the form comes anywhere near to isolating its defining features in such a way that its identity as a specific genre is clearly revealed. A cross-section of typical definitions of the nouvelle and novelette would include the following:

novelette (earlier, novelet). A work of fiction longer than a short story but shorter than a novel....

Novelette, a short novel, usually now meaning a sentimental or thrilling story, cheaply produced and sold, of negligible literary merit.....

novelettes, an art form between the novel and the short story in length, which allows the author space to present his characters fully.

Novelette: A work of short fiction, shorter than a novel, longer than a short story, demonstrating more characteristics of the short story than of the novel; between 10,000 and 20,000 words.

Novelette... such long and complex forms as Melville's Billy Bud, Henry James's The Turn of the Screw, and Conrad's Heart of Darkness, whose status is between the tautness of the short story and the expansiveness of the novel.

nouvelle, (1a) Fr. A kind of short

novel or novelette, not so tight in plot structure as the short story or conte.

Novella... denotes a form hard to define precisely, but shorter than most novels (and single-stranded, unlike the classic novel) and longer and deeper than most short stories. The French nouvelle has a similar meaning....⁸²

The overwhelming tendency to compare the nouvelle or novelette to both the novel and the short story (the bias towards the one or the other is variable) displays, perhaps, a resistance to seeing the genre in its own terms. Another tendency to imply the simplicity and looseness of the genre would offend James, one of the innovators of the form in English (preceded by Maria Edgeworth, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville), who stressed its complexity and who hated contemptuously, as R.P. Blackmur indicates, looseness of any description, whether of conception or of execution: "In both respects he found English fiction 'a paradise of loose ends,' but more especially in the respect of execution. His own themes, being complex in reference and development, could only reach the lucidity of the represented state, if they were enclosed in a tight form. Any looseness or laziness would defeat his purpose and let half his intention escape."⁸³

The stipulation as to length in virtually all definitions of fiction is both redundant and misleading, particularly when it leads to claims as extreme as Robert Gale's: "I define a short story as under 25,000 words; a long short story, 25,000 to 50,000 words; a short novel, 50,000 to 75,000 words; and a novel, over 75,000 words."⁸⁴ Very precise stipulation such as this is no definition of genre at all as it implies that one word over the mark either way and the type changes, becomes something else despite its formal characteristics. N.W. Visser has pointed instead to the "developmental," a term

adapted from James,⁸⁵ in prose fiction as a means of differentiating long from short forms:

"Developmental" is a term devised in the attempt to cope with and at the same time offset slightly the question of length in the novel. Length is a necessary yet not entirely adequate criterion for distinguishing novels from short narrative forms such as the short story. There are occasions when great length will immediately mark the work as a novel rather than a short story just as there are occasions when extreme brevity will do the reverse. On the other hand there are countless works which, on the criterion of length alone, fall awkwardly in between, and while it might be possible to establish lower limits on novel length and upper limits on short story length, there will inevitably be an overlap.

In the range where the short novel intersects with the long short story the features which clearly differentiate the typical novel from the typical short story lose precision and begin to blend into each other. These typifying features can be divided into thematic, typical, and compositional categories. The typical novel exploits expansive themes and motifs: the journey, social change, educational (in the sense of the Bildungsroman) and generational themes. It also borrows or synthesises narrative types which ordinarily consume large quantities of narrated or narrating time: the biography, the autobiography, and so on. In terms of compositional features, the typical novel can be episodic, doubly or multiply plotted; it can specify a wide range of characters and events, and it is spatially uninhibited. The orthodox short story reverses these patterns: it presents restrictive themes and limited situations, it presents moments and fragments of the depicted lives, it is confined spatially as well as in its range of characters and action. Occasionally the presence of these typical

features can clarify the generic nature of a work which, by the criterion of length alone, would be ambiguous.⁸⁶

The nouvelle tends towards both development and curtailment and, as such, displays typical features of both the novel and the short story. The presence of these typical features more usefully clarifies its generic nature than the criterion of length. An analysis of James's Daisy Miller: A Study will clearly reveal the presence of such features.

Daisy Miller is central to the genre: James noted in his preface that the tale is "essentially and pre-eminently a nouvelle; a signal example in fact of that type..." (P, p. 268). The structure of Daisy Miller is very carefully regulated: the narrative is divided into four equal parts.⁸⁷ In the opening pages of the first "chapter" the authorial narrator⁸⁸ introduces the setting: Vevey, a Swiss lake resort, sometime during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The narrator, after swiftly presenting the scene rather in the manner of one of James's travel sketches, then reduces the focus to Winterbourne, a young American domiciled in Europe and the figural medium of narration, through whom we are introduced to the young American "Princess," the main focus of interest. She is emphatically presented as a type; her precocious brother announces to Winterbourne: "here come's my sister.... She's an American girl, you bet!"⁸⁹ As a type and as the germinal point of the nouvelle, she takes on a certain one-sidedness. The limitations residing in the character of Daisy impose limitations on the action of the nouvelle; she is, as her name suggests, a "flat" character: "Flatness indeed... was the very sum of her story" (P, p. 268).

Daisy not only throws a rigidified European society into relief; she embodies an American type, one whose extreme innocence and vulnerability are apparent only

when taken out of their protective context. As a type, she is comic as well as tragic, vulgar as well as pathetic. James does not attempt to make her anything more than a type; he could not have written a novel about her. ⁹⁰

In a letter to his brother, James wrote of his early efforts: "I have a constant impulse to try experiments of form, in which I wish to not run the risk of wasting or gratuitously using big situations."⁹¹ The situation of Daisy Miller is limited since its impetus is a limited character. In the figural medium of Winterbourne, however, through whose consciousness the narrative unfolds, inheres both the impulse for development (since situation is subjectively conceived) and the economy of presentation that restriction to a singly and specifically located vantage point may achieve: the authorial narrator, after his initial appearance, remains suitably absent throughout apart from two brief interjections in the final two "chapters" (the one being, notably, in the concluding paragraph). By sharply limiting the authorial point of view, James achieves dramatic form. The action arises out of a series of singular and distinctly realized scenes: Winterbourne's interrogation of Daisy's brother, who supplies an immense amount of information; confrontations between Winterbourne and Daisy, Winterbourne and his aunt, Winterbourne and the Miller "entourage"; Winterbourne and Daisy making their irresponsible outing to Chillon; Winterbourne's first meeting with Daisy in Rome; Winterbourne caught between Mrs Walker and Daisy in her "improper" conduct with her "brilliant" Giovanelli; Daisy being ruthlessly cut at Mrs Walker's party; Winterbourne's shocked discovery of Daisy and Giovanelli alone together at night in the murky air of the Colosseum; Daisy's funeral. These scenes in serried array indicate temporal development through the "process of adumbration" that James was yet fully to develop and which is prefigured in this

early nouvelle. This series is enclosed within the frame of Winterbourne's first meeting with Daisy at Vevey and his departure from Rome after her death.

Since we are presented with a series of "events," time is expansive yet not, as in the typical novel, fully expanded upon. The action stretches from June, the season for Americans in Switzerland, in the first two chapters, to January, in the final two chapters and parallels the spatial leap from Vevey to Rome. The nouvelle has, then, a clearly defined bi-partite structure, but the action of the first half is of as limited duration as the action of the second half and, in both instances, is closely circumscribed spatially.

Daisy Miller lacks the intensity and complexity of an Isabel Archer or a Milly Theale. Her Americanism is her only justification and James is able, through her, to launch swiftly into a highly foreshortened and direct portrayal of his International Theme. The circumspection and introspection that is to be found in the opening chapters of The Portrait of a Lady and The Wings of the Dove is lacking in the "Study" of Daisy Miller. Character and conflict are clearly demarcated by the end of the first chapter of Daisy Miller: what remains is for Daisy to be "tested."

There is barely any time leap between the first two chapters: Poe's "close circumscription of space" and "unity of time" is in effect.⁹² What Winterbourne is impressed by in chapter one is expanded upon and illustrated in chapter two; the first confrontation is between Winterbourne and his aunt, the "exclusive" Mrs Costello, who finds Daisy "common." Winterbourne instead suggests that she is "uncultivated." In conversation with Winterbourne, Daisy maintains that "I like a lady to be exclusive: I'm dying to be exclusive myself. Well, I guess we are exclusive, mother and I. We don't speak to any one - or they don't speak to us. I suppose it's

about the same thing."⁹³ Daisy and her mother are very clearly "snubbed" in Europe rather than regarded as exclusive and, characteristically, she confuses the two. Winterbourne meets Daisy's mother who responds with comic indifference to her milieu. There has been a high degree of scenic presentation so far and figural and dramatic presentation are artfully blended; but the highly selective presentation effected through the figural medium accelerates the narrative pace in comparison with James's novels and their long passages of free indirect style which slow the action by expanding it. In Daisy Miller, narrated time is foreshortened through the pin-pointing of events. In contrast to a Lambert Strether or, to cite a much earlier example, even a Roger Lawrence, Winterbourne's reflections are mere impressions, usually no more than a couple of paragraphs in extent.

In chapter two, Eugenio, the courier, enters the scene and Daisy and her mother are shown, as suspected, to be on "familiar" terms with him. Daisy's "sudden familiarities and caprices" are illustrated in a short scene involving a late night boating episode. A time leap of two days occurs when the excursion to Chillon is undertaken and Daisy's flippancy as well as her naïvity are brought into sharp focus. The narrative avoids being episodic since it is structured around a single situation brought about by a single character and unified in impression through the consciousness of Winterbourne. The progression of the narrative involves, in a sense, the continuous restatement of the same thing in different ways: Daisy constantly reveals her "type" under differing European social mores. At the end of chapter two, Winterbourne summarises aspects of the Daisy Miller type: her "rapidity of induction... frankness of her persifilage... an extraordinary mixture of innocence and crudity."⁹⁴ All is now set for her tragedy in European society at large.

In Rome, Mrs Costello once again provides the

link between Daisy and Winterbourne. She is a typical Jamesian "ficelle" (Mrs Walker in this respect is an extension of Mrs Costello), a device that finds no place in his very short fiction. These two characters also fulfil another important function--they create the background of a social milieu against which the situation is played out. Foreshortened as they are, they supplement the highly schematic spatio-temporal milieu. And, like Daisy, they take on a generalized and representative value: it is the conscious figure of Winterbourne who serves to disguise their essential flatness. His richly introspective frame of mind has all the potential of a full-scale novelistic character.

The use of foreshadowing devices, while limited in Daisy Miller, are distinctly novelistic. They have greater and sustained relevance in an extended narrative, whereas the limited scope of the short story would diminish their portentousness. The description of lakes and snow-capped mountains are prognostic of death in chapter one and Daisy's visit to the Castle of Chillon prefigures her visit to the Colosseum which brings about her death--both appointments are highly indiscreet in terms of European mores and yet completely innocent in terms of American mores. In the third chapter, hints of catching fever and then Daisy's words: "We are going to stay all winter - if we don't die of the fever; and I guess we'll stay then...", take on a sinister irony in terms of her destiny.⁹⁵

Winterbourne meets Daisy and her family in Rome in the salon of Mrs Walker and he then accompanies her to a rendezvous with a "spurious gentleman," Giovanelli. Daisy seems intent on further exemplifying her "indelicacy" and continues, on this occasion, "to present herself as an inscrutable combination of audacity and innocence." Her potential for scandalous behaviour recognized in Vevey is openly expressed in the society that Rome represents.

The dramatic confrontation between Daisy, Giovanelli, Winterbourne, and Mrs Walker is climaxed by Daisy's refusal to understand: "I don't think I want to know what you mean.... I don't think I should like it."⁹⁶ The utterance is both poignant and indicative of the extent to which Daisy's knowledge of herself in Roman society has developed; she holds steadfastly to her innocence.

At Mrs Walker's party, Daisy's indiscretion and her refusal to "go by the custom of the place" result in her being snubbed by Mrs Walker and in her realization of this affront for the first time. A developmental pattern emerges out of the presented incidents in the "education" of Daisy. Her refusal to conform results in her ostracism by Roman society and, finally, her death; her imprudence results in her catching "Roman fever" and her death is social as well as physical.

Daisy Miller clearly lacks the amplitude of many novels, but the narrative covers more ground than the typical short story. It covers a complete action rather than a fragment which implies the rest of a completed action as in the short story, and this complete action is structurally unified by a single point of focus from a single vantage point. There is no clearly demarcated pattern of exposition, climax, and denouement that is to be found in the typical short story. However, the narrative does adapt from the short story the rapid denouement, the sudden curtailment of the developmental, something approaching the "whip-crack" ending produced by Maupassant.

In terms of its narrative situation, Daisy Miller complies with what Ronald Paulson sees as a feature of the novelette: "The novelette tends to circle its narrow subject, moving away for better perspective."⁹⁷ This Daisy Miller does through the figural mode and the objectification of scenic presentation, moving away for better perspective with

the intervention of the authorial narrator at the beginning and the end of the narrative.

There is not the wide variety of characters in Daisy Miller that is to be found in many novels; the restricted dramatis personae is a feature of short prose fiction. The scope of Daisy Miller is limited--there is no space for the novel's preoccupation with time. But unlike the short story with its single "arc of tension,"⁹⁸ Daisy Miller, as a novel might, has two arcs of tension that are spatially defined--Vevey and Rome--and which correspond compositionally with its four chapters, two chapters being devoted to each spatial centre. Furthermore, these two arcs are projected on a larger scale by the narrative as a whole, itself one overspanning arc of tension that thematically expresses the nouvelle's International Theme.

The features of compression and development that pertain to the structure of Daisy Miller are, then, indicative of its form in a way that a mere declaration of its length (approximately 25,000 words) can never be. Length is, with regard to generic definition, a very relative matter--especially where the tendency has been to place undue emphasis on it to the neglect of all other characteristics. As Charles G. Hoffman has stressed: "... length alone cannot predetermine form in prose fiction."⁹⁹ It has no central place in definition at all, although we might concede to it a peripheral significance from the point of view of the reader who does have certain expectations as to length when he chooses to read a specific literary form.

James, of course, despised "the rude prescription of brevity at any cost" and the "hard-and-fast rule of the 'from six to eight thousand words' " that the magazine editors of his day so slavishly insisted upon. With this in view, it is not surprising that the problem of length became something of an obsession to him as he found it increasingly difficult

to sell his tales to the magazines of his day. F.O. Matthiessen and Kenneth Murdock illuminate the source of the problem:

As he also became more interested in the projection of complex states of thought and feeling, he got into other difficulties with the magazine editors, who found his stories too long and not "exciting" enough. His notebooks show him realizing the ironic fact that at the very time he was growing into fuller mastery of his resources, he was beginning to be rejected by magazines that had previously accepted him. He foresaw lucidly the widening gap between the slick popular magazine and the serious reader, and fought vigorously against each new sign of vulgarization of taste. His chief weapons in this fight were such stories as "The Next Time," "The Death of the Lion," and "The Figure in the Carpet," which were designed as fables for critics.

But he did not shrug off the question of excessive length, since he knew it to be the danger in his method. His last secretary, Theodora Bosanquet, reported that all the five stories that made up The Finer Grain were produced as a succession of abortive attempts to meet Harper's request for a piece of five thousand words. We can observe him, again and again, conceiving his theme as "a thing of a tiny kind," only to have it expand, once he began to treat it, far beyond his reckoning. Short stories became nouvelles, and nouvelles became novels. He almost never held himself down to the limit he first specified, and when he did, for example in "The Two Faces," the shortest story in his collected edition, he signaled the occasion in his preface as a special triumph. 100

The Notebooks and prefaces contain numerous references to the dilemma and James became notoriously absent-minded as to the length of some of his works. The Reverberator, he claims at one point in his Notebooks,

is "less than 30,000" words when in actual fact it is closer to fifty-five thousand words. Even to call James a writer of "short" stories is a loose approximation. He only rarely achieved the concision of five thousand words, the limit of his power of compression, and this he sometimes falsely claimed. "The Middle Years" he described as having reduced to five thousand five hundred words but an approximate word-count reveals nine thousand as closer to the real total.

While the contrast between the *nouvelle* and the *conte* or short story is fairly apparent, midway generic classification of the *nouvelle* between the long short story and the short novel is far from clear and it has been equated by certain critics with both of these forms. Philip Rahv, for example, described James's The Aspern Papers as "... undoubtedly one of the finest of James's short novels" and then goes on to suggest that James used the terms "nouvelle" and "short novel" interchangeably ("The short novel, or nouvelle, as he preferred to call it...").¹⁰¹ Carl Van Doren defines James's *nouvelles* non-committally as "shorter novels," and R.P. Blackmur writes that "The *nouvelle* - the long short story or the short novel - was perhaps James's favourite form...."¹⁰² Nevertheless, as early as 1915, one American critic at least regarded the equation between the *nouvelle* and the long short story as an "anomaly": "The two terms are decidedly not even approximately synonymous."¹⁰³ And in the nineteenth century, Spielhagen considered a merely quantitative test for distinguishing between the roman and the *nouvelle* to be utterly absurd and tried to show that the former must from the nature of its "content" be of greater length than the latter.¹⁰⁴ While the distinction between the long short story and the *nouvelle* is extremely difficult to formulate since the long short story is as elusive a genre as the *nouvelle* and appears to rely on the relative and approximate

differentiation of length alone for its identity (which makes it, after all, the most contradictory of prose fiction genres), James clearly distinguished between the nouvelle and the short novel. He referred to all of his short narratives as "tales" and his affinity to French literature probably prompted him to refer to certain of them as nouvelles. He called the fifty-three-thousand-word The Turn of the Screw a tale and the fifty-five-thousand-word The Reverberator a short novel; and he pointed directly to where the difference lay. Leon Edel, commenting on the obstinacy of James's editors in insisting on translating "nouvelle" as "short novel," lists the short novels of James as Watch and Ward, The Europeans, Confidence, Washington Square, The Reverberator, The Spoils of Poynton, What Maisie Knew, The Sacred Fount, The Other House, and The Outcry.

There were, for him, two kinds of short narratives - the "anecdote" and the "picture." The anecdote, he said, was an account of "something that has oddly happened to someone." To remain an anecdote, it had to point directly to that person, and to keep him at the very centre of the story. On occasion, an anecdote tended to acquire "a surface really much larger than the mere offered face of the work." By becoming a dramatic action, in which the "something that had oddly happened" to the hero or the heroine happens to other characters as well, the anecdote ceases to be itself. It has evolved into a short novel. ¹⁰⁵

The central criterion here, apparently, is that concern most dear to James--point of view or narrative situation. Length is obviously a very peripheral criterion indeed. As Edel points out in a footnote, all the "short novels" in Rahv's collection The Great Short Novels of Henry James must, by James's definition, be called tales. And more precise analysis will reveal them as nouvelles.

The French nouvelle has always been a much more elastic form than the English or American "short story." It has had many great masters; and its appeal to James resided in its being of unprescribed length. It possessed always a length proper to itself. For this reason, he spoke of it as "the beautiful and blest nouvelle." He deplored the general tendency of magazines to disregard questions of "organic" form, and to consider short stories in terms of their shortness - that is, to make them conform to some arbitrary word-count. This does not mean that he favoured an undisciplined prolixity. What he believed in was "masterly brevity," as he put it, and even more - "the idea beautifully developed." This was possible only in the tale, as consecrated long ago in prose by Boccaccio and in poetry by Chaucer. The closest James was to come to the magazine requirements of his day was in two tales of five thousand words each. His average tale runs from ten thousand to twenty thousand words. And there is one which exceeds fifty thousand. This explains why, as he advanced in his career, he found it increasingly difficult to place his stories in the magazines. 106

Critics who unequivocally equate the nouvelle with either the short novel or the long short story would do well to keep in view that for a typology to retain a necessary degree of flexibility, it must work within a system of conceptual frameworks with "blurred edges." Certain nouvelles (Flaubert's A Simple Heart, or, in the case of James, Daisy Miller, The Coxon Fund, The Turn of the Screw) appear to epitomize the central characteristics of the genre while others tend to blur in either direction; towards the long short story ("The Author of Beltraffio") by retaining certain distinctive features of the short story, or the short novel (The Spoils of Poynton) by becoming a "dramatic action." Rahv's generic categorization is, however, clearly untenable since those tales in his collection that are not distinctly

nouvelles tend to blur in the direction of the long short story and not the short novel at all.

Literary works, like all art forms, are structured and like all structures are mutually comparable. Literary structures may be meaningfully classified according to their shared typical features into different genres. In this respect, however, the concern is not with the age-old distinction between Epic, Drama, and Lyric. Such distinctions, arising in Plato's Republic and restated by both Aristotle and Horace, precipitated the static and rigorously prescriptive nature of Neo-Classical genre theory. This is categorization at a very different level of abstraction from the artistic patterns or shapes or figurations that are maintained by the concept of genre as an aesthetic form. Generic identification and comparison between genres may be usefully directed towards bringing the meaning of a literary work into clearer focus insofar as it works towards revealing form and its correlated aesthetic value qualities for all to see. The genre, as Claudio Guillén has emphasized, is a structural model, an invitation to the actual construction of the work of art.¹⁰⁷ Genre theory, while describing a number of related works, at the same time has much to reveal concerning the form of any given individual work. Genres "condition and incite the questioning of literary works."¹⁰⁸

With regard to the generic classification of literary works, consideration of Wittgenstein's notion of "family resemblances" is both appropriate and useful. In the Philosophical Investigations Wittgenstein presents an intricate account of the similarities and differences between various games to illustrate his notion of "family resemblances":

66. Consider for example the proceedings that we call "games." I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? - Don't say: "There must be something common, or

they would not be called 'games' " - but look and see whether there is anything common to all. - For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look! - Look for example at board games, with their multifarious relationships. Now pass to card-games; here you may find many correspondences with the first group, but many common features drop out, and others appear. When we pass next to ball-games, much that is common is retained, but much is lost. - Are they all "amusing"? Compare chess with noughts and crosses. Or is there always winning and losing, or competition between players? Think of patience. In ball-games there is winning and losing; but when a child throws his ball at the wall and catches it again, this feature has disappeared. Look at the parts played by skill and luck; and at the difference between skill in chess and skill in tennis. Think now of games like ring-a-ring-a-roses; here is the element of amusement, but how many other characteristic features have disappeared? And we can go through the many, many other groups of games in the same way; can see how similarities crop up and disappear.

And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.

67. I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblances"; for the various resemblances between the members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. - And I shall say: "games" form a family. ¹⁰⁹

In Wittgenstein's view there are no determinate or relatively determinate characteristics, or what he terms "features," common to all phenomena called "games." The situation involved, to use Wittgenstein's

analogy, is like that of a thread in which different fibres overlap but none runs through the whole length of the thread: "And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres."¹¹⁰ Here Wittgenstein is attacking the traditional view that in every case where phenomena are called by the same name in the same "sense," there is a quality or set of qualities which is common to them all, by virtue of which they are called by that name. This view, Wittgenstein asserts, is mistaken. However, one of Wittgenstein's commentators, Haig Khatchadourian, has posed a significant question in terms of the relatedness of phenomena as the basis for their classification:

But how determinate should a characteristic shared by all members of a "family" be in order that it may be said to be "something in common" to all the members? For determinateness is a matter of degrees, and is relative: what is a determinate characteristic relatively to a given characteristic may be a determinable relatively to another characteristic.¹¹¹

The notion of "family resemblances" is, however, of use when deciding whether a certain literary work which may appear to be a borderline case, The Sacred Fount, or The Pupil, for example, belongs to a particular genre such as the nouvelle. Following Wittgenstein, one may look at a selection of nouvelles about which there is no question, which are at the centre of the concept, and then one may decide whether the work in question has resemblances enough to the undoubted examples of the type to be included in it or to extend the category to take it in.¹¹² However, before this decision can be made, that initial investigation which establishes the undoubted examples of the genre, the centre of the concept, must be pursued by uncovering the typifying features to which they pertain and which entitle them to the name

"nouvelle." This involves modification of Wittgenstein's theory; however, recognition of Wittgenstein's "family resemblances" as "typifying features" is not to distort his theory. It is, rather, to assert qualitative "sameness" rather than qualitative "resemblance." But it is not to assert qualitative "identity": this is the important distinction.

If Wittgenstein is merely repudiating the view that all things called by the same name (in the same "sense") have a qualitatively identical "determinate" characteristic (or a set of these), then traditional essentialism will not be completely overthrown; since on the latter view relatively determinate characteristics which are not qualitatively identical are counted as the "same." It is obvious that it makes all the difference where we draw the line between qualitative "sameness" and mere qualitative "resemblance." If anything short of qualitative identity is rejected as a common quality, even two copies of the same book, or two dimes, may only have certain "resemblances" but no quality "in common." On the other hand, if the distinction is drawn higher up, so to speak, in the determinate-determinable scale, then the members of the family, all of whom have brown eyes of different shades, will have a common quality and not a "resemblance" in color of eyes. That Wittgenstein does not intend to draw the distinction too finely or too stringently is seen by considering his analysis of "games." There he seems to consider games which are amusing as having a common feature; similarly with games which involve competition, or winning or losing; and so on. Yet "amusiveness," for instance, may be of different kinds. Nevertheless, the difficulty seems to remain: for on what logical basis or bases (whether the same or different ones in different cases) would Wittgenstein draw the line in a given case, and in different given cases,

between qualitative "resemblance"
and qualitative "identity"?¹¹³

The "difficulty" that Khatchadourian points to need not concern us here as our search is not for essential qualities but for typical features. This method realizes that generic categorization must at all times be fluid if the fixed and closed categories of Neo-Classical theory are to be avoided.

Traditional genre theory, as Robert Scholes has pointed out, has two facets, almost two separate methods:

In one, specific works of literature are referred to certain ideal types, in which reside the essence of each genre and its potential. In the other, a notion of general types is built up from data acquired empirically, based on historical connections among specific works, and traditions that can be identified. One is essentially deductive, the other inductive. An ideal theory of fictional genres should work toward a reconciliation of these two approaches, which are equally necessary, and in fact complementary.¹¹⁴

Aristotle describes definition as "a phrase signifying a thing's essence"¹¹⁵ and in the Metaphysics he comes near to equating definition and essence:

There is an essence only of those things whose formula is a definition. But we have a definition not where we have a word and a formula identical in meaning (for in that case all formulae or sets of words would be definitions; for there will be some name for any set of words whatever, so that even the Iliad will be a definition), but where there is a formula of something primary; and primary things are those which do not imply the predication of one element in them of another element. Nothing, then, which is not a species of a genus will have an essence - only species will have it.... Definitions and essence in the primary and simple

sense belong to substances. Still they belong to other things as well, only not in the primary sense.... In one sense nothing will have a definition and nothing will have an essence, except substances, but in another sense other things will have them. Clearly, then, definition is the formula of the essence, and essence belongs to substances either alone or chiefly and primarily¹¹⁶ and in the unqualified sense.

As John Randall has pointed out, essence in the Aristotelian sense may be "defined as what is knowable and statable about an ousia [substance], what the definition of a kind will formulate."¹¹⁷

With regard to the definition of literary genres, however, the search for essential features has, in the past, involved restricting a genre to certain very definite characteristics and to insist that these are essential, that is, necessary and sufficient, to the genre. This invariably involves the exclusion of a large number of works which are usually regarded as belonging to the genre and is the danger inherent in an essentialist approach to generic distinction. It is a potential danger underlying the method of Roman Ingarden in his fundamental and informative search for the invariant logical conditions of the mode of being of the literary work and the correlated method for distinguishing genre that he points to.¹¹⁸ To establish a formula, on the other hand, which covers all the various examples usually included in the genre is to widen the definition to such an extent, leave it in such general terms, that it will cease to be an exact definition altogether. At the opposite extreme, inexact definition is the danger underlying Wittgenstein's "concepts with blurred edges" as applied to generic classification.

... the notion of "family resemblance" fails to explain certain obvious features of the usage of the term "literary work." It fails to explain

that there are correct and incorrect uses of the term. Family resemblances may be found between poems and plays, plays and novels, novels and short-stories, short-stories and essays, essays of a more general kind and more narrowly technical essays in history, philosophy, science, technology, engineering; between novels and detective stories, detective stories and crime reports, crime reports and sociological essays on crime, between sociological essays on crime and other essays in sociology etc., etc. However, somewhere along these separate lines we pass a fuzzy border where we would cease to apply the term "literary work." Without such a border we end in comparative madness where everything, in the end, belongs to the same group as everything else.¹¹⁹

Reconciliation between the two apparently opposed methods of "essentialism" and "typicism" is required to arrive at a balanced overview of generic classification that creates the right degree of interplay between the rigidity of the former and the vagueness of the latter. There is, however, in the phenomenology of Roman Ingarden sufficient definite indication that the two methods need not be mutually exclusive.

Usually one distinguishes genres of literary works of art. If we are to speak of "genres" at all, however, the possibility of their various changes and modifications must come from the essence of the literary work in general. It would also have to be shown that, although a certain number and selection of strata are indispensable in each literary work, the essential structure of these strata allows various and not always necessary roles for each of them, as well as the appearance of new strata that are not present in every literary work.¹²⁰

Here Ingarden indicates the dual character of the

literary work composed of (1) essential features exhibiting a certain objective structure which gives it its status as a literary work and (2) non-essential but typical features that make it a certain kind or genre of literary work. As David Levin suggests, Ingarden employs the powerful method of phenomenology in order to penetrate the underlying ontological essence, or mode of being, of the literary work and to make explicit the corresponding side of subjectivity within whose structures the underlying modes of givenness peculiar to the literary entity are lawfully established.¹²¹

Ingarden's fundamental guiding question in The Literary Work of Art is: What are the essential properties, the invariant logical conditions, of that mode of being which the literary work of art uniquely possesses?

Which, then, are the strata that are necessary for every literary work if its internal unity and basic character are to be preserved? They are... the following: (1) the stratum of word sounds and the phonetic formations of higher order built on them; (2) the stratum of meaning units of various orders; (3) the stratum of manifold schematized aspects and aspect continua and series, and, finally, (4) the stratum of represented objectivities and their vicissitudes. Subsequent analysis will show that this last stratum is, so to speak, "two-sided": on the one hand, the "side" of the representing intentional sentence correlates (in particular the state of affairs), on the other, the "side" of objects and their vicissitudes achieving representation in these sentence correlates.¹²²

The degree to which the four strata identified in The Literary Work of Art are responsible for the status of the literary work of art qua work of art is more clearly outlined in The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art. As Ingarden maintains, in the

former he is establishing the structure of the literary work in the broadest sense by identifying four essential strata.

The particular cases of the literary work are, on the one hand, the literary work of art (the work of belles-lettres) and, on the other hand, various works in the medium of language, among which the scientific work is most prominent. An essential feature of the scientific work is that it is intended to fix, contain, and transmit to others the results of scientific investigation in some area in order to enable scientific research to be continued and developed by its readers.

If it performs other functions in the process, these are not essential, and it performs them almost incidentally. But the literary work of art is not primarily intended to form and fix scientific knowledge in concepts and judgements, nor does it serve to communicate the results of scientific knowledge to others. And should it accidentally happen to do so, then it goes far beyond its proper function. The literary work of art does not serve to further scientific knowledge but to embody in its concretization certain values of a very specific kind, which we usually call "aesthetic" values. It allows these values to appear so that we may see them and also experience them aesthetically, a process which has a certain value in itself. If in a particular case the literary work of art is unable to embody these values for some reason, then the whole supply of transmitted knowledge of one sort or another which may be present in it is of little help. The work is a failure and only appears to be a work of belles-lettres. What we have just said holds also when the work manifests no aesthetic values but does express important philosophical or psychological insights; it is still no work of art. And, conversely, it is a mistaken undertaking to examine and interpret literary works of art

as if they were disguised philosophical systems. Even if literary works of art sometimes perform other social functions or are used in the performance of such functions, that adds nothing to their character of being works of art, nor does it save them as works of art if they embody no aesthetic values in their concretization.

From this fundamental distinction in function between the scientific work and the literary work of art it follows that the former has a completely different structure from the latter, although both are "literary works" in the broadest sense.¹²³

The difference in structure between the two, it is important to note, is not so much a difference between the essential strata that both share as their mode of being literary works in the broadest sense;¹²⁴ it is, rather, a difference that emerges from the structure of the essential strata of the literary work in general at the level of the sub-strata that each essential stratum gives rise to and which are peculiar to a specific work in accordance with the distinct character of that work--that is, "... the essential structure of these strata allows various and not always necessary roles for each of them, as well as the appearance of new strata that are not present in every literary work."¹²⁵ Here Ingarden comes close to echoing Husserl who, in one way, referred to "eidetic reduction" as a method of "free variation." The "eidos," being the essence of a phenomenon as it presents itself to consciousness, can also be viewed as a prototype of other phenomena which can be referred to the same eidos. By introducing other phenomena of the same kind, one thereby introduces variations which can be compared to an eidos in terms of which these various phenomena can be seen as belonging to the same type.¹²⁶ Each essential stratum of a literary work then, may have a peculiar or, in terms of generic classification when we consider a number of related works, a typical

structure that typifies a literary work as a certain kind or genre.

Ultimately, for Ingarden, it is the polyphonic harmony of aesthetically valent qualities, arising from the content and the interrelation of the various strata, that makes a literary work a work of art and not a scientific work. And within this narrowed down range of literary works of art, differences in kind similarly occur at the level of the sub-strata that a group of works may share (but which are not essential) and which typify them as belonging to a certain genre. It is according to the degree of shared typical features at the level of the sub-strata that the works vary in their proximity to the centre of the conceptual framework, or model, or genre.

Whether or not we accept Ingarden's four strata as essential features of the literary work depends largely on our philosophical orientation; but it need not directly concern our search for generic identity. While the concept of essence in the Aristotelian sense is clearly fundamental to Ingarden's theories, his apologia on the subject is worth quoting in the face of the scepticism that essentialism has attracted, particularly within the tradition of British empiricism.

Among positivistically and, in particular, neopositivistically orientated researchers there is a tendency to ridicule that direction of research which attempts to discover the essence of an object or its essential features. The reason for this is that by "the essence of an object" the positivists, presumptively, understand something that is totally unknowable in general and for man in particular. Positivists are de facto negativists; as regards the theory of cognition and the theory of science, they are sceptics. In this, moreover, they do not attempt either to clarify or make precise the concepts

they oppose. One of these unclarified concepts that is only caricatured by them is that of the essence of an object. It is indeed a difficult and polysemic concept. At another point I have tried to show that, after distinguishing many historically tangled meanings, one can draw out an understanding of what is essential in an object that keeps it fully within the bounds¹²⁷ that are accessible to our cognition.

The four strata that Ingarden identifies are within those bounds and that he can maintain them as such is largely the result of his definite emphasis that they are common to the basic structure of all literary works whether they are artistic or scientific in orientation. Ingarden determines the artistic, aesthetic, and scientific values in each essential stratum which give the work its status as "artistic" or "scientific" while at the same time he recognizes that aspects of both may be present in any one. However, it is not directly on the essential nature of each stratum that generic differentiation relies. It relies on the complex of sub-strata that fulfil "various and not always necessary roles" and also on "the appearance of new strata that are not present in every literary work" to give the literary work its generic identity. It is when we recognize that Ingarden is asserting typical rather than essential features as the basis for generic differentiation that his methodology becomes compatible with the fluid concept of genres with blurred edges.

Approaching a selection of James's nouvelles using the methodology suggested by Ingarden in order to arrive at a generic classification of undoubted examples of the type must keep in view his major premise that literary works have a basic structure that is "common" to all of them, as well as its corollary: "... they are not individualities which cannot be conceived as examples of a certain

determinate class." 128 This, as Ingarden points out, is an assumption without which no theory of art or aesthetics is possible.

While the selection of certain works for study seems to anticipate the findings of this investigation, those findings may only prove their usefulness when they enable us to decide whether or not other works by James, among them borderline cases--for example, The Sacred Fount--may be included in the genre. The primary aim, however, from a generic standpoint, in investigating in some detail a selection of nouvelles that stand central to the genre--Daisy Miller, The Aspern Papers, In the Cage, The Bench of Desolation, The Turn of the Screw, The Coxon Fund--is to arrive at a clear understanding of the nature of the Jamesian nouvelle and, through the revelation of its form, as to how exactly "the trick was played." As James wrote in the preface to The Awkward Age: " 'Kinds' are the very life of literature, and truth and strength come from the complete recognition of them, from abounding to the utmost in their respective senses and sinking deep into their consistency" (P, p. 111).

Notes

- ¹ Percy Lubbock, ed., The Letters of Henry James, 2 vols. (London: MacMillan, 1920), 1, p. 138. Hereafter cited as Letters.
- ² Ibid., p. 163.
- ³ "Guy de Maupassant, 1883," The House of Fiction, ed. Leon Edel (London: Hart-Davis, 1957), p. 152.
- ⁴ All dates in brackets after titles refer to first publication.
- ⁵ Letters, 1, p. 189.
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 232.
- ⁷ Walter Isle, Experiments in Form: Henry James's Novels 1896-1901 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 7-8.
- ⁸ R.P. Blackmur, "Introduction" to The Art of the Novel (New York: Scribner's, 1962), p. xxvi.
- ⁹ Alternative spellings include Turgeniéff, Tourgeniev, Tourgvénéff, and Tourgenieff. I have used the more common spelling--Turgenev-- throughout except in quotations that use other forms.
- ¹⁰ Notes of a Son and Brother, Autobiography, ed. F.W. Dupee (London: Allen, 1956), pp. 287-88. See also Leon Edel, The Untried Years (London: Hart-Davis, 1953), p. 216.
- ¹¹ Edel, The Untried Years, p. 216.
- ¹² Ibid., pp. 216-17.
- ¹³ Parisian Sketches, ed. Leon Edel and Ilse Dusoïr Lind (London: Hart-Davis, 1953), p. 135.
- ¹⁴ "Emile Zola, 1903," The House of Fiction, pp. 237-38.
- ¹⁵ Letters, 1, p. 49.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., p. 51.
- ¹⁷ French Poets and Novelists (London: MacMillan, 1908), pp. 88, 179, 188, 196.

Literary Reviews and Essays, ed. Albert Morrel (New York: Twayne, 1957), p. 162.

¹⁸ Jeanne Delbaere-Garant, Henry James: The Vision of France (Paris: Societe d'Éditions Les Belles Lettres, 1970), pp. 220-21.

¹⁹ Letters, 1, p. 102.

²⁰ James as quoted by Leon Edel, The Conquest of London (London: Hart-Davis, 1962), p. 228.

²¹ Ibid., p. 221.

²² "Gustave Flaubert, 1902," The House of Fiction, p. 211.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Delbaere-Garant, p. 159.

²⁵ "Gustave Flaubert, 1902," The House of Fiction, p. 211.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 211-12.

²⁷ W.C.D. Pacey, "Henry James and His French Contemporaries," American Literature, XIII (November 1941), pp. 240-56.

²⁸ "Guy de Maupassant," Harper's Weekly, XXXIII (19 October, 1889), pp. 834-35.

²⁹ As quoted by James in The Selected Letters of Henry James, ed. Leon Edel (London: Hart-Davis, 1956), p. 176.

³⁰ Delbaere-Garant, p. 171.

³¹ "Prosper Mérimée," Literature, III (23 July, 1898), p. 66.

³² Ibid.

³³ Literary Reviews and Essays, p. 171.

³⁴ As quoted by Leon Edel, The Untried Years, p. 166.

³⁵ "The Lesson of Balzac, 1905," The House of Fiction, p. 66.

³⁶ This may appear to be a strange thing to say about Balzac but it must also be borne in mind that James's moral sense had a completely different emphasis from the tenets of the French realists and naturalists. See Pacey, pp. 243-44.

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- 38 "Honoré de Balzac, 1902," Notes on Novelists (London: Dent, 1914), p. 90.
- 39 "The Lesson of Balzac, 1905," The House of Fiction, p. 70.
- 40 Ibid., p. 72.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid., p. 82.
- 43 Ibid., p. 76.
- 44 Ibid., p. 82.
- 45 "Ivan Turgenieff," French Poets and Novelists, pp. 211-12.
- 46 See Daniel Lerner, "The Influence of Turgenev on Henry James," Slavonic Review, XX (American Series 1), 1941, pp. 28-54, and F.O. Matthiessen, The James Family (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1947), pp. 548ff.
- 47 Turgenev as quoted by Lerner, p. 33.
- 48 Partial Portraits (London: MacMillan, 1888), pp. 314-15.
- 49 Lerner, pp. 37-38.
- 50 Delbaere-Garant, p. 199.
- 51 Ibid., p. 201.
- 52 Letters, I, p. 289.
- 53 See Notebooks, pp. 76-82.
- 54 Robert Scholes, "Towards a Poetics of Fiction: An Approach through Genre," Novel, II (1969), p. 103.
- 55 Ibid.
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- 70 Gillespie, p. 125.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 Charles Baudelaire as quoted by Gillespie, p. 125.
- 73 Paulson, p. vii.
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- 75 Kern, pp. 517-18.
- 76 Ibid., p. 518.
- 77 Gillespie, p. 119.
- 78 Ibid.
- 79 As quoted by Leon Edel, The Untried Years, p. 221.
- 80 M.H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 110.
- 81 H.M. Waidson, "The German Short Story as a Literary Form," Modern Languages, XL (1959), p. 125.
- 82 Joseph T. Shipley, ed., Dictionary of World Literary Terms: Form, Techniques, Criticism (London: Allan & Unwin, 1943). New Enlarged and Completely Revised Edition, 1970, p. 219.

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124 The scientific work, however, has, in some cases, only three essential strata; the stratum of schematized aspects "in some areas of mathematical investigation... do not, and indeed cannot, appear in the work." CLWA, pp. 151-52.

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Chapter 2 : Principles of Composition

James's conception of prose fiction was gradually formed as his art developed and the writers he had read were assimilated by his artistic consciousness. An examination of James's formalization of the *nouvelle* has to take into consideration his views on art and the various forms or "kinds" of fiction as they appear in his general statements in the few papers he wrote on the novel, in his literary reviews and essays, and in some selected passages from the prefaces to the New York Edition of his works, in which he explains his creative aims. This will make us familiar with James's critical terms and help us to understand his conception of the form and function of the *nouvelle*.

The ambiguity that underlies so much of James's prose fiction is paralleled by the tension between the notions of free expansion and artistic restraint that underlies his literary criticism. However, as James developed and refined his style in the direction of his "major phase" the paradox contained in that tension resolved itself; as Dorothea Krook has remarked with reference to the late style, "in James the philosophic, analytic passion is all of a piece with the poetic and the intuitive: they can be distinguished but never divided."¹

In the well-known essay, "The Art of Fiction" (1884), the essence of James's organic theory of fiction is succinctly expressed:

A novel is a living thing, 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. The critic who over the close texture of a finished work shall pretend to trace a geography

of items will mark some frontiers
as artificial, I fear, as any that
have been known to history.²

While it may appear that James has overlooked that one can only speak metaphorically of an "organism" in connection with works of art,³ he had, nevertheless, an astute awareness of the concept of organic form. The very attempt to analyse and to classify, the attempt "to trace a geography of items," James appears to be suggesting, is to falsify the literary work since every work is a determinate system of signs, in which every item and phase consists of corresponding items and phases of all the interconnected strata of the work and attain determinate qualification because they occur precisely in one and not another place or in isolation: the phrase, for example, as James wrote in a review of Flaubert, is "properly part of something else that is in turn part of something other, part of a reference, a tone, a passage, a page."⁴

James delighted "in a deep breathing economy and an organic form" and referred to the "organic form" of many of his own works; the concept appears in his criticism and theory from the beginning of his literary career. At the same time, the novel, for James, is free and independent: "A healthy, living, and growing art, full of curiosity and fond of exercise, has an indefeasable mistrust of rigid prohibitions."⁵ Statements like these, especially when seen in the context of James's formalistic concerns, have caused some consternation among his critics. As Leon Edel claims, it has been fashionable in recent years to disparage James's critical precepts as the pleasant and intelligent utterances of a fine writer, but not the work of a literary critic. He has been variously reprimanded for the "inconsistencies in his aesthetics" as well as for theories of which no trace are to be found in anything he ever wrote,⁶ for his "academic humanism and ready-made classicism,"⁷ and for "an absolute refusal to recognize the existence of abstract

categories, of whatever is not visible,"⁸ all of which indicate either an incomplete reading or an incomplete understanding of James's criticism. There is also T.S. Eliot's somewhat patronizing dismissal: "Henry was not a literary critic."⁹ However, it would be very difficult to deny James's influence on twentieth century criticism and theory of the novel. Percy Lubbock's influential work, The Craft of Fiction (1921), which makes consistent use of Jamesian terms and concepts, is a case in point. Lubbock pronounced James as "the novelist who carried his research into the theory of the art further than any other - the only real scholar in the art."¹⁰ René Wellek considers James "by far the best American critic of the nineteenth century who - pace Mr. Eliot - is brimful of ideas and critical concepts and has a well-defined theory and point of view which allow him to characterize sensitively and evaluate persuasively a wide range of writers...."¹¹ But it must also be kept clearly in view that James was his own best critic and that the prefaces "are primarily reminiscences and commentaries and not criticism."¹² For Leon Edel it is "beyond question" that James approached criticism largely in the light of his practice of fiction.

The critical act, in the case of Henry James, was essentially an enlargement of his action as novelist; in this it differed, for example, from Sainte-Beuve who once wrote a novel in an effort to enlarge his action as critic. The novel was factitious, though perhaps it gave Sainte-Beuve an inkling of what the creative process might be. James was a novelist first and foremost, and his criticism was colored constantly by his creative intelligence.¹³

James often achieved what in the Notebooks, prefaces and critical essays, before and after the creative act, he outlined as having been his aim. His clear-sightedness in this respect makes these works an achievement in themselves and "conflicting"

theories and statements that occur from one preface to the next, from one Notebook entry to another critical essay, reveal primarily that "James's creative energy thrived on the reconciliation of opposites."¹⁴ Nevertheless, on the whole, James's critical views are remarkably coherent and rather than revealing inconsistencies in his aesthetics, they show, at most, "changes of emphasis due to a difference of audience or the changed atmosphere of the time."¹⁵ As far as the prefaces are concerned, it must also be borne in mind that many years separate the writing of the early novels and tales, in particular, and the corresponding preface; if several of the statements concerning the conception and writing of these works are not entirely valid, the reason is often the result of a developed and mature reflection on the practice of the art as an apprentice.

"The novel remains, still, under the right persuasion, the most independent, most elastic, most prodigious of literary forms" (P, p. 326), James proclaimed, yet his obsessive concern with brevity, with concision, as we have seen, dominated his creative impulse and runs counter to his desire for the "free development" of the "germ" of the story and to his organic theory, in terms of which form is "an unfailing cohesion of all ingredients" of a literary work. In the organic whole, "every word and every punctuation-point contribute directly to the expression" of the idea or the "seed."¹⁶ But while James wholly endorsed organic form, he equally delighted in "a deep breathing economy" and the reconciliation of the two, of the organic with the "mechanistic,"¹⁷ led him to his realization of the perfect "kind," the nouvelle. However, James's recognition of "kinds" of literature, it is important to remember, is largely a recognition of genres of his own formulation: the concise anecdote, the picture, the nouvelle, the short novel and the novel, have each, for James, their own structural laws, prescribed method, and peculiar advantages and

disadvantages.¹⁸

The "free development" that James sees time and time again as the necessary explosive impulse of his literary creation is countered by the implosive impulse of the idea "logically developed," enabling "a certain assured appearance of roundness and felicity." J.A. Ward sees this aesthetic principle as the basis of James's idea of structure and certainly it is corroborated by James's resorting again and again to architectural analogy in his consideration of fictional form:

To James, architecture, with its emphasis on proportion and symmetry, is virtually analogous to composition. Architecture is both science and art; the architectural structure can simultaneously conform to the most exact geometric measurements and demonstrate the organic principle of free expansion.... James's metaphorical account of the writing of The Portrait of a Lady perfectly illustrates the organic theory of architecture: "The single small cornerstone, the conception of a certain young woman affronting her destiny, had begun with being all my outfit for the large square building of 'The Portrait of a Lady.' It came to be a square and spacious house..." (P, p. 48). The organic theory of architecture stresses what is often absent or subordinate in organic theories of literature: that proportion, regularity, and geometry - in short, composition - are necessary attributes of the form that follows function. An organic pattern, unlike a mechanical pattern, develops logically from the controlling idea, but is no less considerate of outward appearance (thus the "building" of The Portrait is "square"). Organicism in architecture is opposed not only to order for its own sake, which is necessarily lifeless, but also to orderlessness... to James, a synthesis of the natural and the artificial is not merely possible, it is of first importance - as he suggests in "The Future of the

Novel": "Many see the whole business of the novel too divorced on the one side from observation and perception, and on the other from the art and taste. They get too little of the first-hand impression, the effort to penetrate - that effort for which the French have the admirable expression to fouiller - and still less, if possible, of any science of composition, any architecture, distribution, proportion."¹⁹

Genres, or "kinds", for James, were clearly determined by organic qualities. And that they maintain their formal propensity was important since "the confusion of kinds is the inelegance of letters and the stultification of values." This remark, coming as it does in the preface to The Awkward Age, in which James borrows from drama the consistent use of "scenic" presentation, does not forbid the conversion of one technique into a device consistent with another. Indeed, the symmetrically determined alternation of "picture" and "scene" is the predominant structural pattern that occurs in most of James's extended fiction.

Most novelists... seem to betray, like Thackeray, a preference for one method or the other, for picture or for drama; one sees in a moment how Fielding, Balzac, George Eliot, incline to the first, in their diverse manners, and Tolstoy (certainly Tolstoy, in spite of his big range) or Dostoevsky to the second, the scenic way. But of course every novelist uses both, and the quality of a novelist appears very clearly in his management of the two, how he guides the story into the scene, how he picks it out of the scene, a richer and fuller story than it was before, and proceeds with his narrative.²⁰

For James, maximum narrative value is obtained "when both weights are felt."²¹ Each exerts its pressure in an area where the other is not as appropriate. James's use of internalized narration is interwoven with his

rigid adherence to his "pictorial" method, and both are subsumed by "the blest operation... of my Dramatic Principle, my law of successive aspects."

The great contribution of Turgenev and James to the development of modern fiction is usually called the "dramatic novel." Its aims and methods follow from the humanism which was so integral to their personalities. Since their interest began at that point "where conscious life begins," it was not important to tell whether a woman sweats in the middle of her back or under her arms; perspiration was important only as it contributed "information about the human mind." Instead of... the accumulation of detail which was the ideal of the Naturalists (and the lack of which they deplored in Turgenev), their artistic ideal was rather the "portrait." Their care then was for "significant detail," and the two key words in the vocabulary of the dramatic novel are: selection and economy. The chief appeal for James was that of "the successfully foreshortened thing, where representation is arrived at... not by the addition of items, but by the art of figuring synthetically."²²

James achieved his fictional art of portraiture through what he made appear a necessary--and consequently both subtle and organic--interaction and alternation of picture and scene. He used both these terms respectively to cover several related meanings and relied on context to distinguish their various uses and give them precise meaning. Joseph Wiesenfarth has isolated four senses in which James used picture:

... picture as a structural block which alternates with scene... picture in the sense that a novel is an ordered composition... picture referring to the novel as a picture of life... picture in the sense that a novel as a whole is a pictorial one; thus Lubbock on The Ambassadors: "It is a purely pictorial subject, covering Strether's field of vision and bounded by its limits; it consists

entirely of an impression
received by a certain man."²³

The first and last of these differentia are of particular relevance to the composition of James's fiction; the second is closely bound to his organic theory and the third relates to his concern with the relation of art to life.

Picture, James wrote, aims at "richly summarized and foreshortened effects - the opposite pole again from expansion inorganic and thin" (P, p. 139). Viola Hopkins has pointed to the function of a pictorial passage within James's extended narratives:

An outgrowth of James's habit of seeing a landscape or figures "composed" so that the scene appears to the spectator as a living picture perhaps recalling a real one or as a subject for a picture is his use of the "framing" device. Any scene or part of a scene may be considered framed if through visual imagery or description it is circumscribed and set apart from the rest of the narrative. Framing may serve various purposes; it may integrate description with action or with characterization, especially if the scene is presented through the consciousness of a character with a painter's eye; it may convey with great precision the particular tone of the setting or appearance of a character. Most important of all, it may symbolize²⁴ relationships and underline themes.

The technique of foreshortening is central to James's "pictorial" method, but its discussion in the prefaces is never extensive. Foreshortening is a term James adapted from the visual arts and applied to narrative art.

The foreshortened image in a painting is the representation of a part of a figure so that it suggests the whole figure because the painter has established a depth of perspective. In narrative structure the foreshortened

effect suggests temporal and spatial perspective.²⁵

The device was invaluable to James, a directive principle conducive to "the only compactness that has a charm, to the only spareness that has a force, to the only simplicity that has a grace - those, in each order, that produce the rich effect" (P, p. 278).

James consistently followed the rule of "showing" as opposed to "telling." His formula for this derived from the dramatist's art and, while indicative of the inward turn of narrative that characterizes novelistic technique of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was an innovatory and experimental technique for presenting human situations. Its prime requirement is "that before the show begins, the author must get off the stage." Turgenev expressed it as the cutting of "le cordon ombilical" between character and author and more recently Joseph Warren Beach captioned it "Exit Author."²⁶

James rarely conceived of his extended narratives in terms of event and its sequential unfolding; instead he regarded each one as "a metaphysical or moral entity."²⁷ He expressed an inability to emulate "the imaginative writer so constituted as to see his fable first and to make out its agents afterwards...." His organic theory conceived of character as action, and action as plot. Even in the tales, he conceived of situation as "an idea - it can't be a 'story' in the vulgar sense of the word. It must be a picture; it must illustrate something.... One must put a little action - not a stupid, mechanical, arbitrary action, but something that is of the essence of the subject" (N, p. 103). "Story," then, must be subordinated to picture and its conversion is one of the prime effects of foreshortening: the idea must be shown and thus it must acquire a form.

To put all that is possible of one's idea into a form and compass that will contain and express it only by delicate adjustments and

an exquisite chemistry, so that there will at the end be neither a drop of one's liquor left nor a hair's breadth of the rim of one's glass to spare - every artist will remember how often that sort of necessity has carried with it its particular inspiration. Therein lies the secret of the appeal, to his mind, of the successfully foreshortened thing, where representation is arrived at... not by the addition of items (a light that has for its attendant shadow a possible dryness) but by the art of figuring synthetically, a compactness into which the imagination may cut thick, as into the rich density of wedding cake. (P, pp. 87-8)

Foreshortening synthesizes and compacts items, aspects, action, events, and produces a spatio-temporal simultaneity that is centrally unified by the organizing intelligence or reflector.

... to give all the sense... without all the substance or all the surface, and so to summarize and foreshorten, so to make values both rich and sharp, that the mere procession of items and profiles is not only, for the occasion, superseded, but is, for essential quality, almost "compromised" - such a case of delicacy proposes itself at every turn to the painter of life who wishes both to treat his chosen subject and to confine his necessary picture. (P, p. 14)

Foreshortening provides density and the result is a picture, produced by "full-fed statement" and "imaged résumé of as many vivifying elements as may be coherently packed into an image at once"; and in a nouvelle like Julia Bride "we catch by the very small reflector, which is of absolute minimum size for its task, a quite 'unlikely' amount... of the movement of life" (P, p. 263). Julia Bride James pointed to as " 'Foreshortened' ... to within an inch of her life" (P, pp. 262-3).

Picture as a structural block, as a unit of composition, is "foreshortened narration, made concrete and immediate." It is rendered summary²⁸ (to set it off from James's general notion of picture in the sense of a structural totality), in which past, present, and future time references often merge within the dimensions of something approaching, analogously, an apparently three-dimensional painting: "... the foreshortened procession of fact and figures... is but another name for the picture governed by the principle of composition."²⁹

The novelty of this technique lies in the exposition being treated as part of the main action, not as a subordinate adjunct to it. The focus of presentness shifts continually; the relative pastness and presentness are deliberately dissolved; the tenses are confused or rather fused, so that the past is felt not as distinct from the present but included in it and permeating it. Every moment is conceived as the condensation of earlier history, and the past is not separate and completed but an ever-developing part of a changing present.³⁰

Foreshortening, then, is a dramatic principle that provides both immediacy and economy of presentation that is rich in effect.

Picture as a structural totality, a progression, or rather, juxtapositioning of smaller units of composition or "structural blocks," points most readily to works like Daisy Miller which, significantly, is "A Study," and The Portrait of a Lady. Daisy Miller and The Golden Bowl, nouvelle and novel, are works in which the second half reviews the attitudes and values of the first half, through spatial demarcation in the former and a shift in the figural point of view in the latter. The overall effect may be compared to that of a diptych; but it was not always, in James's opinion, successfully maintained. The latter half of The Wings of the Dove he regarded as "the false and

deformed half" because of his "regular failure to keep the appointed halves of his whole equal" and he lay the blame on his "mislaying or otherwise trifling with our blest pair of compasses" in the attempt "to produce the illusion of mass without the illusion of extent" (P, p. 302). As Joseph Warren Beach has remarked, in this sectionalizing of the novels (for example, the twelve books of The Ambassadors) and also, although to a less emphatic extent, of the nouvelles (the most pronounced example is The Point of View (1882) with its epistolary technique), each section is "to be regarded in the light of a separate panel of a screen or division of a wall-surface, and that the architectural conditions limiting the size and form of each are made to contribute their part to the effect of each division and of the whole."³¹

The pictorial conception of his themes is well exemplified in the series of stories presenting the American abroad. The formula is most frequently... a simple, candid, but very fine and lustrous soul seen against a dense murky background of sophisticated manners and ways of thought.... Mr. James makes no secret of his fondness for the "sinister" and the "portentous" as colors in his picture; these colors, combined with the mystery which is a still more constant source of interest, contribute to the rich complexity of which he is so fond. And they serve moreover to heighten the contrast involved in the subject, to create an effect of chiaroscuro. Most effective pictorially are the figures of Isabel Archer in "The Portrait" and Milly Theale in "The Dove." But the secret of this effectiveness lies more in the background than in the main foreground subject. As much art went to the creation of Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond as to that of Isabel. It required a greater mastery of the brush to give us Kate Croy than Milly Theale herself.... And the superiority of James in this painter's job

arises largely from his stronger consciousness of its being a question of painting.³²

The overall technique of picture applies equally to works like Madame de Mauves, What Maisie Knew, and The Ambassadors, in which the reflector is made to see progressively more dimensions of the presented action. In all cases, the technique arises out of that very leaning in James that prevented him from successfully mastering the form of the concise anecdote: his "incorrigible taste for gradations and superpositions of effect; his love, when it is a question of picture, of anything that makes for proportion and perspective, that contributes to a view of all the dimensions" (P, p. 153). As Ward points out, the effect of James's overall pictorial method is that of a "perspective painting."³³ While the method is "subjective" insofar as it is filtered through consciousness, it also conforms to James's constant impulse to "Dramatize! Dramatize!" insofar as it is always immediate, rarely retrospective. Immediacy and dramatization are also further enhanced by the counterpointing of picture (as a unit of composition) and scene.

The word alternation is the key to the whole question of the use of the scene and the picture in the novel. James thinks of the development of his novels as the alternation of parts that prepare for scenes and scenes themselves, both of which fuse to give the synthesis of picture. The dramatic scene in the novel is, then, a device used to frame the reader's attention; it focuses on one small area of the canvas; when all of these areas have been examined and put together, the picture emerges. The dramatic scene is thus a means to the end of developing the novel as picture.³⁴

James's principal use of scenic presentation was to objectify the method of presenting action in terms of a highly sensitized register--it is a demarcatory

device that resembles the use of the scene in a stage play and insofar as it "frames" action it parallels the picture which it frames through the use of a central or peripheral intelligence.

These devices James used throughout his works as those most calculated to command, direct, and limit or frame the reader's attention; and they are employed in various combinations or admixtures the nature of which almost every Preface comments on. These devices are not, as their names might suggest, opposed; nor could their use in equal parts cancel each other. They are in the novel, two ends of one stick, and no one can say where either end begins.³⁵

For James, scenic presentation was "as near an approach to the dramatic as the novel may permit itself." The use of scenes dramatically rendered in a novel or nouvelle has in common with pure drama the fact that "they move in the light of alternation" which "imposes a consistency other than that of the novel at its loosest, and, for one's subject, a different view and a different placing of the centre." The charm, then, of "scenic consistency" was "the consistency of the multiplication of aspects, that of making them amusingly various" (P, p. 90).

The use of the scene was the method most suitable for focussing on situation and on character without "that 'going behind,' to compass explanations and amplifications...." Scene, then, focusses primarily, both objectively and economically, on action but, as character is action, so was it also James's most objective method of rendering character and, as such, complemented, through alternation, the picture with its emphasis on the commanding intelligence, since the scene makes for "intelligibility as nothing else does, orders and regulates, even when but faintly turned on; squares things and keeps them in happy relation to each other. What 'happens,' by that felicity, happens thus to every one concerned, exactly as in much more

prodigious recitals: it's a case... of the planned rotation of aspects and of that 'scenic' determination of them..." (P, p. 182).

James and Lubbock see the novel as giving us, in turn, "picture" and "drama," by which they mean some character's consciousness of what is going on (within and without) in distinction from a "scene," which is partly at least in dialogue and which presents, in some detail, an important episode or encounter. The "picture" is as "objective" as the "drama," only it is the objective rendering of a specific subjectivity - that of one of the characters (Madame Bovary, or Strether), while the "drama" is the objective rendering of speech and behaviour.³⁶

The influence of James's theatrical experiments on his novelistic career has been variously commented on.³⁷ As Wellek points out, James did not, in general, approve of an attempt to emulate drama:

James's own unlucky dramatic experiments sharpened rather his consciousness that a play and a novel are eternally distinct and have their own rigid laws. James's admiration for the drama is largely due to the demands for unity, economy, and concentration made by the stage.... Thus it seems hardly surprising that drama and dramatic unity in the novel are frequent terms of praise. Among George Eliot's novels, The Mill on the Floss has "most dramatic continuity," in distinction from descriptive, discursive narration.³⁸

James's experience in writing drama and his interest in the works of other dramatists are reflected in his prose fiction. A case in point is the scenic method which is a more predominantly consistent feature of the nouvelles and novels written during and after his theatrical involvement. James's devotion to the theatre, however, extended back to his early twenties and his dramatic technique is very much in the foreground.

of those works written before 1889. Its influence is reflected in the ideal he expressed with great confidence in the North American Review in 1865: "All writing is narration; to describe is simply to narrate things in their order of space, instead of events in their order of time." But it is during and after James's theatrical debacle that the technique of describing, which became for him synonymous with "showing", showed a marked refinement and development.

James referred to the "material," of The Wings of the Dove and The Ambassadors as "the stuff of drama" and to nouvelles like The Pupil and In the Cage as "little constituted dramas" in "recognition of the inveterate instinct with which they keep conforming to the 'scenic' law" (P, p. 157). He named three aspects of the "scene" upon which his "dramas" were founded--"the logic of the 'scene,' the unit of the scene, the general scenic consistency" (P, p. 157). The logic of the scene, as R.W. Short has indicated, applies to the relationship of the "unit" to the other parts or units of a given work.³⁹ James wrote in the preface to The Wings of the Dove that he "had mainly to make on its behalf the point of its scenic consistency." The "general scenic consistency" of a work refers to "the organization of the whole in terms of blocks which obey the 'scenic law,' though not recognizable as scenic units...."⁴⁰ The Wings of the Dove, for example, "disguises that virtue of being scenic, in the oddest way in the world, by just looking, as we turn its pages, as little scenic as possible" (P, p. 322). Here apparently, picture and scene have become so unified as to make the whole work a coherent and tightly integrated aesthetic and organic totality.

James not only occasionally used scene alone to stand for scenic logic, unit, or general consistency, but sometimes, with less critical exactitude to mean other things as well, as when he wrote of The Ambassadors: "Other persons in no small number were to people the scene, and each with his or her axe

to grind...." Here the word may suggest merely mis-en-scene, or it may suggest, more generally than scenic consistency, the well-ordered whole of the novel, in the easy, conventional sense that we have seen him use the word picture. James always regarded himself as free to manipulate and exploit the whole barrage of associative meanings which had clustered about the evocative words he chose as critical terms, always sublimely confident of his ability to avoid confusion by the controlling force of context. He is one critic who left the language undamaged.⁴¹

James, then, it appears, used occasionally the terms "picture" and "scene" almost synonymously to denote the framework of the whole or the "close consistency in which parts hang together even as the inter-weavings of a tapestry." More frequently, however, the two terms refer to distinctive narrative modes that, in alternation, represent the action embodied in a nouvelle or novel.

In the preface to The Ambassadors James wrote that the novel "sharply divides itself... into the parts that prepare, that tend in fact to overprepare, for scenes, and the parts, or otherwise into the scenes, that justify and crown the preparation. It must definitely be said, I think, that everything in it that is not scene (not, I of course mean, complete and functional scene, treating all the submitted material, as by logical start, logical turn, and logical finish) is discriminated preparation, is the fusion and synthesis of picture." (P, p. 322-3) The alternation of picture and scene is "the very form and figure" of James's extended narratives that "amounts to a system of structures which postures itself to accommodate the subject being developed: the typical scene treats in dialogue, interpersonally and objectively those thoughts and opinions, facts and probabilities that can find an outward expression; the picture typically treats those thoughts, emotions, and

desires not easily expressed in conversation and also those actions and situations which press in upon and affect the consciousness."⁴² The alternation of their appearance communicates the very rhythm of the structure of the nouvelles and novels.

The treatment by "scene," regularly, quite rhythmically recurs; the intervals between, the massing of the elements to a different effect, and by a quite other law, remain, in this fashion, all preparative, just as the scenic occasions in themselves become, at a given moment, illustrative, each of the agents, true to its function, taking up the theme from the other very much as the fiddles, in an orchestra, may take it up from the cornets and flutes, or the wind-instruments take it up from the violins. (P, p. 158)

James rejoiced on "those occasions or parts of an occasion when the boundary line between picture and scene bears a little the weight of the double pressure" (P, p. 300), especially as he recognized the stumbling-block in his method to be the "odd inveteracy with which picture, at almost any turn, is jealous of drama, and drama (though on the whole with a greater patience, I think) suspicious of picture" (P, p. 298). His whole effort in this respect was directed, as in The Wings of the Dove, to preserving the function of each while obliterating any appearance of marked difference between them since "each baffles insidiously the other's ideals and eats round the edges of its position; each is too ready to say 'I can take the thing for 'done' only when done in my way.'" (P, p. 298)

The brevity of the short story form did not, in James's view, allow for the alternation of picture and scene, yet the nouvelle, while maintaining a concise form, could easily embody this method of portraying "the social and personal events of an action, the areas of conduct and consciousness"⁴³ and provided another reason for James's fond attachment to the genre.

A short story, to my sense and as

the term is used in magazines, has to choose between being either an anecdote or a picture and can but play its part strictly according to its kind. I rejoice in the anecdote, but I revel in the picture; though having doubtless at times to note that a given attempt may place itself near the dividing line. (P, p. 139)

Picture, in this context, clearly refers to the "developed" narrative, and the "dividing line" between picture and anecdote corresponds to that between nouvelle and short story. James considered the picture to be a richer form than the anecdote and he praised The Chaperon (1891), which runs to approximately 18,000 words, in which, on the whole, "picture ingeniously prevails."

The anecdote consists, ever, of something that has oddly happened to some one, and the first of its duties is to point directly to the person whom it so distinguishes. He may be you or I or any one else, but a condition of our interest - perhaps the principal one - is that the anecdote shall know him, and shall accordingly speak of him, as its subject. (P, p. 181)

In deciding whether The Reverberator, which falls "into the category of Shorter Novels," may be best viewed as an "exemplary anecdote" or "a little rounded drama," James concluded that, on close inspection, the "anecdotic grace does break down." "Something happens," he noted, "and to a certain person, or, better, to a group of persons, in The Reverberator, but of whom, when it comes to the point, is the fable narrated?" The anecdote must always point directly to its subject, the "whom in the instance... the principle thing, the thing worth telling" happens. What happens, he concluded of The Reverberator, "happens thus to everyone concerned.... [I]t's a case... of the planned rotation of aspects and of that 'scenic' determination of them...." The grace of the anecdote, of the "slender

production," but also that of the "stout" although perhaps less appreciably so, is that while the "face of the work may be small in itself... the surface, the whole thing, the associated margin and connexion, may spread, beneath the fond remembering eye, like nothing more noble than an insidious grease-spot" (P, pp. 180-2).

James again used the term "anecdote" in several senses. In one sense, it appears similar to the notion of the "germ," the "seed," or the essence of the informing idea of a narrative: "any anecdote about life pure and simple, as it were, proceeds almost as a matter of course from some good jog of fond fancy's elbow, some pencilled note on somebody else's case." In contrast, complex states, "the material for any picture of personal states," must come from "the depths of the designer's own mind" (P, p. 221).

When James wanted the anecdote to refer specifically to the short story form he often qualified it by the inclusion of "concise" since he also saw that the anecdote was capable of development. "The form of 'The Middle Years'," he wrote, "is not that of the nouvelle, but that of the concise anecdote; whereas the subject treated would perhaps seem one comparatively demanding 'developments'..." (P, p. 232). To give in to the demand would result in the concise anecdote developing into a nouvelle, a demand that, as the Notebooks indicate, James had given in to before. But in "The Middle Years," he combatted the problem by following the "little situation" of the tale "as much as possible from its outer edge in, rather than from its centre outward." The attempt evidently cost him some effort and he admitted that he could "scarce perhaps recall another case... in which my struggle to keep compression rich, if not, better still, to keep accretions compressed, betrayed for me such community with the anxious effort of some warden of the insane engaged at a critical moment in making fast a victim's straightjacket" (P, pp. 232-3).

But that the nouvelle and the anecdote were by no

means mutually exclusive is further evidenced by James's reference, in the preface, to The Turn of the Screw as "an anecdote - though an anecdote amplified and highly emphasized and returning upon itself." The anecdote or "squeezed sponge" of The Turn of the Screw demanded the more extensive treatment of the nouvelle form in order "to represent the whole sense of the matter." It required a developed treatment that extended from "the centre out," so allowing "the imagination absolute freedom of hand...." Clearly what James was indicating was that "so fine a germ" could not be subjected to the outside control of the concise anecdote. But that he does insist that The Turn of the Screw is an anecdote would, in terms of his definition, corroborate that line of interpretation that emphasizes the subjective drama of "something that has oddly happened" to the register, the governess.

Closely allied, either in a determinant or complementary relationship, to the pictorial and scenic modes as well as to the anecdotic and developmental impulses is James's method of "masterly indirectness" and characterization as informed by his manipulation of point of view. The former is central to James's concept of picture. The latter, James's method of characterization, seen in the relation of art to reality, a relation that James never allowed himself to lose sight of, clearly invites the term "psychological realism" for "as in real life, our knowledge about somebody's personality is not gained by descriptions, but by accumulating gradually more and more minute and subtle indications, hardly recognizable aspects and fragments of his psyche."⁴⁴

Given the germ of a story, James "meditated upon it, let it develop... compressed and pared the developments until he had found the method by which he could dramatise it, give it a central intelligence whose fortune would be his theme, and shape it in a novel or a story as a consistent and self-sufficient organism."⁴⁵ The "synthetic, essential complex of mutually modulated,

aesthetically valent qualities" is brought to concrete appearance in James's works by means of his unique manipulation of the narrative situation.⁴⁶ Everything in the story, as H.G. Ruthrof points out, is unified and dependent on this device.

It is a centre of consciousness that sees, conceives, interprets, and discusses what the reader may only assume to happen off-stage. The reader is offered a quasi-reality, a reality which has been filtered through the consciousness of a created intelligent centre. The subject, therefore, is no longer what happened but what a highly perceptive mind feels and thinks about what happened. Or, to state the phenomenon more technically, the presentational process has become the presented world. As a result, action in the traditional sense is replaced by a string of reflections on reality experienced and directly conveyed by the central persona.⁴⁷

The temptation, at this point, is to conclude that the use of a central intelligence, a singly located and "fixed" medium, is indicative of a limited or partial point of view. James himself referred to his mediums of narration as "registers" or "reflectors" and herein lies the clue to Professor Krook's claim that "the common notion of the partial view will not meet the Jamesian case."⁴⁸ Certainly, in most cases, especially in the later works to which Professor Krook is referring, it will not, but exceptions must always be made for nouvelles such as Madame de Mauves and In the Cage. The Turn of the Screw, as always, is a case in point. However, as far as the typical Jamesian reflectors are concerned:

... they are intensely perceptive, incessantly analytical, and marvellously articulate. They are always lucid and ironical, never muddled or tediously portentous. They are all possessed of a limitless curiosity and detachment, which renders their perceptions and analyses intensely

enjoyable to themselves even while they burn in purgatorial fires; indeed, the 'enjoyment' appears to be most intense when the immediate object of their detached curiosity is their own present suffering. They are generous and fearless; earnest without being boring; delicate without loss of candour; civil and kind and good-humoured, and never sentimental; and intent with the strangest passionate intentness, upon knowing themselves to the last limit of their powers, and acting upon that knowledge with an absolute consistency - as if to fail in this kind of consistency were the ultimate outrage. They are indeed... superior people, figuring the human intelligence at its furthest reach. They can hardly therefore be 'limited' in the ordinary sense.⁴⁹

In the preface to The Princess Casamassima, James justified the "omniscience" or "amplitude of reflexion" of his reflectors:

... the person capable of feeling in the given case more than another of what is to be felt for it, and so serving in the highest degree to record it dramatically and objectively, is the only sort of person on whom we can count not to betray, to cheapen or, as we say, give away, the value and beauty of the thing. By so much as the affair matters for some such individual, by so much do we get the best there is of it, and by so much as it falls within the scope of a denser and duller, a more vulgar and more shallow capacity, do we get a picture dim and meagre. (P, p. 67)

Such protagonists convert "the very pulses of the air into revelations."⁵⁰ But, of course, as Professor Krook notes and James himself points out, they must not be too "acutely conscious":

They may carry too much light for our credence, for our compassion, for our derision. They may be shown as knowing too much and feeling too much - not certainly for their remaining remarkable, but for their remaining "natural" and typical, for their having

the needful communities with our own precious liability to fall into traps and be bewildered. (P, p. 63)

The heroes and heroines of the later novels, Professor Krook maintains, are finally limited by their pride, their boredom and its resultant revulsion of stupidity and vulgarity, and, subsuming all these, their fatal aestheticism by which they believe themselves redeemed but by which they are ultimately damned. They are, then, despite being in the highest degree intelligent, imaginative, and sensitive, human after all and "even at its furthest reach, the human intelligence, as it is human, can only see partially; for it is after all limited."⁵¹

The subtle and complex reflectors of the late period are, however, preceded by simpler or more narrowly defined consciousnesses in the early novels and the tales; in the nouvelles, especially where the narrator is a detached observer, the limitation of vision is marked by the degree of detachment of subject from object. The heroine of In the Cage is "finely unconscious"; she repeatedly misconstrues the affairs of her aristocratic "clients"; and the narrator of The Figure in the Carpet, who never does solve the riddle of Hugh Vereker's aesthetics, is, at the end, a victim of "unappeased desire." The narrower and less diffuse cognizance of the narrators and figural mediums of the nouvelles is structurally determined. It is, fundamentally, a matter of proportion rather than of a lacking sensibility. Indeed, they often appear to have the potential of the central intelligences of the novels, but insofar as they encounter a fictional world of limited aspectual presentiments, so do they reveal themselves in terms of a somewhat reduced light. Nevertheless, even in such cases, the reflection in the nouvelles, despite the more highly schematized fictional world, "shines much more brilliantly than the source of its light."⁵² But they also, especially where they occupy a peripheral vantage point, show an easier

liability "to fall into traps and be bewildered" (P, p. 63).

From the perspicuous early works of James to the subtle circumlocutions of the late style, it is evident that James "gradually develops the reflector until the original subject is rivalled or even overshadowed."⁵³ This is particularly noticeable in the tales, as a comparison of "A Tragedy of Error" (1864) and "A Round of Visits" (1910), to move from one temporal extreme to another, illustrates: external action becomes ever increasingly subordinated to the subject of consciousness, to internalization. This trend in James's technique parallels, if not merges with, his constant striving for concision and economy: action filtered through consciousness is concentrated and organized rather than diffused.⁵⁴

The selective, reshaping, controlling force of the artistic intellect or "cold artistic calculation" is coupled, in James, with the dynamic, explosive force of the creative imagination. A significant structure-carrying element in much of James's fiction is his innovatory use of the "central intelligence"--the "vessel of consciousness" represented by a figural medium of narration that enabled him to achieve that dearly sought after symmetry with no loss of "rich effect" or hampering of the "idea freely developed." "As a technical device, its primary intention is to ensure the maximum economy and intensity of effect...."⁵⁵ In the preface to The Spoils of Poynton, James pointed to the advantage of concentrating on a character's intelligent awareness of a situation as residing in "the rule of exquisite economy." And closely correlated to this device is the renowned Jamesian ambiguity: "Technically speaking, it is a direct consequence of James's 'law of successive aspects' which leads him... in all the works of the late period (and, though less rigorously, also in the main works of the early and middle periods) to present his story at every point through the consciousness of a single interpreter,

so that everything that happens is seen from the interpreter's point of view and no other."⁵⁶

The "central intelligence" refers specifically in James to a figural medium at the centre of the action in the fictional world. When James in the preface to The Ambassadors bears heavily against the use of the "first person" in narration, he is attacking the method of writers like Dickens with their autobiographical use of the first person, of having the story told in the first person by a leading character. This he set up in opposition to the central intelligence. He refers to "the romantic privilege of the 'first person' - the darkest abyss of romance this, inveterately, when enjoyed on the grand scale - variety and many other queer matters as well, might have been smuggled in by a back door" (P, p. 320). The first person in the extended or developed narrative is "a form foredoomed to looseness," to which the writer only surrenders if he "is prepared not to make certain precious discriminations" through endowing his narrator "with the double privilege of subject and object" (P, p. 321).

Mr James is seldom or never, in his late works, the "omniscient author." He has a great scorn for this slovenly way of telling a story. It is only in his earlier work that he sometimes allows himself to step in and give special information to the reader, information which he could not have had from the person or persons who are for the moment most concerned. Quite as little does he employ the device of having the story told in the first person by a leading character, with its great initial sacrifice of plausability. His austere muse will not consent to that "terrible fluidity of self-revelation" that characterizes narratives like "Gil Blas" and "David Copperfield." ⁵⁷

James deplored the practice of writers like Trollope, Thackeray, and George Eliot, who regularly interrupt their narratives with direct authorial address, moral analysis, or philosophical generalizations:

he complained that "certain accomplished novelists have a habit of giving themselves away which must often bring tears to the eyes of people who take their fiction seriously."⁵⁸ Authorial interpolations destroyed the "illusion of life" that James saw as the novelist's first duty to establish; a writer like Trollope, for example, "in a digression, a parenthesis or an aside ... concedes to the reader that he and this trusting friend are only 'making believe.'"⁵⁹

James did, on the other hand, make quite substantial use of the first-person narrator in a peripheral vantage point in his tales (of the long novels, only Roderick Hudson (1875) makes use of the device of a first-person detached observer) giving rise to a duality of subject and object that lends itself both to ambiguity and irony in the works in which it is employed. Often this narrator is "an unnamed, un-introduced and (save by right of intrinsic wit) unwarranted participant, the impersonal author's concrete deputy or delegate" (P, p. 327). Such are the narrators of Guest's Confession, A Passionate Pilgrim, "The Madonna of the Future," "The Author of Beltraffio," "Greville Fane," and Glasses. Equally as often, the figural medium is also allocated a peripheral, detached vantage point, as in Pandora, Daisy Miller, An International Episode, and In the Cage. When James employed the consciousness of an outside observer as reflector, he was able to achieve very often an even greater concision.

The mind of the observer concentrates and organizes, rather than diffuses, the action. But another effect is to place the emphasis on consciousness rather than on action. The synthesizing reflector pictorializes rather than narrates: he is given not to the fluid reporting of incidents but to the assimilating of all aspects of the entire situation. The story told from the point of view of one character, particularly if the character is an observer and not an agent, sometimes turns into two stories: one of the

situation which occupies the observer's mind and one of the observer himself, his own psychological, intellectual, and moral reactions.⁶⁰

It is this duality arising out of the use of a peripheral intelligence that gives rise to one type of ambiguity in James, providing his fiction with an inherently ironic structure.

Little use, however, is made in the late tales of the device of the detached observer which was earlier so often employed. In the later tales where the subjective tendency is more emphatically localized the central intelligence is employed. The Bench of Desolation in particular strongly emphasizes the shift and situation is presented totally from within.

In the choice and maintenance of a point of view that is either central or peripheral, but in either case highly aware, James was "seeking a steady consistency of effect, the intensity and concentration that come of an exact centering of attention upon the chosen plot of consciousness."⁶¹ It is James's method of elaborate economy:

There is no economy of treatment without an adopted, a related point of view, and though I understand, under certain degrees of pressure, a represented community of vision between several parties to the action when it makes for concentration, I understand no breaking up of the register, no sacrifice of the recording consistency, that doesn't rather scatter and weaken. (P, p. 300)

The central intelligence and the detached observer (whether first person or figural) share a vital structural component--both place the emphasis on consciousness, in terms of which the action of the narrative is unified and upon which everything may be made to depend. As such, each becomes the compositional centre of the work in which it is employed, presiding over everything else and compelling the story to be predominantly what that intelligence

feels about what happened. Both devices are closely allied to James's notion of the commanding centre as a principle of composition, the whole question of which is bound up with James's view of fiction as organic form that "can neither be looked at all round nor will it be able to move on its own account unless it has a solidly posed centre."⁶²

The detached observer is most commonly employed in James's tales. The observer, like the central intelligence, fulfils most of the authorial functions of the traditional omniscient narrator, and is able to be involved in the same analytical tasks which, because of the direct and dramatic mode of presentation, are never as obtrusive or overtly discursive as outright authorial address invariably tends to be.

In many of the tales of James's middle period, the observer often performs a dual role: that of witness as well as that of agent, so fulfilling both an observational, interpretative role and acting as a catalyst. When such an agent-observer adopts a first person stance (The Turn of the Screw, The Figure in the Carpet, The Lesson of the Master, The Aspern Papers), his fortune and the theme are invariably bound up with one of James's major concerns: obsession.

Though the notebooks and prefaces give no definite evidence, it is tempting to surmise that one reason for James's preference for isolated and obsessive protagonists, especially in the nouvelles of the 1890's, is the economy that results from the representation of such characters as George Stransom of The Altar of the Dead, John Marcher of The Beast in the Jungle, and the narrator of The Aspern Papers. The total consciousness of each of these "reflectors" is absorbed in a single restricted preoccupation, and their "relations" with others are necessarily most limited.... The nouvelles dealing with these lonely and obsessed men can thereby remain relatively brief without the author's resorting to severe foreshortening or

arbitrary curtailment of developments. The "law of entire expression" (P, p. 144) is intended to govern the short as well as the long fiction. It is necessary that in the former the psychological and social subject matter be severely restricted.⁶³

Obsession is, both thematically and structurally, the central core of value of many short stories. Significantly, Edgar Allan Poe, the "father of the modern short story," made extensive use of the theme in his tales ("Ligeia," "Berenice," "The Black Cat," "The Tell-Tale Heart," etc.). Obsession narrowly focusses on the obsessed person and the object of his obsession and is realized in most short narratives as a spatio-temporal still-point that is most intensely delineated from the restricted point of view. As a result of the very nature of obsession as a psychic manifestation, its delineation within the compass of the short story form becomes a structural determinant in harmony with the typical nature of the form. Because of the limitations that obsession imposes, it may be dealt with economically yet intensely, richly, within a limited narrative framework. And when the obsessed person is a Jamesian protagonist of heightened sensibility, the manifestation invariably gives rise to complications, to that degree of development that is most suitably contained within the broader horizon of the nouvelle.

The first person narrator who is overwhelmed by his own obsession avoids the trap of loose and diffuse self-revelation that James saw as the pitfall of the method. The economy of presentation that inheres in the theme of obsession applies equally to those tales in which the obsessed person is a figural medium (The Beast in the Jungle, The Altar of the Dead), although here the presentation is less liable to "terrible fluidity."

James found the nouvelle particularly adaptable to his need for psychological elaboration even while practicing that "exquisite economy in composition"

which he valued above all else. In structuring the nouvelle around the first person narrative situation, James adapted the narrative stance to his dramatic method: the first person narrator in James's nouvelles is often made to fulfil a dramatic role through the suppression of narrative distance between the experiencing self ("erlebendes Ich") and the narrating self ("erzehlendes Ich") that is a typical feature of this narrative mode.⁶⁴ "As a rule the experiencing process is separated from the narrating process by a more or less clearly marked time span which corresponds to the narrative distance of the authorial novel."⁶⁵ James, on the other hand, manipulated the first person narrative situation in such a way as to make it, less typically, correspond to the figural narrative situation: "... when the narrative process, narrative distance, and narrating self are not portrayed in the text - the first person novel approaches the narrative situation of the figural novel."⁶⁶ The identity of the narrator is subordinated to the identity of the experiencing protagonist for enhanced immediacy and dramatic effect. In The Aspern Papers, for example, the narrative process itself is, for the most part, considerably played down. There is barely any yielding to that retrospective contemplation that often characterizes the first person narrative situation, as in Dickens's Great Expectations. The attention of the reader is drawn to the experiencing self and he is shown rather than told what the observer sees. Virtually all references to and traces of the narrative act of the narrating self in The Aspern Papers are eliminated and the high incidence of scenic presentation further concentrates the reader's interest on action and thus on the experiencing self.

Although written in the form of a personal reminiscence, the narrator in The Aspern Papers hardly ever reminisces; instead he imaginatively projects himself into the past, reproducing with a vivid sense of

dramatic immediacy the adventures of the experiencing self.... In sum, James makes narrative as similar as possible to dramatization of consciousness, imposing upon it the very restrictions and advantages of this more dramatic method of presentation. There is, however, one important respect in which the first-person narrative necessarily differs from dramatization of consciousness. In dramatizing an observer's consciousness James uses free indirect speech, a technique which enables him to slip in directive authorial comments that provide an unobstrusive running commentary. Since this procedure is, of course, ruled out in a first-person narrative... misinterpretation and... ambiguity become considerably greater.⁶⁷

The "little subject" of The Aspern Papers is based on "the picture of... two faded, queer, poor and discredited old English women - living on into a strange generation, in their musty corner of a foreign town - with these illustrious letters in their most precious possession." The subject was suggested to James by "a curious adventure... of Capt. Silsbee - the Boston art-critic and Shelley-worshipper":

Miss Claremont, Byron's ci-devant mistress (the mother of Allegra) was living, until lately, here in Florence, at a great age, 80 or thereabouts, and with her lived her niece, a younger Miss Claremont - of about 50. Silsbee knew that they had interesting papers - letters of Shelley's and Byron's - he had known it for a long time and cherished the idea of getting hold of them. To this end he laid the plan of going to lodge with the Misses Claremont - hoping that the old lady in view of her great age and failing condition would die while he was there, so that he might then put his hand upon the documents, which she hugged close in life. He carried out this scheme - and things se passerent as he had expected. The old woman did die -

and then he approached the younger one - the old maid of 50 - on the subject of his desires. Her answer was - 'I will give you all the letters if you marry me!'... Silsbee court encore. (N, pp. 71-2)

James initially conceived of the narrator (who remains unnamed) as the story's dramatic agent whose attempts to get hold of the precious documents form the "general situation" which "is in itself a subject and a picture."

Then the plot of the Shelley fanatic - his watchings and waitings - the way he covers the treasure.... The interest would be in some price that the man has to pay - that the old woman - or the survivor - sets upon the papers. His hesitations - his struggle - for he really would give almost anything. (N, p. 72)

The story of the attempt to secure the documents (the narrator as agent) informs the primary observational and interpretative role of the narrator and lends it greater intensity since he is involved: "seeing" becomes a more authentic rather than merely vicarious form of "being."⁶⁸

The entry outlining the informing idea of The Aspern Papers appears in the Notebooks in between notation of "The Marriages" (1891) and "Louisa Pallant" (1888). After these entries, James wrote: "I don't see why the three above things (the 2d and 3d are much the best - and I think the 2d really almost a gem) shouldn't be, if treated at all, treated effectively with great brevity." (N, p. 75) While James was able to treat "Louisa Pallant" and "The Marriages" within the compass of 14,500 and 12,000 words respectively, The Aspern Papers developed into a nouvelle of approximately three times their length at 38,000 words.

The central situation of The Aspern Papers underwent some modification and elaboration after the initial notebook entry: Shelley became the fictitious American poet, Jeffrey Aspern, whose papers Juliana

Bordereau, his former mistress, has treasured throughout the years, and Florence became Venice.

James added to the notebook sketch by suggesting that the old lady, Juliana, schemed to make the seeker for Jeffrey Aspern's papers marry the 'younger one,' Tina, as the price of seeing them. After Juliana dies, Tina virtually offers him the relics if he will marry her. He runs away, then wavers - only to discover that Tina will not have him now that she realizes that he cannot love her. The story ends with her destruction of the papers and his discomfited departure. Juliana is made a kind of symbol of what James, as his preface shows, wanted to see in the 'Byronic' age, and her constant masking of her eyes heightens the mystery which hangs about her in a time very different from that in which she was a poet's mistress. Tina, whose transparent honesty borders on downright stupidity, supplies a sharp contrast, and in developing this James goes beyond the notebook to set up tension between the romantic charm of a 'Byronic' world, and the simpler aspect of later American characters.⁶⁹

In The Aspern Papers the reader's orientation is in the now and here of the narrator as experiencing self. It is only really in two scenes, both, significantly, climactic, that the narrator noticeably, yet briefly, speaks from the temporal plane of the narrating self. Elsewhere, references to the act of narration are mere flashes: for example, after the narrator's disturbing confrontation with Miss Tina twelve days after her aunt's death, he relates that "I am far from remembering clearly the succession of events and feelings during this long day of confusion ... it only comes back to me that there were moments when I pacified my conscience and others when I lashed into pain."⁷⁰ (my italics); or they take the form of temporal leaps which indirectly suggest narrative control from the plane of narration. The first scene in which the narrative act is emphatically designated is

the narrator's final ghoulish confrontation with the dying Juliana:

I never shall forget her strange little bent white tottering figure, with its lifted head, her attitude, her expression; neither shall I forget the tone in which as I turned, looking at her, she hissed out passionately, furiously:

"Ah you publishing scoundrel!"

I can't now say what I stammered to excuse myself, to explain; but I went toward her to tell her I meant no harm. She waved me off with her old hands, retreating before me in horror; and the next thing I knew she had fallen back with a quick spasm, as if death had descended on her, into Miss Tina's arms.⁷¹

The brief interpolations--"I shall never forget...", "... neither shall I forget...", "I can't now say..."-- indicate temporal distance between the event and the act of narration, and the "there and then" spoken from the point of view of the narrating self in place of the experiencing self's "here and now" clearly indicates the shift in the centre of orientation to that of the narrative act; but the shift is so fleetingly sustained that it barely suspends at all the impression of the act of experiencing. The narrative act is more forcefully maintained in the final paragraph.

... she paused long enough to give me one look. I have never forgotten it and I sometimes still suffer from it, though it was not resentful. No, there was no resentment, nothing hard or vindictive in poor Miss Tina; for when, later, I sent her, as the price of the portrait of Jeffrey Aspern, a larger sum of money than I had hoped to be able to gather for her, writing to her that I had sold the picture, she kept it with thanks; she never sent it back. I wrote her that I had sold the picture, but I admitted to Mrs Prest at the time - I met this other friend in London that autumn - that it hangs above my writing-table. When I look at it I can scarcely bear my loss - I mean of the precious papers.⁷²

The "I have never forgotten it and I sometimes still suffer from it..." prepares the transition to the forecful closing line that reinforces the irony of the whole while at the same time bridging the gap between the experiencing self and the narrating self: "... the moment of experience actually coincides with the moment of narration, and narrative becomes 'instantaneous' This use of the present tense, which characterizes instantaneous narration, reinforces the effect of an open ending and the reader's sense that the narrator's double torment is continuing to the present moment."⁷³

The narrator's obsession with procuring the Aspern papers is the central core of value of the nouvelle: as such, it focusses economically on the subject of obsession (the narrator in an observational role) and on the object of obsession (Jeffrey Aspern's papers, involving the narrator as agent, the apex of the triangle at whose other points stand Miss Juliana and Miss Tina). He describes his preoccupation with Jeffrey Aspern and the papers as "my curiosity" and "a fine case of monomania." Mrs Prest, the expatriate American socialite who helps the narrator launch his plan to obtain the letters, charges him with his interest in his "possible spoil":

"One would think you expected from it the answer to the riddle of the universe," she said; and I denied the impeachment only by replying that if I had to choose between that precious solution and a bundle of Jeffrey Aspern's letters I knew indeed which would appear to be the greater boon. She pretended to make light of his genius and I took no pains to defend him. One doesn't defend one's god: one's god is in himself a defence. Besides, to-day, after his long comparative obscuration, he hangs high in the heaven of our literature for all the world to see; he's a part of the light by which we walk.⁷⁴

The narrator's obsession, as he so frankly intimates, is his religion (as it is for George Stransom in The

Altar of the Dead, who creates a religion of the dead, a spiritual altar, a shrine to his own fixation); hence, "... he can justify almost any unscrupulous motive on the grounds of a more sublime zeal."⁷⁵ The narrator does, however, despite his grim and immoral determination, finally come to realize the nature of his "extravagant curiosity." He first becomes conscious of his predicament soon after he is confronted by a truth about himself that he has hitherto avoided--he is a "publishing scoundrel." The knowledge shames him just as Miss Tina's refusal to deceive her aunt on her death-bed--"It isn't decent"--makes him feel immediately "reprimanded and shamed." He suffers "the just punishment of that most fatal of human follies, our not having known when to stop."⁷⁶ The discovery of some choice which will force him to stop is all that remains to curb his noxious impulse: this point is reached in the final chapter with Miss Tina's conditional "You could see the things - you could use them...":

"If you weren't a stranger. Then it would be the same for you as for me. Anything that's mine would be yours, and you could do what you like. I shouldn't be able to prevent you, and you'd have no responsibility."⁷⁷

But the narrator's response to her "droll explanation" is "It wouldn't do, it wouldn't do!"-- and he flees the old house. He has discovered the point, even for Jeffrey Aspern, beyond which he will not go. However, he is only momentarily redeemed. On returning to the house that evening, he discovers that an idée fixe is not to be dislodged so easily and that he has, once again, "swung back to a passionate appreciation of Juliana's treasure." He is tormented by a question: "Was I still in time to save my goods?" Having recognized the moral cul de sac to his attempt to procure the papers only a few hours previously, he now wavers and is overcome by "a positive ferocity" in his "need to acquire them again." Encountering Miss Tina once more, his obsessive trait is complicated by a

momentary delusion and he experiences an optical hallucination precipitated, ironically, by an immoral conviction, since the transfiguration that Miss Tina really undergoes is a moral one and not physical at all.

Poor Miss Tina's sense of her failure had produced a rare alteration in her, but I had been too full of stratagems and spoils to think of that. Now I took it in; I can scarcely tell how it startled me. She stood in the middle of the room with a face of mildness bent upon me, and her look of forgiveness, of absolution, made her angelic; she was not a ridiculous old woman. This trick of her expression, this magic of her spirit, transfigured her, and while I still noted it I heard a whisper somewhere in the depths of my conscience: "Why not, after all - why not?" It seemed to me I could pay the price.⁷⁸

But he is too late; he has allowed himself to lose sight of "that most fatal of human follies" and his punishment is final. "I've done the great thing. I've destroyed the papers." Miss Tina announces, and then, to increase the injury, adds: "I burnt them last night, one by one, in the kitchen.... It took a long time - there were so many."⁷⁹ The narrator is left at the end with the intolerable frustration of complete failure and loss--"I mean of the precious papers."

The room seemed to go round me as she said this and a real darkness for a moment descended on my eyes. When it passed Miss Tina was there still, but the transfiguration was over and she had changed back to a plain dingy elderly person.⁸⁰

The grotesque nature of his inverted desire is unambiguously returned to him.

The effect of foreshortening the distance between the temporal planes of narrating self and experiencing self enhances the dramatic method and results in "picture" or rendered summary. Another effect of foreshortening is the condensation of the extended period of time that the narrative covers, so again enhancing the immediacy

of presentation.

The division of The Aspern Papers into nine short chapters, nevertheless, creates the illusion of duration while at the same time involves a high selectivity of event, a recurrent pinpointing of dramatic scene. While time is specifically enough delineated to enable the reader to concretize its expanse (from the months of May to August), further indications of the passage of time are indirectly suggested: the seasonal cycle, from summer to the beginning of autumn, has almost mythical undertones (albeit with a high degree of "displacement") that reflect the development of the narrator's emotional awareness, and the growth of the garden, from which the narrator intends to woo the victims of his deceit with "floral tributes," parallels the development of the plot. The passage of time is also suggested by quite frequent and sometimes vague time references that reflect time leaps between chapters (for example, that between the third and fourth chapters which covers an expanse from the narrator's third day in the Bordereau house to "six weeks later, towards the middle of June") as well as summarize routine or ongoing action⁸¹ (for example: "... for a long time, I never saw her...", "... for some days I looked out for it...", "I made a point of spending as much time as possible in the garden..."). But the highlighting of specific events overrides all and creates a sense of dramatic immediacy to which the duration of time is subordinated, yet always definable. Again, as in Daisy Miller, the narrative is divided into a series of phases that are unified by a single, overriding arc of tension that has as its instigation the narrative medium and his deeply rooted obsession. Unity of effect is further created by the closely circumscribed spatial milieu--Venice and, more specifically, the Bordereau mansion--and the limited dramatis personae of only three main characters.

In contrast to the first person peripheral observer of The Aspern Papers is the figural medium in

an observational role. The heroine of In the Cage typifies the standpoint and James introduces her in terms of her vantage point.

It had occurred to her early that in her position - that of a young person spending, in framed and wired confinement, the life of a guinea-pig or a magpie - she should know a great many persons without their recognizing the acquaintance. That made it an emotion the more lively - though singularly rare and always, even then, with opportunity still very much smothered - to see any one come in whom she knew outside, as she called it, any one who could add anything to the meanness of her function. Her function was to sit there with two young men - the other telegraphist and the counter-clerk; to mind the "sounder," which was always going, to dole out stamps and postal-orders, weigh letters, answer stupid questions, give difficult change and, more than anything else, count words as numberless as the sands of the sea, the words of the telegrams thrust, from morning to night, through the gap in the high lattice, across the encumbered shelf that her forearm ached with rubbing. This transparent screen fenced out or fenced in, according to the side of the narrow counter on which the human lot was cast, the duskiest corner of a shop pervaded not a little, in winter, by the poison of perpetual gas, and at all times by the presence of hams, cheese, dried fish, soap, varnish, paraffin and other solids and fluids that she came to know perfectly by their smells without consenting to know them by their names

The barrier that divided the little post-and-telegraph-office from the grocery was a frail structure of wood and wire; but the social, the professional separation was a gulf that fortune, by a stroke quite remarkable, had spared her the necessity of contributing at all publically to bridge.⁸²

The opening paragraphs of In the Cage typify James's pictorial method. The grocery shop, its employees and customers, and the inventory of provisions

are important only in terms of the young telegraphist and her acute social consciousness. As Wiesenfarth has noted:

The inwardness of the picture is reflected in the girl's view of her situation: her detachment from the counter clerks because of her attachment to Mr Mudge, her attitude towards his absence, her idea of marriage, her consciousness of her present and her future. And all indeed are presented in perceptually evocative prose. A picture... is a description to which a value is attached because of the relation of the description to, or its meaning for, a character in the tale - in this case, the relation of Cocker's and the meaning of both it and Mr Mudge for James's heroine.... Characteristically, it is under the pressure of personal value that the fusion of time, place, incident and impression occurs.⁸³

The image of the "barrier" or "screen" is a metaphor that James sometimes applied in connection with the observer (cf. The Turn of the Screw). In In the Cage, the "transparent screen" of the post-and-telegraph-office is the barrier between the unnamed heroine and her social aspirations as well as her only link with the aristocracy into whose exclusive society she dreams of entering. At the same time, it is because of the barrier that she has to have recourse to her imagination. However, the barrier, "frail structure" that it is, is also reinforced by her delusions of social grandeur which have, James suggests with heavy irony, so far only been realized through her engagement to Mr. Mudge with "his superior stature, his whiter apron, his more clustering curls and more present, too present, h's...." She is in limbo, separated from her "common" milieu by her social superiority and separated from the milieu to which she aspires by her social inferiority, by that very milieu which she scorns. Her only immediate recourse is to the role of observer.

The degree of the caged telegraphist's self-delusion

is also the degree of her vicarious participation in the lives of her "clients"--in particular, Lady Bradeen and Captain Everard. As James points out in the preface: "The action of the drama is simply the girl's 'subjective' adventure - that of her quite definitely winged intelligence; just as the catastrophe, just as the solution, depends on her winged wit." (P, p. 157) Her strenuous imaginative efforts to find connections and links which are missing from the facts as they present themselves to her, to fill in and elaborate on the scanty knowledge which is all she has access to, defines her role as a "magpie" collecting the words on the telegraph forms presented to her and impressions of facial expressions, gestures, and clothing, resorting to her memory, which proves to be infallible, to endow them with intelligibility and romantic intrigue. "She wonders, putting it simply, very much as Morgan Moreen wonders in The Pupil; and they all wonder, for that matter, very much after the fashion of our portentous little Hyacinth of The Princess Casamassima, tainted to the core... with the trick of mental reaction on the things about him and fairly staggering under the appropriations... that he owes to the critical spirit." (P, p. 156) These capabilities she shares with many of James's protagonists in the nouvelles in which the "course of incident" is "complicated by the intervention of winged wit" (P, p. 157). Her inclination to embellish concrete data, to "see" in the sense that the astute, sensitive governess in The Turn of the Screw "sees" and the super-sensitive, super-imaginative narrator in The Sacred Fount likewise "sees," links her, in particular, with those protagonists who are subject to obsessive behaviour in one form or another.

They have in common a strenuous eagerness to know which leads them variously to excessive curiosity, stubborn conviction, preoccupation, idée fixe, monomania, torment, hallucination, and hysteria.

The dramatic perfection of their narratives depends most of all upon James's ability not merely to report the obsession but to present a convincing illusion of its whole destructive path.⁸⁴

But she also differs from these obsessed protagonists in one quite distinct respect: she is not a "fine fanatic" - she is, like Ruth Anvoy in The Coxon Fund, only "a generous, irresponsible inquirer."⁸⁵ Nevertheless, without her imaginative excess, without her willing surrender "to a certain expansion of her consciousness," detailed, "the phenomena would have lacked their principle of cohesion" (P, p. 157).

In Captain Everard the telegraphist sees her ideal of elite society, the epitome of all good intentions, generosity, and civility, aloof from the immoral aspects of his world, in short, the perfect gentleman. Her illusion, however, is shattered when she sees the reward of her long conjecture and intimate concern in his affairs. After receiving from her vital information concerning the contents of a certain telegram (which she remembers and repeats to him), Captain Everard simply turns "the broad back of his great stature" and departs with no show of gratitude or hint of alliance. And on learning from Mrs. Jordan (her friend who "does" flowers in the homes of the wealthy) the true (and sordid) facts in the case of Lady Bradeen and Captain Everard, she suffers the defeat of disillusionment when they conflict with the facts as she would have them to be; as she had, with her excessively romantic spirit, imagined them to be. What she finally comes to see instead is "the vivid reflexion of her own dreams and delusions and her own return to reality."⁸⁶ She relinquishes her role as observer and decides to marry Mr Mudge.

The narrative situation of In the Cage, as James indicates, is its "principle of cohesion." The "central spirit" of this nouvelle is rooted in "the author's

irrepressible and insatiable, his extravagant and immoral interest in personal character and in the 'nature' of a mind, of almost any mind the heaving little sea of his subject may cast up..." (P, p. 156). However, by confining the focus to the telegraphist's point of view, her "subjective adventure," James achieves density, compactness, and unity--corollaries all of his dramatic method. From the opening sentence-- "It had occurred to her that in her position... she should know a great many persons without their recognizing the acquaintance"--a single centre of interest is focussed on and is maintained throughout by the very high incidence of the personal pronouns "she" and "her." The carefully placed and regulated point of view and the figural medium's singleness of intent achieve a unity of effect and tone that is characteristic of the short story and which James maintains in the more complex compass of his "shapely" nouvelles. The reader's centre of interest is fixed throughout in the now-and-here of the figural medium, the telegraphist. While an authorial presence is faintly perceptible on a few occasions, he is never overtly designated. His presence is only perceptible in comments not unlike stage directions which are left quite impersonal and are largely confined to passages of scenic presentation or to the very occasional quick epithet ("our young lady" or "our young woman"), but neither of these will succeed in suspending in the majority of readers the impression of immediacy.⁸⁷

Henry James's presentation of consciousness still belongs to the generation before James Joyce. Although James was not unreceptive to the psychological findings of his brother, William James, concerning the inner laws which govern consciousness, he was still far removed from realizing these inner laws - in his narrative technique as well as in his language - by means of autonomous presentation of consciousness such as that attempted later by James Joyce. For the process of consciousness Henry

James employs a style still
 analogous to literary language,
 to elevated prose with intact
 syntax and orthodox word formation. 88

The close, consistent, and sustained confinement to the consciousness of the figural medium in In the Cage is rarely so finely achieved in James's novels: "Like the authorial novel and the first-person novel, the figural novel is only rarely realized in a consistent, typical form."⁸⁹ While, however, it is tempting to accede to the view that the restricted, singly located point of view is a typical feature of James's tales and a point of demarcation between the nouvelles and novels, close investigation of some of James's later novels would prove this to be not strictly accurate. While in many of James's novels, there are definite shifts in point of view, a "breaking-up of the register" as in, for example, Washington Square, The Europeans, The Reverberator, The Portrait of a Lady, The Wings of the Dove, and The Golden Bowl, novels like What Maisie Knew and, in particular, The Ambassadors share with James's nouvelles a carefully placed and regulated figural point of view. But the figural nouvelles, finally, are more often achieved in a consistent, typical form while in a figural novel like The Ambassadors there is a more pronounced movement towards and recourse to the authorial narrative situation: the novel "manifests a whole series of authorial features" that are, to a large extent, disguised by the style.

The author was confronted with a difficult problem in his attempt to present Strether's mental processes in a predominantly figural but not authorial style. What stylistic technique could create the illusion that these mental processes, which are the actual dramatic action of the novel, become known to the reader by means of a direct glimpse into the thoughts and feelings of Strether and not by a means of a narrator's report?... Pictorially one could imagine James's method of

presenting consciousness in this way: he executes a cross section through Strether's consciousness at a height where the content of this consciousness already appears formulated as thoughts expressed in their traditional verbal forms. In this way occasional comments of the author are possible with no changes in the stylistic level. Consequently, no attention is drawn to the momentarily authorial narrative situation. Here, as everywhere in the realm of literary art, one cannot fix with objective certainty the point beyond which the immediate perception and experience of that which is being narrated begins to include a simultaneous awareness of the narrative process itself.

In The Ambassadors a figural narrative situation thus predominates, although an authorial situation seems to be superimposed upon the figural, with the result that the author can resort to the authorial situation whenever necessary for presentational reasons. As a rule, however, the figural situation remains the decisive factor for the reader's imagination.⁹⁰

James's expressed intention in The Ambassadors was to "employ but one centre and keeping it all within my hero's compass" (P, p. 317). As a reading of the novel reveals, this intention is artistically achieved. However, while there is, in The Ambassadors, "the story of one's hero," there is also, James recognized, "thanks to the intimate connexion of things, the story of one's story itself" (P, p. 313). He also acknowledged that the latter, strictly speaking, was the more "dramatic." "I blush to confess it, but if one's a dramatist one's a dramatist, and the latter imbroglio is liable on occasion to strike me as really the more objective of the two." (P, p. 313) On a stylistic level, Strether's consciousness is rendered as to employ unobtrusively certain authorial features. James was also able to avoid the necessity of resorting to an authorial narrative situation through the help of

"the most unmitigated and abandoned of ficelles," Maria Gostrey, who "in her lengthy conversations with Strether... largely assumes the customary task of the authorial narrator - the unfolding of the past in its most important elements up to the present time of the characters."⁹¹ She is introduced "to wave away with energy the custom of the seated mass of explanation after the fact, the inserted block of merely referential narrative" (P, p. 321). If, finally, there is a stronger sense of authorial control and greater recourse to aspects of authorial narration in The Ambassadors than is to be found in some of the nouvelles (others, like An International Episode and Lady Barbarina, betray an unmistakable authorial presence behind the figural medium), this is largely the effect of the extent of the narrative, of its development which involves a greater welter of experiences and impressions due to the complexity of its theme:

"Live all you can; it's a mistake not to. It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that what have you had? I'm too old - too old at any rate for what I see. What one loses one loses; make no mistake about that. Still we have the illusion of freedom; therefore don't, like me to-day, be without the memory of that illusion. I was either, at the right time, too stupid or too intelligent to have it, and now I'm a case of reaction against the mistake. For it was a mistake. Live, live! (P, pp. 307-8)

In The Ambassadors, as in What Maisie Knew, the figural medium and the singly located vantage point are prominently presented to the reader's imagination, which makes these works, as well as The Sacred Fount (with its first-person situation and emphatic concentration on the experiencing self), blur in the direction of the nouvelle. But that each does (with the possible exception of The Sacred Fount, a problematic case) retain definite novelistic features

(the chain of localities, pronounced temporal expanse, wider range of characters and events) enables them to fall more comfortably, finally, within the genre of the novel. But it is also by the use of certain transposed authorial devices (the ficelle and expository material embedded in long passages of scenic presentation, and the rendering of consciousness in free indirect style to incorporate authorial information) that creates in a novel like The Ambassadors the strong sense that "Other persons in no small number... people the scene, and each with his or her axe to grind, his or her situation to treat, his or her coherency not to fail of, his or her relations to my leading motive, in a word, to establish and carry on" (P, p. 317). Thus, The Ambassadors becomes, in this sense, a "dramatic action" which, as we have seen, is one of James's criteria for the novel as a distinct genre. But just as the nouvelle employs certain features of the novel (the developmental), so do James's novels employ certain typical features of his nouvelles and short stories. The technique of the restricted point of view is the most apparent; as James described the dramatic action of The Ambassadors:

... Strether's sense of these things, and Strether's only, should avail me for showing them; I should know them but through his more or less groping knowledge of them, since his very gropings would figure among his most interesting motions, and a full observance of the rich rigour I speak of would give me more of the effect I should be most "after" than all other possible observances together. It would give me a large unity, and that in turn would crown me with the grace to which the enlightened story-teller will at any time, for his interest, sacrifice if need be all other graces whatever. I refer of course to the grace of intensity, which there are ways of signally achieving and ways of signally missing - as we see it, all round us, helplessly and woefully missed. (P, p. 317-8)

It is in the use of the restricted (but highly aware) point of view that the conceptual frameworks of the two genres have "blurred edges." It is also in terms of the intensity that is, for James, a corollary of this method, that:

James' nouvelles, written in every phase of his career as a writer, mirror the range of his growth as a novelist. The technique of the central observing intelligence, perhaps the best known aspect of his craftsmanship, is first used to good effect in one of his earlier nouvelles - Madame de Mauves. All his important subjects, the international theme and the themes of renunciation and growth of consciousness, are first explored and developed in his nouvelles. The dramatic method and the dramatic scene are first experimented with in his nouvelles. Even when, between 1890 and 1897, he stopped writing novels in order to experiment with the London stage, he continued to develop as a novelist and this is reflected more in some of his nouvelles of that period like The Pupil and The Altar of the Dead⁹² than in his concise anecdotes.

The Ambassadors in many respects exemplifies James's use of the central intelligence. The difference between the detached observer as a figural medium and the central intelligence is one of degree - the degree of the medium's involvement in the central action. It may also, at times, present itself as a matter for interpretation (especially where the central action is the process of consciousness as in the long short story, "The Velvet Glove") of the extent to which the figural medium is involved or aloof. Both devices, however, invariably tend to place primary emphasis on the delineation of the consciousness of a figure in the narrative, whether he stands at the centre or the periphery of the presented world.

The nouvelles of James's late period make constant use of the central intelligence as in, for

example, The Beast in the Jungle. In this nouvelle, John Marcher's obsession that something unusual is to happen to him is presented entirely from his point of view and functionally approximates the delineation of his character as an invert, a monomaniac who has to realize the extent of his own self-absorption to recognize the spring of the beast and acknowledge the damning revelation that he is to be the one man in all the world to whom nothing ever happened. His destiny is his theme and his theme controls the work's structure. The form of the nouvelle, determined by the commanding centre, John Marcher, follows the functional internalization of the narrative: in James's own words, the form of The Beast in the Jungle "is to be appreciated after the fact." The Bench of Desolation, the last nouvelle that James produced, likewise unfolds through the consciousness of its protagonist, Herbert Dodd, who is central to the action portrayed.

Once again, James conceived of the germinal idea of his story as a "good small 'short story' donnée of the orthodox type." With characteristic precision, he saw The Bench of Desolation "in '5 of 5' - five little sections of 5 pages each: 25 in all, and 5000 words, through each section being 1000 words - 200 to a page" (N, p. 332).

Story was, for James, representative of "the subject, the idea, the donnée" of the concise anecdote, nouvelle, or novel, and it was in this sense alone that he could distinguish it from the organic whole. But while the "idea" and "form" are "the needle and thread," it is the idea that precipitates form, that creates form.

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 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. Here it is especially that he works, step by step, like his brother of the brush, of whom we may always say that he has painted his picture in a manner best known to himself.⁹³

James's creative life involved a concerted search for an adequate form of artistic expression to appease his "constant impulse to try experiments." James stressed the notion of the experimental in the novel and recognized that each writer changes existing forms to create new genres of his own. More recently, Guillén has expressed the process thus:

... a preexistent form can never be simply "taken over" by the writer or transferred to a new work. The task of form-making must be undertaken all over again. The writer must begin once more to match matter to form, and to that end he can only find a very special sort of assistance in the fact that the fitting of matter to form has already taken place. To offer this assistance is the function of genre.⁹⁴

In his essay on Guy de Maupassant, James wrote that:

There are as many kinds as there are persons practicing the art, for if a picture, a tale, or a novel be a direct impression of life (and that surely constitutes its interest and value), the impression will vary according to the plate that takes it, the particular structure and mixture of the recipient.⁹⁵

And of Kipling James wrote that he proves "that there are just as many kinds, as many ways, as many forms and degrees of the 'right,' as there are personal points of view."⁹⁶ It is in relation to remarks like

these and to James's critical precepts generally that Lowell Landry can accurately assert that "James describes much of his own short fiction in terms of generic qualities, emphasizing the importance of this aspect of his craft, and the critic of James's short fiction, in turn, must come to an understanding of these qualities."⁹⁷

James did, through experiment, discover and refine several principal features of a basic form which make a kind of common denominator in both his nouvelles and novels⁹⁸--only the very short tale, the concise anecdote, eluded him and this was probably, in part at least, the result of an inability to adapt a highly complex vision and method that persisted in seeing shades and differences, developments and cross relationships, to the singularity of the short story form. "It is equally excellent and inconclusive to say that one must write from experience," James declared, since "Experience is never limited, and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every airborne particle in its tissue."⁹⁹ Throughout the prefaces James implies that there is really no such thing as a subject incapable of complex development: the "germ" or "seed" metaphor emphasizes this capacity for growth.¹⁰⁰

The Bench of Desolation, predictably, finally developed into a nouvelle of some 18,000 words; it is constructed of two parts of three sections each. Another significant departure from the Notebook entry is the shift in emphasis that is placed on both the "young woman" (Kate Cockham in the finished tale) and the "hero" (Herbert Dodd) to concentration primarily on Herbert Dodd's fate and his assimilation of and reaction to "her life and behaviour - her subsequent action."

The man had engaged himself to a

young woman, but afterwards had thought better of it and had backed out... she threatened him bel et bien with an action for breach of promise... he, scared, afraid, of the scandal and injury, etc., agreed to 'compromise' and pay her.... This he did, but with the effect for years afterwards of staggering under the load of the obligations he had contracted to raise the money. His whole life blighted by it, impoverished, etc. - and the years going by.... What I seem to see in it is her life and behaviour - her subsequent action... she has kept her money and added to it - she has led her life. She waited and watched... the hero of her early episode - from afar... almost on a calculation of what may happen. She sees him suffer... sees him pay for what he has done to her, and she measures and follows this... a certain time... they finally meet again - and they then marry. She has kept the money... for him, gives it back to him augmented.... I seem to see her come to him - it isn't that he goes to her; never! And at first he won't look at her. They must have met before - he seen her prosperous, etc. Then he has hated her, etc. The thing given him by her in the end as all her own plan.... She has taken the money because she has known he would want money badly - later on.... She tells him she has refused to marry - so that the money shouldn't be got at by her husband. He has known of a case - a fellow he has known before she knew him and whom she has refused or chucked, jilted, in order to become engaged to him - and whom she supposes that now she will marry (now that she has the money); he sees her refuse this man just because she has, and wishes to keep, the money - and he's mystified... thinks the money has made her 'proud' - and mean. But she has just thus remained single for him. At last, when he (the 'hero') learns that she has the money, then he accepts her charity, then he marries her. (N, p. 330-1)

In the finished tale, James changed certain details and eliminated others. He constructed the narrative with an entirely different emphasis from what he originally appeared to have in mind. By suppressing authorial intrusion and by limiting the point of view to one character, James orientates the narrative to the consciousness of Dodd and asserts the anecdotic principle. In the first three sections of The Bench of Desolation, the ten years of Dodd's suffering move swiftly across his consciousness in rapid succession: "He watched everything impossible and deplorable happen as in an endless prolongation of his nightmare; watched himself proceed, that is, with the finest, richest incoherence to the due preparation of his catastrophe."¹⁰¹ There are several very brief intrusions by the authorial presence who provides aspects of Dodd's background: he is, the reader is told, "The youngest and most interesting, the 'delicate' one and the literary of her five scattered and struggling children."¹⁰² But such interruptions are so fleeting and so artfully blended with the pulsations of Dodd's consciousness that they do not succeed in suspending the narrative from his sphere. The extent of his suffering--his violent quarrel with Kate, his infatuation with Nan and the tragic, sordid years of their marriage, his bankruptcy and its devastating effects--is telescoped and so intensified: time is greatly foreshortened and not always strictly chronological.

Fragments of conversation supplant scenes. A lengthy series of half-remembered incidents replaces chronological and orderly presentation. By the end of the third section the little history has gradually become clear.¹⁰³

The careful selection of incidents and the broken chronology create a sense of duration which, here again, is subordinated to the singular intensity of Dodd's ordeal.

The final three sections of the nouvelle resolve, in a series of detailed incidents (James's "law of successive aspects"), the complex question of how reunion with one's worst enemy, the instigator of all one's hardships, might be morally possible. Kate indicates to Dodd that cruelty and suffering necessarily inhere in an ideal moral decision:

"You've suffered and you've worked - which, God knows, is what I've done! Of course you've suffered, ... you inevitably had to! We have to," she went on, "to do or to be or to get anything."¹⁰⁴

Herbert Dodd's fate, his destiny, from his own point of perception, has returned in upon itself: the termination of his ordeal is the point of its inception. By internalizing his narrative from a fixed centre, James has succeeded in controlling as well as richly exploiting all dimensions of a subject that is developmental with a vengeance.

Notes

¹ Dorothea Krook, The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 413.

² "The Art of Fiction," The House of Fiction, p. 34.

³ cf. Roman Ingarden: "It is clear that the concept of organism can be applied to the literary work of art in general only in a metaphorical sense and by way of approximation.... It must be noted... that one can speak of an 'organism' only metaphorically in connection with works of art, so that the form of an 'organic structure' in a literary work of art deviates in various features from the form of an organism in the genuine sense, as applied to living things." CLWA, pp. 73-76.

⁴ "Gustave Flaubert," French Poets and Novelists, p. 93.

⁵ "Guy de Maupassant, 1888," The House of Fiction, p. 167.

⁶ W.R. MacDonald, "The Inconsistencies in Henry James's Aesthetics," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, X (Winter 1969), pp. 585-97.

⁷ Frank Moore Selby, "In Darkest James," The Question of Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. F.W. Dupee (London: Allan Wingate, 1947), p. 42.

⁸ Tzvetan Todorov, "Structural Analysis of Literature," Novel, 111 (Fall 1969), p. 72.

⁹ T.S. Eliot, "On Henry James," The Question of Henry James, p. 124.

¹⁰ Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), pp. 186-87. (1921)

¹¹ René Wellek, "Henry James's Literary Theory and

Criticism," American Literature, XXX (November 1958), p. 293.

¹² Ibid., p. 294.

¹³ Leon Edel, "The Literary Convictions of Henry James," Modern Fiction Studies, 111 (Spring 1957), p. 4.

¹⁴ J.A. Ward, The Search for Form: Studies in the Structure of James's Fiction (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 12.

¹⁵ Wellek, p. 295.

¹⁶ "Howell's A Forgone Conclusion," Literary Reviews and Essays, p. 208.

"The Art of Fiction," The House of Fiction, p. 39.

¹⁷ I have adopted this term from Ward, The Search for Form, who aligns it with terms from the Jamesian critical lexicon such as "logic," "law," "symmetry," "geometry," and "science."

¹⁸ Ward, p. 24.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

²⁰ Lubbock, p. 119.

²¹ Blackmur, p. xxvi.

²² Lerner, p. 34.

²³ Joseph Wiesenfarth, Henry James and the Dramatic Analogy: A Study of the Major Novels of the Middle Period (New York: Fordham University Press, 1963), p. 119.

²⁴ Viola Hopkins, "Visual Art Devices and Parallels in the Fiction of Henry James," PMLA, LXXVI (December 1961), p. 561.

²⁵ Lowell Landry, "Genres of Short Fiction in the Works of Henry James," Diss. Tulane, 1970, p. 13.

²⁶ Lerner, p. 37.

²⁷ Francis Fergusson, "James's Ideal of Dramatic Form," Kenyon Review, V (Autumn 1943), p. 501.

²⁸ Ward, p. 32.

²⁹ The Future of the Novel: Essays on the Art of Fiction, ed. Leon Edel (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 124.

³⁰ A.A. Mendilow, Time and the Novel (New York:

- Humanities Press, 1972), p. 104.
- 31 Joseph Warren Beach, The Method of Henry James (Philadelphia: Albert Saifer, 1954), p. 34.
- 32 Ibid., p. 35.
- 33 Ward, p. 38.
- 34 C.M. Taylor, "The Pictorial Element in the Theory and Practice of Henry James," Diss. Stanford, 1955, p. 86, as quoted by Wiesenfarth, pp. 35-36.
- 35 Blackmur, p. xvii.
- 36 René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, 3rd ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), pp. 232-33.
- 37 See, for example, Walter Isle, Francis Fergusson, and Joseph Wiesenfarth.
- 38 Wellek, p. 310.
- 39 R.W. Short, "Some Critical Terms of Henry James," PMLA, LXV (September 1950), pp. 673-78.
- 40 Ibid., p. 674.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Wiesenfarth, p. 35.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 H.G. Ruthrof, "A Note on Henry James's Psychological Realism and the Concept of Brevity," Studies in Short Fiction, XII (1975), p. 371.
- 45 Blackmur, p. xvi.
- 46 CLWA, p. 85.
- 47 Ruthrof, "Henry James's Psychological Realism," p. 371.
- 48 Krook, p. 402.
- 49 Ibid., pp. 402-3.
- 50 "The Art of Fiction," The House of Fiction, pp. 31-32.
- 51 Krook, pp. 403-4.
- 52 Short, p. 671.
- 53 Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1961), p. 341.
- 54 Ward, p. 55.
- 55 Krook, p. 310.
- 56 Ibid.

- 57 Beach, pp. 56-57.
- 58 "The Art of Fiction," The House of Fiction,
pp. 25-26.
- 59 Ibid., p. 26.
- 60 Ward, p. 55.
- 61 Beach, p. 60.
- 62 Blackmur, p. xxiii.
- 63 Ward, pp. 22-23.
- 64 This distinction, first suggested by Leo Spitzer in his essay "Zum Stil Marcel Proust," Stilstudien (Munich, 1928), is exploited by Ora Segal, The Lucid Reflector: The Observer in Henry James's Fiction (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1969), and Stanzel, Narrative Situations in the Novel. I am indebted to both.
- 65 Stanzel, Narrative Situations in the Novel, p. 61.
- 66 Ibid., p. 69.
- 67 Segal, pp. 75-76.
- 68 Ibid., p. xii.
- 69 Matthiessen and Murdock, pp. 72-73.
- 70 The Aspern Papers, New York Edition (New York: Scribner's, 1937), vol. 12, p. 157.
- 71 Ibid., p. 118.
- 72 Ibid., p. 143.
- 73 Segal, p. 92.
- 74 The Aspern Papers, p. 5.
- 75 Flower, p. 189.
- 76 The Aspern Papers, p. 137.
- 77 Ibid., pp. 133-34.
- 78 Ibid., pp. 141-42.
- 79 Ibid., pp. 142-43.
- 80 Ibid., p. 143.
- 81 Flower, p. 193.
- 82 In the Cage, New York Edition, vol. 11, pp. 367-68.
- 83 Wiesenfarth, pp. 31-32.
- 84 Flower, p. 188.
- 85 The Coxon Fund, New York Edition, vol. 15, p. 316.

- 86 In the Cage, p. 499.
- 87 Stanzel, Narrative Situations in the Novel, p. 100.
- 88 Ibid.
- 89 Ibid., p. 92.
- 90 Ibid., pp. 100-1.
- 91 Ibid., pp. 102-3.
- 92 Bal Krishan, "Henry James and the Nature of the Nouvelle," Diss. Utah, 1972, p. 157.
- 93 "The Art of Fiction," The House of Fiction, p. 29.
- 94 Guillén, p. 111.
- 95 Guy de Maupassant, 1888, "The House of Fiction," pp. 140-41.
- 96 View and Reviews, ed. Le Roy Philips (Boston: Ball Publishing, 1903), p. 228.
- 97 Landry, p. 2.
- 98 Isle, p. 4.
- 99 "The Art of Fiction," The House of Fiction, p. 32.
- 100 Ward, p. 22.
- 101 The Bench of Desolation, The Complete Tales of Henry James, ed. Leon Edel (London: Hart-Davis, 1964), vol. 12. p. 382.
- 102 Ibid., p. 372.
- 103 Flower, p. 242.
- 104 The Bench of Desolation, p. 405.

Chapter 3 : The Idea and the Form: The
Example of The Turn of the Screw

"Art is essentially selection, but it is selection whose main care is to be typical, to be inclusive," James wrote in 1884.¹ "Don't let anyone persuade you," he advised Hugh Walpole four years before his death in 1916, "that strenuous selection and composition are not the very essence of art, and that Form is [not] substance to that degree that there is absolutely no substance without it. Form alone takes, and holds and preserves, substance - saves it from the welter of helpless verbiage that we swim in as in a sea of tasteless tepid pudding."² This realization of the need for strict selection in the creative process led James into a consideration of how to present the thing selected, of what techniques to use to set it off from the thing not selected. The search for form³ is one of James's main concerns: the artist is obliged to find, or devise, a form that gives limits and focus to the life he has discovered, to the "idea," and to do so in such a way as to fuse story and form so that story becomes form, is form:

This sense of the story being the idea, the starting-point, of the novel, is the only one that I see in which it can be spoken of as something different from its organic whole; and since in proportion as the work is successful the idea permeates and penetrates it, informs and animates it, so that every word and every punctuation point contribute directly to the expression, in that proportion do we lose our sense of the story being a blade which may be drawn more or less out of its sheath. The story and the novel, the idea and the form, are the

needle and thread, and I never heard of a guild of tailors who recommended the use of the thread without the needle, or the needle without the thread.⁴

James did not believe in l'art pour l'art and was highly critical of "the crudity of sentiment of the advocates of 'art for art' " which presupposed a false divorce of art from reality and morality.⁵ Despite his own fastidious striving for technical and artistic control, which came near on several occasions to being an end in itself, the control of the artist over his artefact was for him equally a moral control. "Literature should be either instructive or amusing (it is commonly assumed), and there is in many minds an impression that... artistic pre-occupations, the search for form, contribute to neither end, interfere indeed with both."⁶ "Excellence in this matter," he pointed out elsewhere, "consists in the tale and the moral hanging well together, and this they are certainly more likely to do when there has been a definite intention - that intention of which artists who cultivate 'art for art' are usually so extremely mistrustful; exhibiting thereby, surely, a most injurious belief in the illimitable alchemy of art."⁷ An excessive concern with technical effects could lead the artist to sacrifice his felt perceptions, and in this respect James had, at times, found himself floundering. He recognized that in his early works the manner was often more apparent than the matter; and even quite late in his career he experimented with technique at the expense of his subject. The result in one instance, The Sacred Fount, is so ambiguously structured as to be virtually incomprehensible; here James pushed his technical expertise in the manipulation of the restricted point of view to the extreme.

The pre-occupation of the artist, James was realist enough to conceive, must involve somewhere a pre-occupation with "clumsy Life at her stupid work" in the attempt to discover the relation of parts to each

other and to the whole. "Art deals with what we see, it must first contribute full-handed that ingredient; it plucks its material, otherwise expressed, in the garden of life - which material elsewhere grown is stale and uneatable." (P, p. 312) The composition of life through art involved, for James, the arrangement, placement, and structuring of selected materials in intimate and inherently meaningful or exemplary connection. "Composition alone," then, "is positive beauty" and to achieve its aesthetically valent realization involves the "study of connections which is the recognized function of intelligent criticism."⁸

The subject or donnée of art was life and James invariably chose to render that subject in terms of someone's apprehension of the experience of it.

It follows that the relation between the artist and "life" is for James the main issue in the creative process. The artist finds himself confronted with the difficult task of enclosing life within his frame without destroying its movement and fluidity. Again and again the organizing activity of the creative mind is thwarted by the muddling force of life, and the artist must continually resist its pressure.⁹

In striving to represent life, art reduces life to its essential spatio-temporal framework by removing the waste and randomness in which it is lived and giving it a lucid, cohesive, and interpretable form. Artistic reduction became for James a moral reduction that created an intense and intelligible representation of life so as to make it morally accessible through the process of artistic "reformation."

The position James takes on the relation of morality to art in "The Art of Fiction" is a development of his idea of a "moral sense." He had early distinguished between the practice of moralizing and the operation of a moral element in the novel. It was not until he approached his major phase, however, that he stopped searching for a "moral sense," per se,

in the novel and came to regard the moral quality of the work as an inseparable aspect of the artist's personal awareness.

From this viewpoint, no work of art could have a deep moral quality unless its producer had a correspondingly deep moral sense. The same applied to the artistic stature of a work of art; it would correspond to the artistic sense of the artist. The moral sense and the artistic sense lay very close together in that "... the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer." The operation of the moral sense as well as the artistic sense was intuitive, spontaneous. James pointed out that individuals such as Hawthorne, Emerson, Charles Eliot Norton and William Wetmore Story persistently displayed the nature of their spiritual ancestry when they were most concerned with art. Even when they tried to lose themselves in the labyrinth of delight, they held fast to the clue of duty. Turgenieff's work is pervaded by his moral sense, and his work offered to James "... a capital example of moral meaning giving a sense to form and form giving relief to moral meaning."

Work such as Turgenieff's illustrated for James that the only way to communicate moral ideas in fiction is to communicate them as an intrinsic part of the experience provided the reader by the novel. If there were no concern with the moral aspects of life guiding the author in his first perception of the donnée, in his reflection upon it, and in his expression of it, there could be no reason to expect moral value as part of the final effect. If the vision of the author and the pressure of his will were conditioned by a moral sense, the finished work would embody a moral quality aesthetically, and it would be offered to the reader with all the added power and beauty effected by art.¹⁰

One thing was certain for James: the writer must have a specific, fundamental idea to start with (a

donnée) and some plan of execution. As the Notebooks illustrate, James invariably started work on a concise anecdote, a nouvelle, a novel, with a "direct impression of life"--from hints dropped at dinner parties, from the conception he had of the relationship between two people he may have seen in a garden, from travellers' tales. The données of the Notebooks are usually of the character-and-problem compound rather than a moral point or a plot summary.¹¹ Stating the donnée of the work enabled James to see his material from the beginning as having certain implications and certain limits (which he often under-estimated); expressing it in a certain form enabled him to realize the implications, moral or otherwise, of his material, through schematization, selection, and reduction, to produce a profound medley of shifting emphases and focusses that is both structurally determined and morally informed. The form that follows function was, for James, aesthetically viable form: it is both the moral and organic corollary of the original informing idea. This concept of form is reflected in his criticism of the French realists and naturalists;¹² he found their crude selection morally distasteful and, hence, aesthetically suspect.

James's concept of the substance of art as a drama of felt relations unfolding within the consciousness of the artist was completely at variance with the dominant trend of his time. Naturalism, which was to carry not only the day but the succeeding half-century, boasted that it dispensed with the artist's personal feelings. It was scientific, objective, dispassionate. The most important French writers were at pains to reflect this theory in their work. The English novelists, too, leaped somewhat clumsily on the bandwagon, and brought with them an enormous baggage of details. Such "new" novelists as Arnold Bennet and H.G. Wells crammed their works with observations until they were ready to burst at the seams, but

just what interest was supposed to attach to these vast collections, James often protested to be at a loss to know.¹³

The "slice of life" concept of literature was, for James, an anomaly since the artist's personal decision about what to slice and how to slice it had to be brought into operation. James's realization of the absolute necessity for selection in the artistic process points to his awareness of the essential difference between art and life. Art cannot "mirror" life; it is not an "amorphous slice"¹⁴ of life, nor can "real people" be transferred to a novel:¹⁵

No such process is effectively possible, we must hold, as the imputed act of transplanting; an act essentially not mechanical, but thinkable rather - so far as thinkable at all - in chemical, almost mystical terms. We can surely account for nothing in the novelist's work that hasn't passed through the crucible of his imagination, hasn't, in that perpetually simmering cauldron his intellectual pot-au-feu, been reduced to savoury fusion. We here figure the morsel, of course, not as boiled to nothing, but as exposed, in return for the taste it gives out, to a new and richer saturation. In this state it is in due course picked out and served, and a meagre esteem will await, a poor importance attend it, if it doesn't speak most of its late genial medium, the good, the wonderful company it has, as I hint, aesthetically kept. It has entered, in fine, into new relations, it emerges for new ones. Its final savour has been constituted, but its prime identity destroyed.... Thus it has become a different and, thanks to a rare alchemy, a better thing.... [I]f it persists as the impression not artistically dealt with, it shames the honour offered it and can only be spoken of as having ceased to be a thing of fact and yet not become a thing of truth. (P, pp. 230-31)

The new French naturalists, the writers of Zola's

school in particular, had, furthermore, in deliberately (since inevitably) selecting their material, chosen to represent the worst aspects of human nature. James saw their aim as the representation of life in all its crudity. While the inevitable deficiency of their works was a moral one, since it stripped art of its informing power and so denied its full aesthetic potential, it also denied the literary work of art its dramatic shaping power. The precepts of naturalism were, then, for James, unattainable in terms of the finite propensity of artistic form.

James's French contemporaries were too keen on reproducing an existing reality, and their form - which sometimes was simply synonymous with style - was life-denying. It is more or less for the same reason that the painter-narrator of The Real Thing fails to convey an impression of life in his drawings.... The "real thing" is in the artist's mind, not out of it, and his mind must be sufficiently stimulated from outside.... Since the inner structure and organization of a work of art is the concrete projection of the artist's mind it follows that when a work has aesthetic significance it also has moral significance and can reveal some of the most important truths about human character.¹⁶

James's corollary to his contemptuous opposition to the "slice of life" school was an equally strong opposition to the all-inclusive mixture, the life en masse, especially as depicted by Russian novelists like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. While showing an epic sweep of imagination, Tolstoy, with his immense ambition to present all human life, is a kind of "splendid accident" but had not Turgenev's gift for expressing "the world of character and feeling, the world of the relation life throws up at every hour and on every spot"¹⁷ within an aesthetically valent form. Looseness of form, James considered, caused the dramatic substance of Tolstoy's and

Dostoevsky's work to relax into a "fluid pudding, though not tasteless, because the amount of their own minds and souls in solution in the broth gives it savour and flavouring, thanks to the strong, rank quality of their genius and their experience."¹⁸ Their writings, nevertheless, lacked formal composition, lacked "economy and architecture," and this tended, in James's view, to dissipate and lay to waste their wide range of experience.

"At least when you ask me if I don't feel Dostoieffsky's 'mad jumble, that flings things down in a heap,' nearer truth and beauty than the pickings and composing that you instance in Stevenson," James replied "with emphasis" to Hugh Walpole, "... I feel nothing of the sort, and that the older I grow and the more I go the more sacred to me do picking and composing become - though I naturally don't limit myself to Stevenson's kind of the same."¹⁹ However wrong James was in his examples, he was developing, as F.O. Matthiessen has remarked, "a principle upon which he had staked his entire career, and upon which he would base the very life of any work of art."²⁰ James was aware, in this respect, of the necessity of form to communicate feeling exactly to the receptor. The informing impulse became, for James, virtually synonymous with the developmental impulse and nowhere as predominantly as in the nouvelles is its formal structuring so equipotentially balanced.

Often a single fact reported at the dinner table was enough for James to seize on and plant in the warm bed of his imagination. If his interlocutor, knowing him to be a novelist, insisted on continuing, James closed his ears. He never wanted all the facts, which might stupefy him, but only enough to go on with, hardly enough to seem a fact at all.... Being a craftsman and delighting in his craft, he knew also both the sheer moral delight of solving a technical difficulty or securing a complicated effect, and the simple, amply attested fact that

the difficulties of submitting one's material to a rigidly conceived form were often the only method of representing the material in the strength of its own light.²¹

That James saw the activity of the artist as essentially moral is not, however, to proclaim him a moralist in the mode of a Hawthorne or Dickens. His works are not didactic since they do not depend for their effect on the object stratum²² containing fictional circumstances "which are chosen and presented in such a light as to force on the reader a certain conviction about a reality existing independently of the work"²³ as, for example, "Rappaccini's Daughter", The Scarlet Letter, Oliver Twist, or Hard Times may be said to do. While James was fully aware of that school of opinion that claimed that one values mere technique and nothing more in a work of art whenever one regards all moral or social tendencies of the literary work as completely dispensable, he found the view untenable in terms of his rigorous conception of "form" and "content" as mutually interdependent,²⁴ the needle and thread. He felt "that in a literary work of the least complexity the very form and texture are the substance itself and that the flesh is indetachable from the bones!"²⁵ In the preface to The Awkward Age, he wrote that:

... it helps us ever so happily to see the grave distinction between substance and form in a really wrought work of art signally break down. I hold it impossible to say, before The Awkward Age, where one of these elements ends and the other begins: I have been unable at least myself, on re-examination, to mark any such joint or seam, to see the two discharged offices as separate. They are separate before the fact, but the sacrament of execution indissolubly marries them, and the marriage, like any other marriage, has only to be a "true" one for the scandal of a breach not to show. The thing "done," artistically, is a fusion, or it has not been done -

in which case of course the artist may be, and all deservedly, pelted with any fragment of his botch the critic shall choose to pick up. But his ground once conquered, in this particular field, he knows nothing of fragments and may say in all security: "Detach one if you can. You can analyse in your way, oh yes - to relate, to report, to explain; but you can't disintegrate my synthesis; you can't resolve the elements of my whole into different responsible agents or find your way at all (for your own fell purpose). My mixture has only to be perfect literally to bewilder you - you are lost in the tangle of the forest. Prove this value, this effect, in the air of the whole result, to be of my treatment, prove that I haven't so shaken them together as the conjurer I profess to be must consummately shake, and I consent but to parade as before a booth at the fair." (P, pp. 115-6)

The idea or donnée, while necessary for James, is merely the starting-point and it is to be regarded as extrinsic to the literary construct: the idea of a work in terms of its "purpose," on the other hand, is an inextricable part of the organic unity of the work as an aesthetically valent totality. As Roman Ingarden points out:

The "idea" of the literary work of art is a "demonstrated," synthetic, essential complex of mutually modulated, aesthetically valent qualities which is brought to concrete appearance either in the work or by means of it. The aesthetically valent qualities lead to the intuitive constitution of a certain aesthetic value, and this value forms a whole, in intimate unity, with the basis on which it is founded (the literary work of art itself). At least in the case of great and genuine works of art, this whole is unrepeatable, "unique," and inimitable. It is revealed to the reader in an adequate aesthetic concretization of the work, which is not to say that it is

then actually appreciated in its full peculiar nature. This qualitative complex, which culminates in the value given in intuition, endows the work of art in concretization with an evident "organic" unity of structure. The qualities contributing to this complex (and in particular the aesthetically valuable qualities) vary in the literary work of art according to the variety of its individual strata.²⁶

The development of the idea to its richest capacity had, in James's tales, to come to terms with the limitations that brevity and space imposed. The concise anecdote allowed for the least development: James rewrote "The Middle Years" several times before achieving its final concise length with any measure of success. But the form of the concise anecdote always remained for him an artificial barrier to the complete actualization of the donnée. "Greville Fane" was "a minor miracle of foreshortening" at approximately 7,500 words and "The Tree of Knowledge" (6,500 words) and "The Abasement of Northmores" (8,500 words) "could but masquerade as little anecdotes" (P, p. 235).

These things, especially the former, are novels intensely compressed, and with that character in them yet keeping at bay, under stress of their failing else to be good short stories, any air of mutilation. They had to be good short stories in order to earn, however precariously, their possible wage and "appear" - so certain was it that there would be no appearance, and consequently no wage, for them as frank and brave nouvelles. (P, p. 235)

The suggestion here is clearly that the form of the nouvelle can comfortably accommodate the developmental subject of the novel without resorting to a great number "of full revolutions of the merciless screw" to keep it "down," which happens when

the developmental subject "has to make the anecdotic concession" (P, pp. 234-35). The length of a tale is, then, not enough to classify it as a concise anecdote: the more important criterion is the donnée itself. Of The Spoils of Poynton James wrote that he found "that with hopes repeatedly deluded and every effort to forecast one's dimensions, one has to do these things as one can (at least I have) and as one 'can' depends on the whole artistic life of one's donnée." As Ruthrof points out, the final difference between the forms of the short story and longer types of prose fiction is:

... a result of an emphasis either on themes which require expansive treatment or on ones which demand extreme compression. James's emphasis is clearly on the development of complex psychological structures which entail great detail and suffer under rigorous compression.... The bulk of James's production supports the view that he "delighted in the shapely nouvelle" and in the novel. It is in these longer forms that he could allow his themes to take shape gradually. The themes that James cherishes could be called 'long themes' since they rely heavily on development and a slow process of unfolding. His international theme, for example, in order to be aesthetically satisfying, requires the careful presentation of characters with different cultural backgrounds and the portrayal of whole social groups. The psychic conflict of seeking experience or avoiding illumination, the juxtaposition of conventions, growing love or decay - these demand the detailed and delicate treatment of which James is an unquestionable master. If, however, such 'long themes' are depicted within too narrow a fictional frame, the results tend to be aesthetically dissatisfying.²⁷

At the same time, James was fully aware that:

"There is of course neither close nor fixed measure of the reach of a development, which in some connexions seems almost superfluous and then in others to represent the whole sense of the matter; and we should doubtless speak more thoroughly by book had we some secret for exactly tracing deflexions and returns." (P, pp. 232-33) In terms of James's organic conception of genre it would indeed be superfluous to construe a close or fixed measure of the reach of a development in the novel, just as, equally, the curtailment of the developmental in the concise anecdote represents the whole sense of the matter: in the nouvelle, however, with characteristic ambiguity, the reach of a development is both superfluous (since its value is "the idea happily developed" in its own organic form) and the whole sense of the matter (since its value is also "to give all the sense without all the substance or the surface" of the work). The nouvelle is the one form in which James appears finally to have discovered the secret for exactly tracing deflexions and returns. And the discovery of that secret, predictably, in terms of the generic ambivalence of the nouvelle, is as circular as the answer to the riddle of the sphinx.

James wrote most of his very short tales or concise anecdotes in the two decades beginning with "Brooksmith" in 1891 and he was fascinated by the challenge that the form presented him. Conscious, perhaps, of his lack of success in the genre, he decided, as late as 1895, to "make a more scientific trial of the form - I mean the idea of this extreme brevity" (N, p. 232). By 1899, he was still exclaiming that the form always eluded him: "Oh, if I could only arrive at a definite, firm, fixed form of that ideal dimension." (N, p. 274) But as he finally came to realize that the short story, unlike the nouvelle, could never have "its own organic form" since it was at all times fettered by "the arbitrary limits of length," he also became unsatisfied with

the extent to which he had to rely on excessive implication and the extreme paring away of exposition in order to treat the données of his concise anecdotes: the form did not allow him to be selective and inclusive at the same time. He came to realize that severe compression was only suited to the trivial and, in the case of a writer like Mérimée, resulted in a moral indifference that he found unsatisfying:

To tell a terrible little story without flinching... without expressing a grain of reprobation for the clever rascal who escapes under the cover of the scuffle in which his innocent rival has his brains blown out, or a grain of compassion for the poor guilty lady whose husband or father, brought upon the scene by the crack of pistols, condemns her to a convent cell for life; not to be sentimental, not to be moral, not to be rhetorical, but to have simply a sort of gentlemanly, epicurean relish for the bitterness of the general human lot, and to distil it into little polished silver cups... this was Mérimée's conscious effort, and this was his rare success.²⁸

While James admired Mérimée's achievement as a writer of short stories, he also recognized that his tales would always be minor works.²⁹

James, then, finally developed a fundamental mistrust of the shortness of the short story form: his own attempts to emulate it were marked by "innumerable repeated chemical reductions and condensations" that tended to make it, in a moral and, hence, aesthetic sense, one of the costliest forms of composition since is precluded so much "felt life." Since the form of a work of art was as much of the essence of the work as the idea, the concise form of the short story inevitably resulted, in James's view, in a superficiality and insubstantiality that he found ultimately unacceptable. In his own work in the genre there is an evident sense of an

artificial linkage, of the donnée straining against the imposition of the form. The données of James's concise anecdotes were invariably so rich in implication that they had to masquerade as concise anecdotes rather than openly reveal themselves for what they were in a mutually compatible form: what was essentially a highly compressed novel had to be passed off as a short story.³⁰ James preferred to develop the dramatic potential of his donnée, to realize all its dimensions and so produce the effect of "truth diffused, distributed" in aesthetic harmony with form.

The donnée of The Turn of the Screw, the nouvelle that, since its first serial publication in Collier's Weekly early in 1898, has attracted more critical attention than any other tale (perhaps even novel) that James wrote, had its origin, according to a Notebook entry dated January 12th, 1895, in "the ghost-story told me at Addington (evening of Thursday 10th), by the Archbishop of Canterbury." While virtually all the critical controversy that surrounds the tale, from Edna Kenton and Edmund Wilson³¹ onwards, has centred on the question of whether or not the governess of the tale actually sees the ghosts of her predecessors,³² and despite James's initial dismissal of the tale as "a piece of ingenuity pure and simple, of cold artistic calculation, an amulette to catch those not easily caught" (P, p. 172), "a pot-boiler and a jeu d'esprit," "a very mechanical matter," and "an inferior, a merely pictorial subject,"³³ The Turn of the Screw is central to the genre of the nouvelle. The critical reaction that it provoked during his lifetime prompted a fairly substantial amount of comment by James himself on the matter of his tale, on its substance and form. The tale, too, clearly reveals the Jamesian process of transformation from donnée, "so fine a germ, gleaming there in the wayside dust of life" (P, p. 170), to its formal completion. An analysis of the genesis of The Turn of the Screw illustrates as well, in more general generic terms,

the typical composition of a rich subject developed yet rigorously circumscribed that is the clue to the form of the Jamesian nouvelle, the figure in its carpet.

The first Notebook entry suggests that the seminal idea of the story came to James in a very vague and indefinite communication, this being, of course, his preferred way for gleaning the données of his works.

... the mere vague, undetailed, faint sketch of it - being all he had been told (very badly and imperfectly), by a lady who had no art of relation, and no clearness: the story of the young children (indefinite number and age) left to the care of servants in an old country-house, through the death, presumably, of parents. The servants, wicked and depraved, corrupt and deprave the children; the children are bad, full of evil, to a sinister degree. The servants die (the story vague about the way of it) and their apparitions, figures, return to haunt the house and children, to whom they seem to beckon, whom they invite and solicit, from across dangerous places, the deep ditch of a sunk fence, etc. - so that the children may destroy themselves, lose themselves, by getting into their power. So long as the children are kept from them, they are not lost; but they try and try and try, these evil presences, to get hold of them. It is a question of the children 'coming over to where they are.' It is all obscure and imperfect, the picture, the story, but there is a suggestion of strangely gruesome effect in it. The story to be told - tolerably obviously - by an outside spectator, observer. (N, pp. 178-9)

The writing of The Turn of the Screw was suspended until 1897 when James was approached for a story by Robert Collier, some two years after its first notation in the Notebooks.³⁴ In its final form, the nouvelle echoes James's original conception: it remains "all obscure" and is narrated by "an outside spectator, observer," the unnamed governess. As Matthiessen and Murdock have pointed out, it is interesting to note "that the anecdote from which James started posited both that the children had been corrupted and that they were still being influenced by the apparitions of the dead servants."³⁵ The frequency with which the editors of the Notebooks point out James's departures from his original notations should, however, also be noted and, as Jean Blackall and Wayne C. Booth have agreed, it is "fascinating to watch James as he transforms a subject into a story of how it affects or is affected by an observer":³⁶

... the relationship between his developing narrators and the original subjects was often more complex than his own critical talk recognizes. Some of his stories present, in fact, a double focus that seems to spring from an incomplete fusion of original subject with the new subject that develops once a seriously flawed narrator has been created to reflect the original.³⁷

James made a number of significant changes when he revised the text of the first English book edition of The Turn of the Screw³⁸ for the 1908 New York edition:

Here James seemed intent on shifting the center of attention away from the details of action observed by the governess to the reactions felt by the governess. By removing commas... he came closer to approximating the stream of her consciousness. By increasing the use of the possessive pronoun "my"

and by replacing verbs of perception and thought with those of feeling and intuition... James draws us intimately into the course of her narrative. The effect is more vital and vivid than that created by either of the earlier [periodical and book] versions.³⁹

The whole question of The Turn of the Screw, when one considers the spectrum of divergent critical views, will "tolerably obviously" never be quite solved and for several very good reasons that may be reviewed in terms of the narrative situation, the process of "adumbration" that James consciously devised for his tale, and, ultimately, its very generic identity. With these considerations in view, much of the literature on this nouvelle becomes somewhat superfluous, retaining its value only insofar as it points to the rich ambiguity that is central to James's technique of fiction and, in particular, his technique of the nouvelle.

Point of view is at the centre of James's aesthetics of fiction. The unnamed narrator of The Turn of the Screw, a young country parson's daughter of twenty, relates in a manuscript her employment at Bly as governess to the young nephew and niece, Miles and Flora, of her absent employer. There are, however, two narrators in The Turn of the Screw. The first is the guest at a house party who introduces the reader to Douglas, who takes over his narrative with a ghost story that has a special turn of the screw. Douglas, in a sense, is also a narrator, although by proxy only since his account is, ostensibly, being quoted or summarized by the unnamed first narrator. Douglas reads to him the manuscript in his possession "with a fine clearness that was like a rendering to the ear of the beauty of the author's hand." The principal narrator, the governess, at this point, takes over. The story that is rendered is specifically hers and it is told in the first person. No more is heard from either

Douglas or the first narrator.⁴⁰

Significantly enough, the enclosure of the tale within a framework recalls the device employed by the writers of early collections of novellas like Canterbury Tales, The Decameron, and A Thousand and One Nights. The nouvelle, like the German novelle, as we have seen, gets its name from the Italian novella and should then, in strictly definitive terms, relate a new, unheard of event, or, at least, a new, surprising treatment of matter already known (Douglas proposes to his audience that he will do just that). As Walter Silz has remarked in connection with the German novelle:

Its name... attests its Romance provenance. Originally, like all story-telling, it stems from the Orient, but its European birth-place is the Renaissance, and its father is Boccaccio. The Renaissance placed a new high value on the individual; yet the "frame" in which Boccaccio's stories (like Scheherazade's Arabian Nights) are set indicates an over-individual background, the relation to a higher society. The Italian Renaissance produced, besides the Decamerone, a great store of novellas. Contemporaneous with Boccaccio's, or just slightly postdating his, are the "framed" stories of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Here, as in all these early novellas, a company (less often a single person) tells stories from their own experience, that is, they relate hitherto unknown matter, and the relating is oral and social. It is characteristic of the later German Novellen that, though the stories are sometimes in a "frame" or series, they are more often single stories, frequently in frames of their own.⁴¹

In the "Introduction" to the first edition of Deutscher Novellenschatz and again thirty years later in his Jugenderinnerungen und Bekenntnisse,⁴² Paul Heyse expressed his views on the form of the novelle;

they are, in summary, the following:

The Novelle... deals with a significant human fate or conflict, revealing to us by means of an unusual happening a new aspect of human nature. It presents a specific case, sharply outlined within a restricted framework, just as the chemist must isolate the interaction of certain elements in his experiment to illustrate some law of Nature. The novel has a wider horizon and more manifold problems; it embraces various concentric "Lebenskreise." The Novelle restricts itself to one circle and one conflict: "in einem einzigem Kreise einen einzelnen Konflikt," and it can suggest only in "abbreviation" the relation of its persons to the general life (xviii). It has a definite individual character or "profile": "etwas Eigenartiges, Spezifisches schon in der blossen Anlage... eine starke, deutliche Silhouette"....⁴³

The effect of the framework of The Turn of the Screw sharply outlines the governess's conflict, so restricting her narrative to the one circle of her relations and throwing a significant human fate into sharp focus--"eine starke, deutliche Silhouette." And the process of suggesting only in "abbreviation" parallels James's process of "adumbration."

The delimitation of the "framing" of The Turn of the Screw contributes to the concentration on an isolated, enhanced world, a figurative "stage," and the throwing of light on only the "engaged" side of the main actress while yet suggesting the complete "round" of her personality. This, taken in conjunction with James's characteristic tendency to dramatize the first person narrative situation, usually by suppressing the narrative distance between the narrating self and the experiencing self but differently achieved in The Turn of the Screw through the effective combination of accelerated pace and reflective tone, involves an objective impersonality

in James's attitude towards the governess. Furthermore, the sense of urgency that these factors create, the propulsive drive of the governess's narrative, stands in contrast to the often slower epic pace of the novel and places The Turn of the Screw steadfastly within the long tradition of its genre.

The parenthetical device employed in the tale is also typical of that traditionally employed by writers of the supernatural and may be found in the works of Edgar Allan Poe, Ambrose Bierce, Rudyard Kipling, Algernon Blackwood, and H.P. Lovecraft.

Ghost stories were originally oral tales, whispered before a winter fire while the wind howled outside and darkness crowded in upon the little circle of firelight; and writers who propose to deal with the supernatural are obliged to recreate imaginatively this atmosphere of superstitious but pleasing shudders. For only then will the reader suspend his broad-daylight, common-sense disbelief and enter into the mood of the story. James has elsewhere referred to this process as the production of "conscious and cultivated credulity," and the establishment of such a mood certainly seems to be one of his main reasons for employing the frame in The Turn of the Screw.... Thus James uses his prologue to set the mood at the proper emotional pitch.⁴⁴

Apart from evoking, then, an appropriate atmosphere, the framework of The Turn of the Screw also certifies the governess's tale as "document" as it is vouched for in the prologue by Douglas.⁴⁵ In this way, the tale achieves an air of authenticity and the reader is invited, encouraged, to accept the governess's story at face value. But in terms of the delimiting form of the nouvelle, what this framework most importantly achieves is the inclusion of a great deal of expository material in the prologue that neither hampers nor stultifies the free flow of the original

informing idea or donnée which, for James, had "the immense merit of allowing the imagination absolute freedom of hand, of inviting it to act on a perfectly clear field, with no 'outside' control involved, no pattern of the usual or the true or the terrible 'pleasant' (save always of course the high pleasantry of one's very form) to consort with" (P, p. 170). It enabled James to encircle his central narrative, to reduce it to its required specifications without breaking "by the space of an instant or an inch" the continuity of his tale: so James has drawn the circle in which relations, the states of affairs inherent in the governess's narrative, happily appear to stop.

Douglas, rather than James, can prepare the reader for what is to follow. He can explain what sort of person the governess was, why she went to Bly, what that household was like, and similar matters. After this the stage is set, and the reader can settle back comfortably while Douglas opens the faded red cover of a "thin old-fashioned gilt-edged album" and reads aloud the narrative inscribed in "old, faded⁴⁶ ink, and in a most beautiful hand."

Douglas fulfils certain functions of an authorial narrator and is thus aligned to the characteristic Jamesian ficelle. The narrative, then, is launched, as typical of the Jamesian nouvelle, in medias res with the advent of the governess's narrative. It is at this point that James sets his "trap for the unwary," the basis for the ambiguity of his tale. It is at this point, too, that critical controversy invariably begins.

The genesis of The Turn of the Screw from the donnée to its final composition and form reveals a distinct shift in emphasis from theme (the corruption of innocence) to the more psychological question of how that theme becomes known. This shift is prefigured in the first Notebook entry since the story is "to be told -

tolerably obviously - by an outside spectator, observer." There is a deliberate obscuring of the donnée with the development of the point of view. In The Turn of the Screw it is the governess who expresses the evil ambiguity of the story since we know of the ghostly presences through her eyes alone: it is through her that the "secret, or latent intention" inherent in the germinal idea is all obscured and given form.

James's tales are based on the quest for an absolute and absent cause... it dominates his work almost exclusively from 1892 until at least 1903.... There exists a cause - to be understood in a very broad sense. It is often a character, but sometimes also an event or an object. Its effect is the tale, the story which we are told. The cause is absolute: everything in the story owes its presence, in the last analysis, to it. But it is absent and we set off in quest of it. And it is not only absent but for most of the time unknown as well; only its existence, not its nature, is suspected. There is a quest: that is, the story consists in the search for, the pursuit of this initial cause, this primary essence. The story stops if it is found. On the one hand then, there is an absence (of the cause, of the essence, of the truth) but this absence determines everything; on the other hand, there is a presence (of the quest) which is simply the pursuit of the absence. The secret of James's tales is, therefore, precisely this existence of an essential secret, of something which is not named, of an absent, overwhelming force which puts the whole present machinery of the narrative into motion. The movement of James's stories is a double and, in appearance, a contradictory one (which allows him to start it ceaselessly over and over again): on the one hand he deploys all his

strength to reach the hidden essence, to unveil the secret object; on the other, he constantly moves it further and further away. He protects it up to the end of the story, if not beyond. The absence of the cause (or of the truth) is present in the text; still more, it is its logical origin, its raison d'être; the cause is that which, by its absence, gives rise to the text. The essential element is absent; absence is an essential element.⁴⁷

The motive force of The Turn of the Screw, that which determines its structure, is in the ghosts of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel; as James confides in the preface, they "helped me to express my subject all directly and intensely." The governess constantly refers to them as "presences" although their presence (or their absence) is never verified; as Todorov has elsewhere remarked, "the essence is never present except when it is a ghost, that is, when it is absence par excellence."⁴⁸ This ambiguity is preserved throughout and is further heightened by there being no one in the here-and-now of the fictional world who can verify the governess's experience. The reliability of the governess as narrator becomes, then, highly problematical since her point of view is tied up so closely with the presence or absence of the ghosts.

While we must concede final authority to the work itself rather than to the author--for, as Wellek and Warren have pointed out, the "meaning of a work of art is not exhausted by, or even equivalent to, its intention"⁴⁹--it is, however, also interesting and relevant to note James's views on the governess, particularly as they often indicate his conception of the first person narrator in an observational role.

James stated that in The Turn of the Screw his whole intention had been to "give the impression of the communication to the children of the most infernal imaginable evil and danger"⁵⁰ through a young woman who keeps "crystalline her record of so

many intense anomalies and obscurities - by which I don't mean of course her explanation of them, a different matter" (P, p. 173). The narrative does present itself as both an "impression" and a "crystalline...record" of a haunting as conceived by a young woman but where the ambiguity in the first instance arises is precisely in her attempts to explain her impressions to the point of presenting them as facts. What she experiences most intensely is "felt life." As Edel points out, she "speculates and assumes - and what she first states as fancy she later states as fact."⁵¹ James himself refers to her in the preface as his "suppositious narrator." In this respect she resembles, by way of comparison, the narrator of Edgar Allan Poe's "Ligeia" who, in his desperate attempt to lend credence to the belief that the power of Ligeia's will effects her resurrection in the body of his second wife, the Lady Rowena, ignores or misrepresents the causes of Rowena's decline and sudden revival. He is slowly poisoning her but presents only the effects of his actions, which he attributes to the will of Ligeia. Similarly, the governess in The Turn of the Screw presents the effects on her of her impressions of Bly, its history, and the children, but fancifies, as is the wont of an impressionable young woman, the causes of all she experiences. At no time does she fully realize the dislocation between cause and effect. She sees everything consistently with "certitude" and interprets her impressions as factual and verifiable (which they are not if we consider her "crystalline" representation of Mrs Grose's account of matters). Within a highly ambiguous narrative construct, she sees everything with an acute awareness (even when her gaze is averted!) that is immediately suspect. Her first vision of Miss Jessel is felt: sitting at the side of the lake with Flora she begins "to take in with certitude and yet without

direct vision the presence, a good way off, of a third person."⁵² She positively denies the possibility of ambiguity inhering to her intuition (which she confuses with her perception) or feelings: "There was no ambiguity in anything; none whatever at least in the conviction I from one moment to another found myself forming as to what I should see straight before me and across the lake as a consequence of raising my eyes."⁵³ She convinces herself that she will see Miss Jessel, of whom she has had prior knowledge, and, of course, she does "see" Miss Jessel. Her second glimpse of Quint (she does not know it is Quint at this stage) is through the window of the dining room: she sees him only from the waist up. He resembles the man she had previously seen from afar on the tower and she immediately attributes the sighting to a supernatural phenomenon, as we may again concede as characteristic of a young woman alone in a lonely house:

On the spot there came to me
the added shock of a certitude that
it was not for me he had come. He
had come for someone else.

The flash of this knowledge - for
it was knowledge in the midst of dread -
produced in me the most extraordinary
effect, starting, as I stood there,
a sudden vibration of duty and courage.⁵⁴

The governess, to say the least, is jumping to conclusions far beyond the empirical evidence at hand, but she appropriates it as "knowledge." She is the soul-mate of the ingenuous and suggestible young heroine of Northanger Abbey and even goes a step further in the extent to which she allows herself to fancy that she has a calling, "a sudden vibration of duty and courage."

Such data, it must be remembered, are provided by the governess alone: it is her story and her interpretation of what she saw or imagined and the reader is entirely in her mind. Unlike in The Aspern

Papers, in The Turn of the Screw, the reader is also constantly referred to the temporal plane of narration; usually these references take the form of "I remember," "I recollect," "I can feel once more," or similar phrases. They also decrease slightly as the narrative unfolds and there is no return to this plane at the close of her narrative. Nevertheless, such interpolations from the plane of narration, the governess's writing of the manuscript ("I can hear again, as I write..."), are frequent but in only a very few instances sustained over several paragraphs.⁵⁵ When the governess speaks from the plane of narration, she invariably does so to foreshadow events that are still to follow, so increasing the sense of urgency that characterizes her narrative, that propels it and creates tension by enhancing the mood of portentous evil. At these times she speaks "only in the light, or the gloom, I should rather say, of other and subsequent matters."⁵⁶ These frequent pointers to the act of narration involve, then, a series of premonitions of horror: their function is to create the right atmosphere and to plant the right suggestions and, in this respect, override any retrospective analysis from the temporal plane of narration. Indeed, James suppresses retrospective analysis on the part of the governess: she describes her feelings as they were felt at the time - time has only allowed her to realize the intensity of her experience for, as she remarks: "I never knew what I myself suffered...." Generally, her past experience is as vivid "as I see the letters I form on this page." She gives no indication in the form of after-thought that they have changed or modified since then. By suggesting that over the years the horror of past events has in no way been diminished, she effects a singular intensity of expression that is as immediate as James's method of dramatizing the first person situation in The Aspern Papers. On seeing Quint for

the first time, for example, the governess relates that:

... the man who met my eyes was not the person I had precipitately supposed. There came to me thus a bewilderment of vision of which, after these years, there is no living view that I can hope to give.... To me at least, making my statement here with a deliberation with which I have never made it, the whole feeling of the moment returns. It was as if, while I took in, what I did take in, all the rest of the scene had been stricken with death. I can hear again, as I write, the intense hush in which the sounds of evening dropped.⁵⁷

The governess, in effect, dramatizes her own narrative by insisting that the past is as vivid as her present time locus. From the plane of narration, the only question that remains concerning these occurrences is "the question of how long they... lasted." The only thing that she admits to in retrospect is a sense of surprise that she accepted the terror of those times with a complacency and inevitability her "older and more informed eyes" cannot really quite accept any more. No explanations, however, of such events are presented from this plane; all explanations and interpretations are presented as they occurred to her at the time of her experience. The past is being evocatively relived by the governess; this is stressed in phrases like: "It all comes back to me now...." Her present, then, takes on the imaginative shadings of her past. It is in this way that James deploys emphasis from the division between the temporal planes of the experiencing self and the narrating self. Furthermore, in the subtle interfusion of the present and perfect tenses through the juxtaposing of the pluperfect, the two temporal planes become, in a

sense, interlocked. The governess's past experience is omnipresent: it is immediate.

There is, however, a purely conventional sense which provides the basis for some degree of authority on the governess's behalf: it is a convention that James expertly manipulates at times to the end of ambiguity:

One advantage of the first person point of view is that it makes provision for the authority which can be adduced from a work; that is to say, it establishes the origin of a narrative by specifying the teller and including him within the frame of the narrative. As a witness to or experiencer of the narrated matter, the first person narrator provides an apparent means of verifying that narrated matter.... It is accepted as a convention in a fictional narrative that the almost innumerable details presented are credited unquestioningly despite the fact that retention of such detail would be beyond the capacities of ordinary human memory. This convention permits the first person narrator to present lengthy stretches of dialogue and to be specific and detailed about the order of such minor occurrences as movements, gestures, or even expressions. 58

Narrative distance in The Turn of the Screw is dramatically telescoped or "foreshortened" and the governess's reliability in the presentation (but not in the interpretation) of the necessary and barest aspects of long past material is conventionally authorized, kept "crystalline." But the data go only so far since a high degree of selectivity governs her tale.

The division of the governess's narrative into twenty-four short chapters and the inclusion of a prologue also aid in the effect of a "crystalline" account by creating an illusion of gradualness, to imply the passing of time and to suggest the

selectivity of event. But yet again, as in The Aspern Papers, the process of time is subordinated to the intensity and the immediacy of the governess's experience. At the same time, her initial terror (the degree to which it is empirically unfounded is indicative of her bewilderment) at what she perceives or, as intensified by James's subsequent revisions of the text, at what she feels, is also a means of simultaneously limiting the tale to her perspective and intensifying it because it does finally become so subjective. The very language she uses is filled with imagery which reveals her own terror in the midst of her apparent composure.⁵⁹ This, of course, does run counter to James's initial conception of the governess as an objective observer:

Of course I had, about my young woman, to take a very sharp line. The grotesque business I had to make her picture and the childish psychology I had to make her trace and present, were, for me at least, a very difficult job, in which absolute lucidity and logic, a singleness of effect, were imperative. Therefore I had to rule out subjective complications of her own - play of tone etc.; and keep her impersonal save for the most obvious and indispensable little note of neatness, firmness and courage - without which she wouldn't have had her data.⁶⁰

While James does achieve singleness of effect by limiting the point of view to a single observer, "subjective complications" nevertheless do present themselves in her narrative. As James himself later hinted: "We have surely as much of her own nature as we can swallow in watching it reflect her anxiety and inductions." (P, p. 174). And, as Flower points out: "There is much room for doubt about the governess's understanding of what 'really' happens, but there is no doubt about the terror she undergoes."⁶¹ And it is because there is no doubt about that that James has

achieved telling a story which is an ultimate in "general uncanny ugliness and horror and pain." The doubt about the governess's hold on "reality," on the other hand, is in large due to the indeterminacy in the text of her narrative--her terror, her feelings are only too real; there is no indeterminacy about them.⁶²

While James explicitly stated that he had vested authority in the governess and described her account of the mysterious events at Bly as a "particular credible statement of such strange matters," he was, as Alexander Jones has indicated, "too interested in subtle shades of character to keep the governess impersonal" despite his avowed intentions.⁶³

In the prologue, the reader is led into accepting the governess in good faith: Douglas, after all, does provide her with a glowing testimonial. Furthermore, the psychological experience of being subjected to "a prolonged intimate view of a character works against our capacity for judgement."⁶⁴ As Blackall has remarked, "the emotional distance between reader and character is, in such a case, narrowed; and the reader tends to yield, submit himself, to the character's point of view."⁶⁵ James does, however, place certain "limitations" on his narrator and by so doing achieves that "masterly brevity" and richness of effect that distinguishes his nouvelles. While the governess's story is undoubtedly reliable in a subjective sense--there is insufficient evidence for us to suppose that she is deliberately lying or pathologically misleading the reader--and she does "see" the ghosts (and so brings the very act of perception itself into question), she is by no means infallible as a narrator and as a highly impressionable young country girl. As in In the Cage the narrative is unfolded from the point of view of an intrinsically limited observer whose misapprehensions are highly ironic and intermingled with elements of pathos.

The irony of The Turn of the Screw arises from the discrepancy between the insight of an intelligent and sensitive but fallible observer and the things she contemplates. As in The Sacred Fount, James attempts to juxtapose the views of his limited observer with an objective reality which the reader should be able to perceive for himself.⁶⁶ Like the narrator of "Ligeia"--and to borrow the title of William James's best known essay--the governess has the will to believe and so exemplifies the tenet that "the willing department of our nature... dominates both the conceiving department and the feeling department; or, in plainer English, perception and thinking are only there for behaviour's sake."⁶⁷ Because she cannot prove anything, because in the last resort she can prove nothing, she freely assumes what she chooses. Her impressions, then, become her experience; as James insisted in "The Art of Fiction":

The power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implications 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.⁶⁸

In many respects, this statement constitutes the informing impulse of the Jamesian nouvelle; form, that is, follows function and the form of The Turn of the Screw reflects the nature of the experience in it.⁶⁹ And it is precisely because of this that the governess feels a strong calling to fulfil a typical governess's calling, to protect her young charges from evil and show them the path of righteousness. As she readily admits: "I had an absolute certainty that I should see again what I had already seen, but something within me said that by offering myself bravely as the sole subject of such experience, by accepting, by inviting, by

surmounting it all, I should serve as an expiatory victim and guard the tranquillity of the rest of the household."⁷⁰ After the initial shock of the apparitions, she begins to translate her nervousness into rigorous dedication. "I have my duty," she tells Mrs Grose, and hereafter her puritanical sense of duty increasingly pervades her narrative. She begins to tighten every screw in sight, bearing down on the situation with a "rigid control" and a "rigid will." James appears to have lucidly comprehended the motivation of an unwordly and unsophisticated--she has never seen a play or even read a novel, she has never seen herself in a full-length mirror--twenty-year old virgin who has emerged from a cloistered Hampshire vicarage, the youngest of several daughters of a poor and "erratic" country parson, to act as mistress of a grand old country mansion and as mother to two "incredibly beautiful" and well-bred and sophisticated young children.⁷¹

It is in the prologue that the first clue to the governess's fallibility is provided. Edel has pointed to the elaborate and careful time-scheme James sets down in the prologue through the first narrator and Douglas, each of whom "provides a set of facts, not, however, evaluated for us."

We are told the governess has been dead for twenty years. She sent the manuscript to Douglas before she died. Douglas tells us she was ten years older than he was and that she was his sister's governess. "She struck me as awfully clever and nice... I liked her extremely." She was twenty when the events described in the manuscript occurred. We are told that forty years have elapsed since her death. Douglas says "it was long ago" that he knew her and "this episode was long before." In fact, he was at Trinity College "and I found her at home on my coming down the second summer." This means that Douglas must have

been eighteen or perhaps twenty when he had completed his second year at the university; and the governess, ten years older, would be about thirty when Douglas met her and found her "nice." And the meeting was ten years after the events described in her manuscript.⁷²

This establishes, Edel continues, that Douglas's description of the governess is based on his knowledge of her ten years after the events described in her narrative--she presumably had matured (as she herself elsewhere claims) somewhat by the time he knew her. Her own story is an account of her youthful insecurity that is expressed in terms of her obsessive interest in her predecessor and the valet who befriended her as well as a highly romantic interest in her handsome employer, who figures in her daydreams. She takes evening walks in the hope that she will encounter him, returned on some pretext or other, and she meets, instead, the figure of a stranger, dressed in his clothes, on the tower. He is Peter Quint. Through the figure of the governess James displays his extraordinary power of probing to the last reaches of consciousness, and of suggesting how the "ghosts" of the dead seem to live through and beyond us. This theme is less ambiguously reiterated in two later nouvelles, The Beast in the Jungle and The Jolly Corner, as well as central to a slightly earlier nouvelle, The Altar of the Dead. In The Turn of the Screw we have a striking instance of the way James's "visiting mind" worked itself into the situations it contemplated and rendered his données to formal completion.⁷³

Detailed analysis of The Turn of the Screw, and it has been attempted time and time again, has so far failed to prove that the narrative is either a ghost story or a psychiatric case history; neither has recourse to James's statements of intention settled the problem since they, too, are often open

to interpretation. As Edna Kenton has remarked of the prefaces: "... that which was to illumine has only served to obscure the more."⁷⁴ The most convincing interpretations of the tale deny neither emphasis and confirm, indeed, both:⁷⁵ the governess's manuscript is something in the nature of a parallel text directing the reader's attention to two levels of awareness--the story as told and the story to be deduced. There is, furthermore, sufficient "forensic" evidence on both levels within the text to satisfy proponents of either side of the controversy--the process of "adumbration" that James employed and the very form of the nouvelle itself leaves within the text large areas of indeterminacy as to render it finally to the predilection of the reader to determine his choice. This, it seems, is precisely what James appeared to have in mind when he wrote the tale. Douglas promises the anecdote to be "quite too horrible.... It's beyond everything. Nothing at all that I know touches it.... For dreadful - dreadful! ... For general uncanny ugliness and horror and pain."⁷⁶ The governess's narrative is given a hyperbolic build-up that evokes a great deal of expectation in the reader that must be fulfilled if the whole is not to disintegrate into anti-climax. James's solution is to create an atmosphere of evil, a tone of "suspected and felt trouble" and to allow the reader to imagine the details for himself. Through a process of "adumbration," of obscuration of the germinal idea, of subjectivization and high selectivity--all informing principles of the nouvelle--he creates a mood of portentous evil, and leaves the reader to do the rest: "Only made the reader's general vision of evil intense enough, I said to myself... and his own experience, his own imagination, his own sympathy (with the children) and horror (of their false friends) will supply him quite sufficiently with all the particulars. Make him think the evil, make him think it for himself, and you are released from weak specifications.

This ingenuity I took pains... to apply." (P, p. 176)
 As Jones points out, this was to be the basis of
 James's amulette:

... to terrify each reader with
 the fruits of his own imagination.
 And in this way James proposed to
 catch and hold the interest of
 sophisticated readers who would
 find ordinary ghost stories boring.
 His trap was set for "the jaded,
 the disillusioned, the fastidious."⁷⁷

To attempt to rationalize The Turn of the Screw
 and confine it to a single interpretative channel
 would be, in James's words, to turn it into a "mere
 modern 'psychical' case, washed clean of all
 queerness as by exposure to a flowing laboratory
 tap" (P, p. 169). To point, however, to the fallibility
 of the governess and her believing her own stream of
 consciousness is by no means to limit her narrative;
 indeed, it may be viewed simultaneously both as a
 delineation of a neurosis and as a tale of "goblins,
 elves, imps, demons... [or] fairies of the legendary
 order, wooing their victims forth" (P, p. 175). As
 Harold C. Goddard astutely recognized before Wilson
 or even Kenton formulated their interpretations,
 nothing in the tale demands the hypothesis that the
 governess sees the actual spirits of Peter Quint and
 Miss Jessel--nothing, on the other hand, absolutely
 contradicts it:

Are Peter Quint and Miss Jessel
 a whit less mysterious or less
 appalling because they are evoked
 by the governess's imagination?
 Surely the human brain is as solid
 a fact as the terrestrial globe,
 and inhabitants of the former have
 just as authentic an existence as
 inhabitants of the latter. Nor do...
 Peter Quint and Miss Jessel exist only
 in the brain of the governess.
 Perhaps they do and perhaps they
 don't. Like Hawthorne in similar
 situations - but with an art that
 makes even Hawthorne look clumsy -
 James is wise enough and intellectually
 humble enough to leave that question open.⁷⁸

And as Dorothea Krook remarks in one of her essays on The Turn of the Screw, James's appeal to the reader is "in short, again, to do what Maggie Verver enjoined upon her husband the Prince when the golden bowl was broken and only his beautiful imagination, sensibility, and good faith could now redeem their loss: 'Find out [...] Find out for yourself.'"⁷⁹

In The Turn of the Screw James exercises his technique of ambiguity with a vengeance. In terms of Todorov's concept of an "absent cause" at the centre of James's tales, the characters in The Turn of the Screw often appear to be talking at cross-purposes to one another. The conversations between the governess and the housekeeper illustrate the technique of what may be termed "scenic ambiguity." An early example of this occurs when the governess inquires about her predecessor: "What was the lady who was here before?" she "innocently" asks Mrs Grose:

"The last governess? She was also young and pretty - almost as young and almost as pretty, Miss, even as you."

"Ah then I hope her youth and her beauty helped her!" I recollect throwing off. "He seems to like us young and pretty!"

"Oh he did," Mrs. Grose assented: "it was the way he liked everyone!" She had no sooner spoken indeed than she caught herself up. "I mean that's his way - the master's."

I was struck. "But of whom did you speak first?"

She looked blank, but she coloured.

"Why of him."

"Of the master?"

"Of who else?"

There was so obviously no one else that the next moment I had lost my impression of her having accidentally said more than she meant....⁸⁰

A question is answered with another question and the reader, like the governess, may be apt (if not solicited) to jump to conclusions. The technique of ambiguity in terms of veiled references in passages of scenic presentation is a quite frequent Jamesian

device; it is also to be found in the short novels, in particular The Other House and in What Maisie Knew, as well as the longer works, as in, for example, the scenes between Isabel Archer and Madame Merle in The Portrait of a Lady. In the nouvelles, this technique is heightened in terms of the anecdotic principle-- something that has oddly happened to someone--as compared to the novels, in which it is less elusive in implication since the something that has oddly happened happens to others as well. Rose Armiger's deception in The Other House to conceal her crime is only too apparent and dialogue between her and Anthony Bream assumes a direct level of duplicity since the narrative is figurally diffused in its point of view. In the nouvelles, on the other hand, with their restricted vantage points, ambiguity is amplified since the standard for measuring the duplicity of reference is located only in the interpretative faculty of a single observer or reflector.

In The Turn of the Screw James carries his ambiguous procedure to a point where, as Edmund Wilson remarked, "we almost feel that the author does not want the reader to get through to his hidden meaning."⁸¹ An inveterate observer himself, James appears to have been aware of the ambiguity pertaining to the perceiving mind and the possible dislocation between noetic and noematic experience, between the "être-pour-soi" and those "instrumental complexes" that make up the objective world-out-there.⁸² By endowing the governess with "interiority," James affects a deliberate means of double perspective:

Instead of being confronted with a single perspective in which all features are in agreement, we get multiple perspectives in which various details in the narrative are contradictory, ambivalent, problematic. Narrators declare their inability to express certain things or even to know them; they speak ironically or ambiguously; they withhold or conceal. Furthermore they can become partially

or entirely unreliable: liars or ignoramuses. Endowing characters with interiority immediately opens up further opportunities for multiple perspective. Interiority creates a gap between deed and doer, between external environment and the subjective apprehension of it. Readers are frequently forced to interpret and evaluate a character according to the norms projected by his milieu, and to interpret and evaluate his milieu according to the norms of the character. In short, readers are no longer expected or indeed permitted to be passive recipients of entertaining narratives; the role of the reader has become more active and more complicated.⁸³

While the form of the nouvelle, with its precisely located, subjectivized, singular spatio-temporal vantage point, is ambiguous in structure and reflects this "dialectic relationship," ambiguity is also to be found in similar collusion in James's novels, especially those of the late phase, in which James has his characters carry on long conversations with "each of the interlocutors always mistaking the other's meaning and neither ever yielding to the impulse to say one of the obvious things that would clear the situation up."⁸⁴

The aggressive emotion that masquerades as a cutting witticism; the excessive endearment that conceals a deep animus; the pleasant remark that is accompanied by a hostile gesture; the sudden slip of the tongue which says the opposite of what had been intended - James had learned long ago to read such "psychological evidence," and it was this which made him one of the remarkable men of his time and of nineteenth century literature. Such observation, particularly today in a world more educated in the nature of human behaviour, is evidence sufficiently conclusive about how persons really feel - and yet there seems to have been

for James an ultimate doubt and ultimate uncertainty. Was he reading these signs aright? Or was he embroidering them and fitting them "into the larger mystery... than the facts, as observed, yet warranted?" The Sacred Fount, in its rather madly obsessed way, states the dilemma of the extra-sensitive observer who can never be sure that he is fathoming the mystery whole. And who suffers intensely because what seems real enough at one moment may become a house of cards at the next.⁸⁵

The governess in The Turn of the Screw is beset by similar doubts: "... there are depths, depths!" she exclaims to Mrs Grose. "The more I go over it, the more I see in it, and the more I see in it the more I fear. I don't know what I don't see - what I don't fear!" She suffers, too, "the appalling alarm of his [Miles] being perhaps innocent." This poses the question that "if he were innocent, what then on earth was I?" But such paralyzing fears are fleeting and the governess is able to find reassurance again in the realm of the suppositious. What saves her from doubt and madness, she at one point claims, are "horrible proofs. Proofs, I say, yes - from the moment I really took hold." The irony of these words may become suggestively sinister. She watches the children engrossed in a book of fairy tales and announces them "steeped in their vision of the dead restored." This brings her to declare emphatically to Mrs Grose: "He's not reading to her... they're talking of them - they're talking horrors! I go on, I know, as if I were crazy; and it's a wonder I'm not. What I've seen would have made you so; but it has only made me more lucid, made me get hold of still other things." The governess, in short, is quickly able to discover "depths" within her own imagination and this reassures her sanity!

Miles's final surrender of Peter Quint's name, the most crucial and climactic scene in the governess's

narrative, especially in terms of her veracity, is again highly ambiguously delineated.

"No more, no more, no more!" I shrieked to my visitant as I tried to press him against me.

"Is she here?" Miles panted as he caught with his sealed eyes the direction of my words. Then as his strange "she" staggered me and, with a gasp, I echoed it, "Miss Jessel, Miss Jessel!" he with sudden fury gave me back.

I seized, stupified, his supposition - some sequel to what we had done to Flora, but this made me only want to show him that it was better still than that. "It's not Miss Jessel! But it's at the window - straight before us. It's there - the coward horror, there for the last time!"

At this, after a second in which his head made the movement of a baffled dog's on a scent and then gave a frantic little shake for air and light, he was at me in a white rage, bewildered, glaring vainly over the place and missing wholly, though it now, to my sense, filled the room like the taste of poison, the wide overwhelming presence. "It's he?"

I was so determined to have all my proof that I flashed into ice to challenge him. "Whom do you mean by 'he'?"

"Peter Quint - you devil!" His face gave again, round the room, its convulsed supplication. "Where?"

They are in my ears still, his supreme surrender of the name and his tribute to my devotion. "What does he matter now, my own? - what will he ever matter? I have you," I launched at the beast, "but he has lost you for ever!" Then for the demonstration of my work, "There, there!" I said to Miles.

But he had already jerked straight round, stared, glared again, and seen but the quiet day. With the stroke of the loss I was so proud of he uttered the cry of a creature hurled over an abyss, and the grasp with which I recovered him might have been that of catching him in his fall. I caught him, yes, I held him - it may be imagined with what a

passion; but at the end of a minute I began to feel what it truly was that I held. We were alone with the quiet day, and his little heart, dispossessed, had stopped.⁸⁶

The crucial utterance in this superbly evocative scene of exorcism is Miles's "supreme surrender of the name and his tribute to my devotion." The governess gives the final twist to the screw, yet ambiguity proliferates. Miles's rejoinder: "Peter Quint - you devil!" says all and nothing. The governess sees it as the ultimate proof, yet several alternatives present themselves. The reader is confronted with several questions where an answer is supposed to have been given.

Does, in the first instance, the "you devil!" refer to Quint or to the governess? If the former, then we are presented with two further possibilities: in one sense (namely, the governess's), the tale is in fact of an "actual" haunting and the experience described an "actual" case of demonic possession as verified by the boy's admission; on the other hand, the reader may again take up the suggestion that the boy has finally surrendered to the governess's will - he has been forced to utter the name, forced into blind ("with his sealed eyes") acceptance of the ghosts, forced into believing that the governess sees the ghosts even if he does not and the shock kills him. This would, to the governess, be tantamount to a confession; in the same words she uses in an earlier and parallel scene in which she charges Flora with her knowledge of Miss Jessel--"It came to that." Flora's subsequent outburst then had led to an hysterical barrage of childish recriminations against the governess; similarly, Miles may well be expressing his indignation and his fear, in fact, his innocence, screaming at the governess in frustration and terror at being forced to utter the dreaded name that symbolizes for him the depths of her perversity. This

alternative is further reinforced by the claims of the governess in earlier passages that he "knows" and, ironically, it may have been the governess that he knew about all along and not Quint. This would also throw doubt on her immediate supposition that Miles had been expelled from school merely because he had been asked not to return for unspecified reasons: forcing him to confess his crimes at school and so to repent, in this case, parallels her puritanical zeal in insisting that he recognize Quint and again repent.

Interestingly, the governess uses a mixed metaphor to describe Miles's "white rage," the tenor of which normally, though again not necessarily, denotes fear. The governess's reference to Miles as "my own," in the possibility that she herself emanates "demonic" forces, would, then, take on an extremely sinister meaning, especially as she adds: "I have you." Miles, of course, by the governess's own admission, sees finally "but the quiet day." Perhaps this is all that he has ever seen and if so, then the final lines of her narrative, for all their seeming pathos, are "beyond everything.... For dreadful - dreadful! ... For general uncanny ugliness and horror and pain." While these alternative interpretations to a "straight" reading of the final scene persist, the governess's story yet remains uncorroborated: it cannot be construed as a ghost story "pure and simple" as long as suspicion remains that she does indeed show Miles "that it was better still than that."

It is possible to cite many passages in The Turn of the Screw in which, from the syntactic level through to the presentation of the states of affairs and portrayed objectivities, ambiguity infiltrates all the strata of the governess's narrative. The governess stands as a filter or screen between the story per se and the reader, just as she stands, by her own admission, as a screen between the children and the evil presences: "I was a screen - I was to stand before them. The more I saw, the less they

would." As a screen, then, she is to receive the images of the evil past, cut them off from the children - but the images will still be there "projected" onto the screen, and thus transmitted to the reader, yet with all the deflections of light that such projection entails; the more she "sees" with her uncanny sense of evil, the more is light deflected and the less distinct becomes the original image - that is, the more the governess "sees," the greater the ambiguity and the less, in a sense, does the reader, like the children, see. As Flower points out, the nouvelle "sums up one of the most obsessive ideas of James's art: that any imaginative experience of life may be frightening simply because it is ambiguous."⁸⁷

Despite the ambiguity that inheres to the narrative situation of The Turn of the Screw, unity of tone and effect are maintained through a single point of view. Space is closely circumscribed and the number of active characters is limited, so achieving the structural tightness that pertains to the nouvelle. The governess herself describes the circumstances that such structural curtailment brings about: "We were cut off, really, together; we were united in our danger. They had nothing but me, and I - well, I had them." The ironic ambiguity of those final words speaks for itself. The governess, of course, is the one who suppresses things; her narrative is highly selective and temporally constricted - it covers her time at Bly from the late spring to the fall, the seasonal cycle itself having highly suggestive symbolic reverberations. Time is segmented in accordance with the high selectivity of incident; it is presented as conceived by the governess: "... a succession of flights and drops, a little see-saw of the right throbs and the wrong." Her narrative is placed within a wider and more definitely defined continuum by the prologue. The time locus of her narrative, on the other hand, is

vague and the day to day progression of time is imprecise. Adverbial phrases with a generalized time reference--"in the first weeks," "for many days after," "as [the days] elapsed," "a Sunday," "for a week," etc.--both telescope time as well as signal the process and development of the governess's narrative while yet subordinating its traceable progression to the intensity of her experience.

The main core of value of The Turn of the Screw is the focus on the governess's experience and is aligned to its single overriding arc of tension; her tale thus becomes highly dramatic and is highlighted in terms of its narrative phases. The shortness of the chapter divisions, as Flower points out, suggests James's progression d'effet: and like Daisy Miller, The Bench of Desolation, and The Coxon Fund, The Turn of the Screw, too, has a generally defined bi-partite structure that is effected by its narrative phases,⁸⁸ each of which corresponds to the chapter divisions:

The thirteenth chapter acts as a bridge between the governess's discoveries of the first weeks at Bly and the hardening of her determination to prove herself right. Coming almost exactly at the center of the narrative, this section... has no dramatic scene. It provides a temporal bridge, telescoping the action of a month: "This situation continued a month, and with new aggravations and particular notes, the note above all, sharper and sharper, of the small ironic consciousness on the part of my pupils"... It marks a shift in the governess's attitude, from her "effort to struggle against my new lights" to her readiness to accept the evidence of her "infernal imagination," as she so honestly describes it. As her obsession intensifies and the children begin ambiguously to defy her, James prepares for his climax with one of his most beautiful and chilling transitions: "The summer had turned, the summer had gone; autumn had dropped upon Bly

and blown out half our lights."⁸⁹

James described The Turn of the Screw as a "squeezed sponge" despite its being, at just under 50,000 words, his longest nouvelle. Like The Sacred Fount, The Spoils of Poynton, and What Maisie Knew, The Turn of the Screw was originally planned "as a story of the '8 to 10 thousand words.'"⁹⁰ The "mere apparitional" tale, he maintained in an earlier letter to W.D. Howells, is easily achieved if it is "a question of the 'short story' dimension" but it strains under "prolongation and extension."⁹¹ The germinal idea of The Turn of the Screw, however, like that of an extended novel like The Awkward Age, no doubt carried for James "an unforeseen principle of growth" and, again like The Awkward Age (which developed far beyond the compactness of the nouvelle form into a "comparative monster"), the "mere grain of subject matter" showed "the quite incalculable tendency... to expand and develop and cover the ground when conditions happened to favour it" (P, p. 98).

Despite, however, the development that the germinal idea of The Turn of the Screw demanded, it was also "a fairy-tale pure and simple"--but the measure of its subsequent complexity was the result of "its springing not from an artless and measureless, but from a conscious and cultivated credulity" that is invoked in the prologue and reinforced by the tone of the governess's narrative--"a conceived 'tone,' the tone of suspected and felt trouble, of an inordinate and incalculable sore - the tone of tragic, yet of exquisite, mystification" (P, pp. 172-3)-- and the artfully conceived diction. Yet the end result was still, for James, a fairy tale, but with certain provisions:

Yet the fairy tale belongs mainly to either of two classes, the short and sharp and single, charged more or less with the compactness of anecdote (as to which let the familiars

of our childhood, Cinderella and Blue-Beard and Hop o' my Thumb and Little Red Riding Hood and many of the gems of the Brothers Grimm directly testify), or else the long and loose, the copious, the various, the endless, where, dramatically speaking, roundness is sacrificed - sacrificed to fulness sacrificed to exuberance, if one will: witness at hazard almost any one of the Arabian Nights. The charm of all these things for the distracted modern mind is in the clear field of experience, as I call it, over which we are thus led to roam; an annexed but independent world in which nothing is right save as we rightly imagine it. We have to do that, and we do it happily for the short spurt and in the smaller piece, achieving so perhaps beauty and lucidity; we flounder, we lose breath, on the other hand - that is we fail, not of continuity, but of an agreeable unity, of the "roundness" in which beauty and lucidity largely reside - when we go in, as they say, for great lengths and breadths. And this, oddly enough, not because "keeping it up" isn't abundantly within the compass of the imagination appealed to in certain conditions, but because the finer interest depends just on how it is kept up.

Nothing is so easy as improvisation, the running on and on of invention; it is sadly compromised, however, from the moment its stream breaks bounds and gets into flood. Then the waters may spread indeed, gathering houses and herds and crops and cities into their arms and wrenching off, for our amusement, the whole face of the land - only violating by the same stroke our sense of the course and the channel, which is our sense of the uses of a stream and the virtue of a story. Improvisation, as in the Arabian Nights, may keep on terms with encountered objects by sweeping them in and floating them on its breast; but the great effect it so loses - that of keeping on terms with itself. (P, pp. 171-2)

While The Turn of the Screw was not, finally, to be a "short spurt" or a "smaller piece," neither, however, was it to "flounder" and "fail... of an agreeable unity, of the 'roundness' in which beauty and lucidity reside." Instead James strove to achieve a compromise between "the short and sharp and single" and "the long and loose, the copious, the various, the endless" without sacrificing that cherished "roundness" of form. It was to keep on terms with itself; hence, the form of the nouvelle affected him as "irresistibly prescribed" as it would allow him to "improvise with extreme freedom and yet at the same time without the possibility of ravage, without the hint of a flood; to keep the stream, in a word, on something like ideal terms with itself" (P, p. 172). That was to be his "definite business" in employing the nouvelle form to circumscribe the richness and demonstrative complexity of his original informing idea without suppressing its freedom to portend. The "finer interest" of his tale, would, then, depend just on how he was to keep this up; he achieved it finally through the compatibility of his form. As James remarked of his tale: "I couldn't have arrived at so much had I clumsily tried for more." (P, p. 174) For all the ravages of its ambiguity, "this perfectly independent and irresponsible little fiction rejoices, beyond any rival on a like ground, in a conscious provision of prompt retort to the sharpest question that may be addressed to it." No critic would deny that. James, finally, regarded The Turn of the Screw as one of his most successful excursions into its genre: "For it has the small strength - if I shouldn't say rather the unattackable ease - of a perfect homogeneity, of being, to the very last grain of its virtue, all of a kind; the very kind, as happens, least apt to be baited by earnest criticism...." (P, p. 169)

The thing was to aim at absolute singleness, clearness and roundness, and yet depend on an imagination working freely, working

(call it) with extravagance; by
which law it wouldn't be thinkable
except as free and wouldn't be
amusing except as controlled. (P, p. 172)

In no other declaration of the form of the nouvelle has James summed up its essential core of value so succinctly and lucidly. Governed by this law, The Turn of the Screw, epitomizing the genre, becomes "an excursion into chaos while remaining... but an anecdote - though an anecdote amplified and highly emphasized and returning upon itself..." (P, p. 172).

Notes

- 1 "The Art of Fiction," The House of Fiction, p. 38.
- 2 Letters, 11, p. 237.
- 3 See Wellek, "Henry James's Literary Theory and Criticism," p. 316: "Form in James means most often composition, architecture; that is, the right distribution of conversation, narration, and pictorial matter."
- 4 "The Art of Fiction," The House of Fiction, pp. 39-40.
- 5 "Charles Baudelaire," French Poets and Novelists, p. 64.
- 6 "The Art of Fiction," The House of Fiction, p. 27.
- 7 "Gustave Flaubert," French Poets and Novelists, p. 201.
- 8 "Pierre Loti," Essays in London and Elsewhere (London: James R. Osgood, 1893), p. 160.
- 9 Delbaere-Garant, p. 49.
- 10 Harold T. McCarthy, Henry James: The Creative Process (New York: Yose Loff, 1958), pp. 136-37.
- 11 Donald M. Murray, "Henry James in the Advanced Composition Course," College English, XXV (1963), pp. 29-30.
- 12 James, especially in his earlier criticism, often used these two terms interchangeably.
- 13 McCarthy, pp. 81-82.
- 14 "The New Novel," Notes on Novelists, p. 342.
- 15 Wellek, p. 301.
- 16 Delbaere-Garant, pp. 50-51.
- 17 "Turgenev and Tolstoy, 1897," The House of Fiction, pp. 171-72.
- 18 Letters, 11, p. 237.

- 19 Ibid.
- 20 F.O. Matthiessen, The James Family (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1947), p. 246.
- 21 Blackmur, pp. xv-xvi.
- 22 See Methodological Introduction.
- 23 CLWA, p. 82.
- 24 See Roman Ingarden, "The General Question of the Essence of Form and Content," Journal of Philosophy, LVII, 7 (1960), pp. 222-33.
- 25 As quoted by Wellek, p. 316.
- 26 CLWA, p. 85.
- 27 Ruthrof, "Henry James's Psychological Realism," pp. 369-70.
- 28 "Mérimée's Last Tales," Literary Reviews and Essays, p. 171.
- 29 Ibid., p. 169.
- 30 Flower, p. 185.
- 31 Edna Kenton, "Henry James to the Ruminant Reader: The Turn of the Screw," The Arts, VI (November 1924), pp. 245-55.
- Edmund Wilson, "The Ambiguity of Henry James," Hound and Horn, VII (April-June 1934), pp. 385-406. Revised for the first edition of The Triple Thinkers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938). Further revised for The Triple Thinkers, rev. and enlarged edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948).
- 32 For example, Oscar Cargill, "Henry James as a Freudian Pioneer," Chicago Review, X (Summer 1956), pp. 13-29.
- M. Katan, M.D., "A Causerie on Henry James's The Turn of the Screw," The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, XVII (1962), pp. 473-93.
- Both republished in A Casebook on Henry James's The Turn of the Screw (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1969).
- 33 Letters, 1, pp. 299-300.
- 34 See Robert Kimbrough, "The Text of The Turn of the Screw," Henry James: The Turn of the Screw, Norton Critical Edition (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1966),

pp. 90-91: "James was approached for a story by Robert Collier who had left college in June to join his father on Collier's Weekly. On the one hand, Collier wanted to raise the tone of this popular magazine and sought out Henry James who was beginning to be thought of as a writer of more importance than merely 'the author of Daisy Miller'; on the other hand, James knew the level of the audience of Collier's... and could well have turned to his Notebook for a sensational idea, here the ghost-story told him by Archbishop Benson."

35 Matthiessen and Murdock, p. 179.

36 Jean Frantz Blackall, Jamesian Ambiguity and The Sacred Fount (New York: Cornell University Press, 1965), p. 15.

Booth, p. 341.

37 Booth, p. 346.

38

The Two Magics: The Turn of the Screw and Covering End (London: Heineman, 1898).

39 Kimbrough, p. 91.

40 Leon Edel, The Modern Psychological Novel (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), p. 40.

41 Silz, p. 1.

42 See Bennet, p. 13.

43 Silz, p. 4.

44 Alexander E. Jones, "Point of View in The Turn of the Screw," PMLA, LXXIV (March 1959), p. 112.

45 Edel, The Modern Psychological Novel, p. 39.

46 Jones, p. 113.

47 Tzvetan Todorov, "The Structural Analysis of Literature: the Tales of Henry James," Structuralism: An Introduction (Wolfson College Lectures), ed. David Robey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp. 74-75.

48 Ibid., p. 113.

49 Wellek and Warren, p. 34.

50 Letters, 1, p. 301.

51 Edel, The Modern Psychological Novel, p. 42.

52 The Turn of the Screw, New York Edition, vol. 12, p. 201.

- 53 Ibid.
 54 Ibid., p. 184.
 55 For example, pp. 172-74.
 56 Ibid., p. 160.
 57 Ibid., pp. 176-77.
 58 Visser, "The Novelistic Documentary," p. 46.

Cf. Jones, pp. 121-22: "... in any story employing the first-person point of view, the narrator must, on the whole, be trustworthy. Of course, the narrator need not be infallible.... Once an erosion of authority begins, who can say where is must stop? Therefore, unless James has violated the basic rules of his craft, the governess cannot be a pathological liar."

59 Leon Edel, Henry James, University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers, No 4 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1960), p. 59.

- 60 Letters, 1, p. 299.
 61 Flower, p. 208.
 62 Edel, The Modern Psychological Novel, p. 45.
 63 Jones, p. 119.
 64 Booth, p. 322.
 65 Blackall, p. 13.
 66 Ibid., p. 11.
 67 Matthiessen, The James Family, p. 351.
 68 "The Art of Fiction," The House of Fiction, p.

32.

- 69 Flower, p. 187.
 70 The Turn of the Screw, p. 195.
 71 Edel, The Modern Psychological Novel, p. 41.
 72 Ibid., p. 40.
 73 Matthiessen, The James Family, p. 247.
 74 Edna Kenton, "Henry James to the Ruminant Reader: The Turn of the Screw," A Casebook on The Turn of the Screw, p. 104.
 75 For example, Harold C. Goddard, "A Pre-Freudian Reading of The Turn of the Screw," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XII (1957), pp. 1-36.

Shlomith Rimmon, The Concept of Ambiguity - the Example of James (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1977).

76 The Turn of the Screw, p. 148.

77 Jones, p. 118.

78 Goddard, p. 15.

79 Dorothea Krook, "The Madness of Art: Further Reflections on the Ambiguity of Henry James," Hebrew University Studies in Literature, I, i (1973), p. 38.

80 The Turn of the Screw, p. 169.

81 Wilson, "The Ambiguity of Henry James," reprinted in A Casebook on The Turn of the Screw, p. 125.

82 Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (London: Methuen, 1972).

83 Visser, "The Generic Identity of the Novel," p. 113.

84 Wilson, p. 125.

85 Leon Edel, "Introduction" to The Sacred Fount (London: Hart-Davis, 1959), pp. 13-14.

86 The Turn of the Screw, pp. 308-9.

87 Flower, p. 212.

88 Krishna Vaid, Technique in the Tales of James (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 118.

Visser, "The Novelistic Documentary," pp. 144-47.

89 Flower, pp. 209-10.

90 Letters, 11, p. 408.

91 Ibid., p. 355.

Chapter 4 : Features of the Jamesian Nouvelle:
A Phenomenological Perspective

The "process of adumbration" that James followed in The Turn of the Screw releases the reader from "weak specifications" and enabled James to portray "the essence of the matter... the villainy of nature in the evoked predatory creatures" and to avoid "the comparative vulgarity" that he saw "inevitably attending... the offered example, the imputed vice, the cited act, the limited deplorable instance..." (P, p. 175). By placing "high interest" on the "artless resentful reaction" of the governess and so achieving "by the same stroke a theme for the moralist," James limits the reader to the governess's point of view and so "abounded in the sense of the situation" (P,p.177). "My values are positively all blanks save only so far as an excited horror, a promoted pity, a created expertness" (P, p. 177), James confided. The governess's narrative ultimately becomes, then, a question of her feelings and their communication to the reader and it is for this reason that there has been so much critical argument: each reader "concretizes" the story differently and fills in the Jamesian blanks in accordance with his "feelings." Beyond the "aspects" of the situation which the governess provides from her point of view, the reader has no other guide to the filling in of the schematic nature of her narrative: indefiniteness and indeterminacy are the principle features of her manuscript, from a stylistic level through to the portrayal of her world, the closely circumscribed mansion and its grounds. James's evocation of a portentous atmosphere in The Turn of the Screw rests

largely on his artful manipulation of the narrative situation and the careful placing of "lacunae of indeterminacy," correlates both of his process of adumbration.¹ To broaden James's notion of his values as blanks to include all aspects of the fictional world that, too, are rendered as "blanks," the lacunae of indeterminacy in The Turn of the Screw can be filled out in several different ways, all of which are in harmony with the linguistic formation of the work. The result is a multiplicity of possible "concretizations" that is suggestive of the richness of the experience contained in the form of the governess's narrative, that is, the form of the nouvelle.²

Roman Ingarden has suggested that the role of lacunae of indeterminacy and the relation between what is explicitly determined and what is undetermined is of significant importance to the determination of various "types" or genres of literary works of art.³ Each work necessarily contains such lacunae because like any linguistic utterance, it is a schematic formation that in its finite number of words and sentences can never establish wholly and exhaustively the infinite multiplicity of determinacies of the individual represented objects, persons, events. Hence lacunae of indeterminacy are aspects of parts of the presented world and its individual elements that are not specifically determined by the text.

Though seemingly negative, the inevitability of spots of indeterminacy can be manipulated artistically to suppress some features of the represented world and its objectivities and emphasize others. It follows that certain types of spots of indeterminacy may characterize individual works, the works of an author, the works of a particular literary movement or of an epoch of cultural history as well as different literary kinds.⁴

The kinds of lacunae of indeterminacy, such as those concerning the character of a fictional person

or those such as purely external spatial and temporal details, may vary from one literary work to another as well as from author to author. However, they may also characterize, for example, a work's style, as well as characterize a genre. It is in this latter respect in particular that Ingarden's phenomenological view of literary art may most usefully be applied to the present attempt to distinguish James's use of the form of the nouvelle.

Sentences join in diverse ways to form semantic units of a higher order which exhibit quite varied structures; from these structures arise such entities as a story, a novel, a conversation, a drama, a scientific theory.... Finally, a whole world is created with variously determined elements and changes taking place in them, all as the purely intentional correlates of a sentence complex.⁵

The objects portrayed in the literary work of art exist solely (in pre-aesthetic cognition) because the intentional correlates of the sentences, the states of affairs, combine in projecting them. The world constructed by literary texts is constructed, then, out of these intentional sentence correlates. But the essential character of that world is schematic--there are "lacunae of indeterminacy" which the reader fills according to thematic relevance. Such lacunae occur between the schematized views or aspects that are a basic characteristic of the literary text. Just as the sentences comprising the text link up in different ways to form more complex, "higher units" of meaning that reveal various structures, giving rise to such forms as the short story, the novel, the drama, etc., so do such views or aspects relate to one another in various structures since they are, indeed, compounded by that very relationship between the meaning units of a text. The degree of connection between the schematized aspects of a text is usually unstated and has to be inferred, but it is the degree

of inference required of the reader that is signalled by the system of clues or signs that comprise the artistic arrangement or form of the text at its most fundamental level. In a lyric poem, for example, as Ingarden points out, the effective determination of what is positively stated in the text is often reduced to a minimum; much remains unsaid.⁶

In reading modern lyric poetry we have the impression that the poets are of the opinion that they have to leave their works undetermined as far as possible, so that the reader has at his disposal the widest possible range of permissible concretizations, which he can form in one way or another according to his will. In Germany this began as early as with Stefan George, when he left out all the punctuation marks in his poems so as not to limit the reader in his freedom to interpret the poem. Contemporary lyric poetry goes incomparably further in this direction by frequently dispensing with the formation of correct, complete sentences, for example, in order to leave the reader the freedom to supplement the poem as he sees fit. The schematic character of the literary work is then sometimes driven to the limit of absurdity.⁷

This observation has an interesting connection with James's revision of The Turn of the Screw in which he eliminated punctuation (especially commas) as far as possible within the limits of intelligibility, so effecting heightened ambiguity. He called the effect "an excursion into chaos."

The short story, which has sometimes in cross-generic comparisons been aligned with the short lyric, shows a similar placing of lacunae of indeterminacy; the most apparent difference between the two genres, however, occurs at the levels of the language strata, which affect the states of affairs they project and, thus, the presented world. Such comparison between the short story and the lyric is, then, loose but,

nevertheless, useful, as it follows that the more a text tries to be precise, the greater will be the number of "aspects" or "views" it presents; in other words, greater precision in presentation often leads to a proportionate increase in particularization.⁸ In this case, it becomes less a case of what remains "unsaid" and more a case of how much is "said." The developmental impulse that pertains to the typical novel creates a greater precision of presentation: within the expansive scope of the novel, the writer is able to supply the reader with more directives, thus narrowing the lacunae of indeterminacy between the aspects that are held in readiness for the actualization of the reader. The reader, in this instance, has greater indication as what to fill in and what to leave as "blank." The novel aims at particularization; it presents a less schematic world than the typical short story. Its magnitude permits a greater variety of characters, greater complication of action and events, an ampler development of milieu, a more sustained, often more subtle exploration of character, and, overriding all these, the delineation of more expansive themes than the concentration of the short story form permits. The short story is, typically, highly schematic; within its confined focus it holds in readiness only a few selected, often representative, aspects. There is greater indeterminacy. Thus the short story typically presents the reader with a more generalized presented world; its placing of lacunae of indeterminacy is so wide, its paring away of explication often so extreme, that its final emphasis is on typicality or on universality. In the novel, development is narrated or enacted;⁹ the novel relies on process and, hence, introduces a complex manifold of aspects that enables the reader to fill out this line with greater specificity or particularity. It is usually only at a high level of abstraction that the novel suggests the universality of the particularized experience that its form coerces; the short story, on

the other hand, "foreshortens" the process of mental abstraction by by-passing, of necessity, particularization and by presenting at a much lower level of abstraction the universality of the single and highly schematic experience it portrays. In this respect, the short story aims at presenting the kernel of human experience and insofar as it tends to "simplify" this, given its narrow formal scope, it also generalizes human experience. As James suggested, it is the art of the pencil as opposed to the art of the brush.

In the Jamesian nouvelle, the placing of lacunae of indeterminacy is carefully regulated in accordance with James's conception of the form as enabling the rich expression of human experience while yet retaining the "shapely" dimensions of a compact and closely integrated artistic and aesthetic construct. James constructs his "blanks" with calculated precision. The nouvelles approach the degree of particularization that is to be found in the novel, yet there is in certain respects a placing of lacunae of indeterminacy comparable to the short story, but without the effect of generalization or low-level abstracted universality. The range of lacunae of indeterminacy in the nouvelle, in conjunction with its emphasis on particularized and intensified experience, leads to an inherent ambiguity and an attendant structural irony. The Jamesian nouvelle shimmers in ambiguity and thus achieves a particular aesthetic effect.

... each single view will generally reveal only one representative aspect. It therefore determines the literary object, and at the same time it raises the need for a new determination. This means that a literary object never reaches the end of its many-faceted determinacy. In other words, a literary object can never be given final definition.¹⁰

It is, of course, this factor that distinguishes literary objects from "real" objects. A literary object, given its essential schematic nature, can never be given final definition since its definition

is primarily dependent upon a text comprising a finite number of words and sentences that can never exhaustively establish the multiple adumbrations of its individual presented objects, characters, events, etc. It is, then, a matter of misplaced emphasis to claim, as Wolfgang Iser has done, that the more a text tries to be precise, that is, the more schematized views it offers, the greater will be the number of lacunae between the views; in other words, over-precision of presentation leads to a proportionate increase in indeterminacy.¹¹ The confusion here arises out of the attempt to compare the very important difference between our perception of "real" objects and our concretization of literary objects; unlike a real object, it is of the ontological essence of literary objects that they are schematic.¹² With this in mind, then, it is evident that the presented world of a text increases in definition with every word; thus the world of an extended narrative becomes more definite and, hence, more particularized and it is from this very feature that forms such as the nouvelle and the novel derive their names; that is, they present something new in the sense of presenting a particular case rather than the general proposition of the short story, the fable, and the exemplum.

This world, however, does not pass before the reader's eyes like a film. The sentences are "component parts" insofar as they make statements, claims, or observations, or convey information, and so establish various perspectives in the text. But they remain only "component parts" - they are not the sum total of the text itself. For the intentional correlatives disclose subtle connections which individually are less concrete than the statements, claims, and observations, even though these only take on their real meaningfulness through the interaction of their correlatives.... The individual sentences not only work together to shade in what is

to come; they also form an expectation in this regard.... As this structure is characteristic of all sentence correlatives, the interaction of these correlatives will not be a fulfilment of the expectation so much as a continual modification of it.... One might simplify by saying that each intentional sentence correlative opens up a particular horizon, which is modified, if not completely changed, by succeeding sentences. While these expectations arouse interest in what is to come, the subsequent modification of them will also have a retrospective effect on what has already been read.¹³

The literary work in its schematic structure is, then, not just something which contains certain gaps; it is also something which is positively determined in itself by "filled" qualities which constitute the actuality of the work. At the same time, it is not something that is merely actual since it determines, through its positive determinations, various potentialities or expectations which are characteristic of the work in question, as we have seen in The Turn of the Screw.¹⁴ As Stanzel points out, the genesis of fictional reality lies in certain ordering patterns which are determined by the structure of the literary work.¹⁵

The nouvelle does employ certain structural features, generalizing features or potentialities that are not modified by the text itself, of the typical short story in order to arrive at its economy of presentation. For example, the restricted point of view, the close circumscription of space, temporal foreshortening, a limited dramatis personae, the use of types (Daisy Miller, Mrs Costello, Jeffrey Aspern, Juliana Bordereau, Mrs Prest, Frank Saltram) and generic characters (lonely, isolated, or obsessed characters) are all features, either singly or in various combinations, of the Jamesian nouvelle. Particularization, on the other hand, occurs with the development of the action, the successive

highlighting of events, temporal expansion, and with the restricted point of view (a typical feature, as noted, of the short story) of a Jamesian protagonist of heightened sensibility, thus giving rise to development, expansion, complication, and ambiguity.

The restricted point of view of the Jamesian nouvelle heightens ambiguity since the reader is presented with a world conceived by a single consciousness; the presentational process, as already suggested, becomes the presented world and the presented world per se is, in a sense, a blank which the reader is left to reconstruct for himself with only selected and restricted aspects to guide him. As Ingarden points out, it is helpful to this reconstruction that almost every literary work of art has its own style and own type of consistency which, once we are aware of them, can serve as a guide to a faithful concretization of the work or as a warning that those concretizations which deviate from the style of the work and from its consistency in the portrayal of objects and in the use of artistic means can be inaccuracies in the reconstruction of the work.¹⁶ A generic examination, then, must take into consideration all the strata of the literary work of art that Ingarden has distinguished.

The Jamesian style is a noted feature of his works. An analysis of James's style, which is used as a check on the "accuracy" of the reconstruction of a work, must take into account all strata and all phases of the work since stylistic influences extend from the linguistic strata to the higher strata and, in a sense, may become (especially through the use of imagery) one of the portrayed objectivities of the text. As Husserl pointed out: "We are not to hold too hard by the metaphor of stratification; expression is not of the nature of an overlaid varnish or covering garment...."¹⁷ And as Michael Murray has commented: "The ultimate implications of the strata model, when properly subordinated to the

more fundamental questions about language and temporality, should be seen to verify the essential insight of Husserl that all unities are unities of meaning."¹⁸

The two directly verbal strata of a literary work provide the substantial basis for the concretization of a fictional world but they must not be equated with that world.

... the precise determination of the fictional world by its language signals is the moot point.... [T]he restriction of the conception of works of literature to their verbal formations cannot account for the way in which the reader constructs for himself, within more or less clearly defined borders, the presentational process with the narrator's spatial and temporal locus, the activities of telling, the "personality" of the speaker or voice, the narrator-reader relationship, and the presented world with its spatial and temporal matrix, its events and human acts, its personae and, finally, the inferences which all these features suggest.... In making statements about literary constructs, and in particular about narrative, we have to operate at different levels of abstraction in relation to the text.... Such statements are not all derived directly from signals of the text: many are inferences about inferences. In fact to make plausible interpretative abstractions at a high level at all, 'thematic umbrella statements' - which few critics abstain from making - we do not use as our basis the string of words but the imagined world, a system of inferences constructed in the reading consciousness by means of presentational process, presented world, and the filling material which the reader contributes from his total storage of knowledge. It is this synthesis which places narrative in a "metaphoric" relationship with everyday life. This does not mean that we should

not link our abstractions back to individual words in the text; on the contrary, the degree to which we are able to 'verify' our imagined world may serve as a measure of the adequacy of our¹⁹ inferences in terms of the text.

Style has as its basis the lexical and grammatical organization of the literary work, the "peculiarities of the language in the text."²⁰ Style constitutes a vocabulary chosen out of many possibilities in the language. Such "selective reduction" is encountered in each stratum.²¹ The types of sentences decide a question that is particularly relevant to a study of a literary stylist like James: whether the work is clear or unclear. Where a work lacks clarity, the obscurity, insofar as the work may present a "mysterious" facade, may have a positive aesthetic value. However, such aesthetic value must first be established by "the concrete datum of the narrative text, the process of presentation, the presented world and, in bringing to life these two with the help of his [the reader's] own stock of experience, the imagined world."²² In the case of James, obscurity is often a feature of one or more of the objects presented in the work, a feature which is "shown" rather than described.²³ For James this feature and its related technique evidently had a high aesthetic value and he praised Conrad for his "perfect eventual obscuration."²⁴ It is a noticeable feature of many of his own extended narratives, exploited to the extreme in The Sacred Fount and The Turn of the Screw, and is often greatly heightened by his "masterly indirectness" and dramatization of the presentational process.

In the development of James's style towards greater circumlocution, in the nouvelles, short novels, and novels, with their ever increasing convolutions of meaning, the famous style consistently strives to present substance by never

overtly alluding to it. The structure of the sentences and the language generally entail certain significant properties of the presented world of a Jamesian narrative.

A tight sentence is a fixative - and the subject of James's tales is a lack of fixity, or a dissolution of it in order to recombine the fixed elements in a larger, expanding reorganization. In this purpose he by no means stands alone; what is unique in him as a craftsman is his method of making the prose sentence work toward the desired end.

If we grant the effect of weak conjunctions, unusual sentence order, and parenthetical interruptions in unsettling the sentences, we should next require some evidence of machinery for recombining their freed elements. And, of course, we should look for the operation of this machinery in sentence structure, as well as in the larger matters of character, plot, and theme.²⁵

On the one hand, where the language is ambiguous and the sentences characteristically complex and "difficult" the presented objects take on a proportionate imprecision;²⁶ on the other hand, precision in the delineation of consciousness becomes proportionately more emphasized.

To give the image and the sense of certain things while still keeping them subordinate to his plan, keeping them in relation to matters more immediate and apparent, to give all the sense, in a word, without all the substance or all the surface.... It is only by doing such things that art becomes exquisite, and it is only by positively becoming exquisite that it keeps clear of becoming vulgar, repudiates the coarse industries that masquerade in its name. (P, p. 14)

In James, the emphasis on the vision of a particular character rather than on the direct vision

of the object of perception is as much stylistic technique as it is theme:²⁷ "It governs every line, it chooses every word, it dots every i, it places every comma."²⁸

In its final form, James's style is distinguished by the high incidence of abstract nouns, deictic pronouns, ellipses, by the nominalization of psychological verbs and adjectives,²⁹ by a sustained use of imagery, an abundance of subordinate clauses and adverbs, and, consequently, a lengthened rhythmical propensity. This last feature conditions the tempo or pace of the work which, in James, tends to linger, often introspectively, aided by the high instance of polysyllabic words, as James's characters involve themselves in various "ordeals of consciousness." The tempo is also connected to the meaning of the sentences and to their arrangement. James's complex, almost (in the late style especially) interminable sentences, introduce a slow, meditative tempo that, in the novels, issues in a series of subtly developing states of affairs. In the nouvelles, the slow tempo is countered by the highlighting of events. The high degree of selectivity introduces, through temporal foreshortening, through the discrepancy between narrated time (in the nouvelles this may cover anything from several months to, less often, several years) and narrating time (the longest nouvelle may be read comfortably in about three or four hours), a heightened narrative pace: and both the highlighting of events and the high selectivity are proportionately balanced in passages of scenic presentation when there is a near equivalence of narrated and narrating time. Such techniques enable James fully to "treat his chosen subject and to confine his necessary picture" (P, p. 14); to give, that is, all the sense without all the substance while yet retaining that cherished harmony and symmetry.

The degree to which the circumlocutions of the

introspective consciousness can slow tempo down, especially in a narrative that strives for an accelerated pace, is expressed on several occasions by the governess in The Turn of the Screw: "I find that I really hang back," she admits, and then adds: "but I must take my horrid plunge." Earlier, after quite lengthy delineation of her impressions of the children, she cuts short her thoughts in the awareness that she is holding back her narrative: "There was a Sunday - to get on - when it rained with such force...."³⁰ Her often slow gropings towards action are balanced by the decisive action itself, a characteristic movement in James's nouvelles, as opposed to the novels in which the groping more often predominates over the decisive action, as in The Ambassadors. Nevertheless, in the nouvelles, reaction is strongly emphasized since the singly located orientation of consciousness invariably determines the portrayed action. As Todorov has remarked of James's tales, "our interest... is directed towards 'being,' not towards 'doing.'"³¹ And as James himself said, he was making "records of seeing, rather than doing."³²

The sustained imagery of James's late style is confined almost entirely to the long novels. As Edmund Wilson has remarked, in The Ambassadors, The Wings of the Dove, and The Golden Bowl, "the psychological atmosphere thickens and fills up the structure of the novel, so carefully designed and contrived, with the fumes of the Jamesian gas; and the characters, though apprehended as recognizable human entities, loom obscurely through a phantasmagoria of dream-like similes and metaphors that seem sometimes... more vivid and solid than the settings."³³ In the nouvelles, on the other hand, the use of imagery enables James to intensify the exploratory mediations of the consciousness of a protagonist. The narrator of The Figure in the Carpet, for example, sums up his overwhelming sense

of defeat and frustration, when he realizes he is never to fathom the mystery of Hugh Vereker's obscure artistic principle, in a singular striking image: "I was shut up in my obsession for ever - my gaolers had gone off with the key. I find myself quite as vague as a captive in a dungeon...."³⁴ The governess of The Turn of the Screw intensifies her initial perception of the situation she finds herself in on arriving at Bly by conceiving of its inhabitants as "being almost as lost as a handful of passengers in a great drifting ship" with herself "strangely at the helm."³⁵ And Frank Saltram in The Coxon Fund, with all his "splendid tainted genius," is likened to "the injured Lear... wandering on the storm-lashed heath."³⁶

In the nouvelles there is rarely found an extended metaphor of such density as in, for example, the opening pages of Book 11 (Part IV) of The Golden Bowl where the remarkable pagoda image extends the action and develop's Maggie Verver's conscious awareness of her ordeal to a degree of heightened innuendo and complexity that could never be contained within the confined focus of the nouvelle without dominating the presented action. The "quest and multiplication of the image" is furthermore heightened in the novels by the intense care with which James chooses words and phrases and distributes pauses and emphases. In the nouvelles, long rhythms and complex sentences, when they occur, lend themselves almost exclusively to another characteristic--found too in the novels but greatly amplified and developed in conjunction with the extended imagery--the relentless search for the "mot juste," or "the art of the detail," in which the part replaces the whole in the manner of the rhetorical figure of synecdoche.³⁷ The character of Captain Everard in In the Cage is presented through the telegraphist's consciousness which, in turn, is constructed out of the minutiae that she perceives

and which are precisely those details that she has collected to nourish her "winged intelligence." He is, in short, a product of her highly introspective imagination, of the meanderings of her consciousness that the very style of the nouvelle reflects.

It is at the level of the sentence units of the second stratum that James surrounds "substance" or event (sometimes summed up in a main clause) with a number of subordinate clauses, each simple in itself, but which together produce an accumulative effect of complexity, of "sheltering vagueness." These subordinate clauses illustrate the many intermediary stages which must be passed before one reaches the "germ," a movement in the presented consciousness of the observer or the central intelligence that is paralleled in the reading consciousness.³⁸ Here is an example from The Bench of Desolation:

She moved towards him, she reached him, she stood there, she sat down near him, he merely passive and wonderstruck, unresentfully "impressed," gaping and taking it in - and all as with an open allowance on the part of each, so that they positively and quite intimately met in it, of the impertinence for their case, this case that brought them again, after horrible years, face to face, of the vanity, the profanity, the impossibility, of anything between them but silence.³⁹

In this passage, a small incident is dramatized; it is not merely reported but shown as happening. The reader is presented with a "picture." Emphasis is placed on the mental reaction of Herbert Dodd to his estrangement from Kate Cookham and this is conveyed through the presented accumulation of innumerable details and observations, on behalf of the central intelligence, which are more present than the action of physical encounter. The embedded units of meaning thereby assume a much greater importance than the principal proposition of the sentence.⁴⁰ All

this points to what James called "the contributive value" or "the beguiling charm" of "the accessory facts in a given artistic case" (P, pp. 3-4). As Eliseo Vivas has pointed out, James's manner of presenting objects--characters and physical setting and ideas and feelings--follows the pattern described by William James who found "reality's true shape" in "the primitive flux of sensational life."⁴¹

William James, in a letter to his brother, described it as follows:

by dint of breathing and sighing all round and round an object, you arouse in the reader... the illusion of a solid object, made... wholly out of impalpable materials, air, and prismatic interferences of light, ingeniously focused by mirrors upon empty space. But you do it, that's the queerness! And the complication of innuendo and associative reference on the enormous scale to which you give way to it does so build out the matter for the reader that the result is to solidify, by the mere bulk of the process, the like perceptions from which he has to start.⁴²

The complexity of James's style, of the "recognizable system of rules responsible for marshalling the textual patterns into a premeditated order,"⁴³ is a corollary of his technique of foreshortening that he strove constantly to apply. The longer the sentence, with its plethora of embedded units, the greater, paradoxically perhaps, the degree of foreshortening in which impressions, aspects, are compacted, giving the sense of a situation without the body of experience. In the Jamesian nouvelle, with its single dramatized centre of consciousness, the style is very closely affiliated to the expression of a protagonist's mode of feeling, of thinking, of "living."

Inasmuch as James was interested in the very minutest texture of

human emotion and character, he needed in style, a tongue, with which to bring this out. He looked constantly for the psychological, the occult, the recondite. Accordingly, his style has its peculiarities. For example, James is very fond of putting a statement negatively. His sentences move by turns, and twists, they eddy at times, move forward a little, retreat a little, fill themselves with parentheses, accumulate qualifications, pick up adjacent ideas, and like a struggling swimmer, after much puffing and panting, land ashore. The central idea thus becomes trimmed and tailored and qualified till it possesses thrilling accuracy, and yet it appears so much related and connected that something of the whole universe seems to flow through its veins.... To James human action grew out of all sorts of complexities of thought and feeling, and he felt that action could not be completely intelligible unless one knew these thoughts. He further held that personality is a unit, and a unit with the great central unity of life. In the nature of the case, then, there can scarcely be such things as absolutes in any sense. Human language was a language of compromises and defects, and hence there was little place for loose, unguarded statements. To mirror accurately the mind in language was to make it a hesitant, allusive thing, ready at any moment between the beginning and the end of the sentence to accommodate whatever bobbed up in thought as having anything at all to do with the matter in hand.⁴⁴

It is in this sense that the style, projected by the stratum of meaning units, sentences, and sentence groupings, determines the states of affairs that arise (and which exercise the function of "portraying"), so as to become, in its close connection with the

mediacy of presentation, a vital aspect of thematic relevance to the presented world. The process itself reveals the dynamism of the "organic" structure of James's fiction; the style "fuses" all levels of the work from the syntactic strata to its artistic and aesthetic functioning on the strata of schematized aspects and presented objectivities.

The Bench of Desolation and The Golden Bowl are two extreme examples of James's style but even in somewhat earlier works the tendency is towards this end. One sees the process at work in James's revisions for the New York Edition, which he described as the brightening of a faded surface and the bringing of old matter to life.⁴⁵ In the preface to Roderick Hudson James discusses the way he brought to the fore the special quality of his style, latent in his early novel, through revision. But even in this early work, the style had indicated the later developments: the "multiplication of touches" produced more life in the character of Christina Light than the novel as a whole could carry, forcing James into "taking her up later on" (P, p. 3-4) in The Princess Casamassima. The "psychological realism" that James's style reflects is early exemplified in "A Most Extraordinary Case," a tale of some 16,000 words first published in 1868 when James was twenty-five, where a delicate insight into the character of the wounded hero, Ferdinand Mason, is achieved fundamentally at a stylistic level. William James, in a letter to his brother soon after the appearance of the tale in the Atlantic Monthly, commented on the method:

I am just in from the theatre and feel like dropping you a line to tell you I have got your last Atlantic story ("Extraordinary Case"), and read it with much satisfaction. It makes me think I may have partly misunderstood your aim heretofore, and that one of the objects you have had in view has

been to give an impression like that we often get of people in life: Their orbits come out of space and lay themselves for a short time alongside of ours, and then off they whirl again into the unknown, leaving us with little more than an impression of their reality and a feeling of baffled curiosity as to the mystery of the beginning and end of their being, and of the intimate character of that segment of it which we have seen. Am I right in guessing that you had a conscious intention of this sort here?... You seem to acknowledge that you can't exhaust any character's feelings or thoughts by an articulate displaying of them. You shrink from the attempt to drag them all reeking and dripping and raw upon the stage, which most writer's make and fail in. You expressly restrict yourself, accordingly, to showing a few external acts and speeches, and by the magic of your art making the reader feel back of these the existence of a body of being of which these are casual features. You wish to suggest a mysterious fulness which you do not lead your reader through. It seems to me this is a very legitimate method, and has a great effect when it succeeds.... 46

This significant observation is one that applies generally to James's fiction: the final note of a tale or novel is often inconclusively sounded. The indeterminacy of such works, related as closely as it is to the Jamesian technique of point of view and the mode of ambiguity, is often founded in the style. And related to this stylistic technique is a more abstract concern with a complex view of life and art that is expressed in the preface to Roderick Hudson:

Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily appear to do so. He is in the perpetual predicament that

the continuity of things is the whole matter, for him, of comedy and tragedy; that this continuity is never, by the space of an instant or an inch, broken, and that, to do anything at all, he has at once intensely to consult and intensely to ignore it. (P, p. 5)

However, if a narrative is to end at all, a pattern cannot be avoided.⁴⁷ James, as H.T. McCarthy points out, was fully aware that "Art had to imitate life in its amplitude and suggestiveness, to make room for the exercise of the imagination and to avoid the kind of obvious and definitive qualities that put an end to the searching activity in the reader's mind."⁴⁸ It is peculiar in this respect that one finds James resorting to an uncharacteristic explicitness in a concise anecdote like "The Middle Years." The story is so severely straightjacketed in its form that James openly and unambiguously sums up the presented situation, labels it, formulates it, generalizes it in a sentence or paragraph such as: "We work in the dark - we do what we can - we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art."⁴⁹ The final effect is that of parable. It is almost as if, as Flower points out, "the brevity of the form elicited a different quality of James's temperament: the impulse to be categorical and final."⁵⁰

To get it ["The Middle Years"] right was to squeeze my subject into the five or six thousand words I had been invited to make it consist of... and I scarce perhaps recall another case... in which my struggle to keep compression rich, if not, better still, to keep accretions compressed, betrayed for me such community with the effort of some warden of the insane engaged at a critical moment in making fast a victim's straitjacket. The form of "The Middle Years" is not that of the nouvelle, but that

of the concise anecdote, whereas the subject treated would perhaps seem one comparatively demanding "developments" - if indeed, amid these mysteries, distinctions were so absolute.... However this may be, it was as an anecdote, an anecdote only, that I was determined my little situation here should figure: to which end my effort was of course to follow it as much as possible from its outer edge in, rather than from its centre outward. That formula, I had alas already discovered, may set as many traps in the garden as its opposite may set in the wood.... Treating a theme that "gave" much in a form that, at the best, would give little, might indeed represent a peck of troubles; yet who, none the less, beforehand, was to pronounce with authority such and such an idea anecdotic and such and such another developmental? One had, for the vanity of a priori wisdom here, only to be so constituted that to see any form of beauty, for a particular application, proscribed or even questioned, was forthwith to covet that form more than any other and to desire the benefit of it exactly there. One had only to be reminded that for the effect of quick roundness the small smooth situation, though as intense as one will, is prudently indicated, and that for a fine complicated entangled air nothing will serve that doesn't naturally swell and bristle - one had only, I say, to be so warned off or warned on, to see forthwith no beauty for the simple thing that shouldn't, and even to perversity, enrich it, and none for the other, the comparatively intricate, that shouldn't press it out as a mosaic. After which fashion the careful craftsman would have prepared himself the special inviting treat of scarce being able to say, at his highest infatuation, before any series, which might be the light thing weighted and which the dense thing clarified. (P, pp. 232-4)

For James, the main problem of the artist is to

express the infinite nature of human experience within the aesthetically viable "capsule" of form; a form, that is, that expresses the very nature of that experience while yet still founded on the valued principles of economy and selection. The drama of consciousness had to be contained and developed within the constriction of artistic form and in his nouvelles James attempted to interfuse the one with the other, "felt life" with art, by constructing them both from the outer edge in and the centre outward. It is here that the structure of James's nouvelles displays a high capability of interpretation. As Franz Stanzel has shown, James was very sensitive to the conception that artistic presentation "is always synonymous with reshaping reality, with developing and revealing the structures of meaning which reality contains only in an obscure and confused state."⁵¹ The opposition and relationship of art and life is central to James's poetics of narrative form, the former "being all discrimination and selection" and the latter "being all inclusion and confusion."

... life persistently blunders and deviates, loses herself in the sand. The reason is of course that life has no direct sense whatever for the subject and is capable... of nothing but splendid waste. Hence the opportunity for the sublime economy of art, which rescues, which saves, and hoards and "banks," investing and reinvesting these fruits of toil in wondrous useful "works" and thus making up for us, desperate spendthrifts that we all naturally are, the most princely of incomes. (P, p. 120)

To order life, to give it form, yet still to express its essential complexity, diversity, and continuity, is the ultimate aim, for James, of the artistic effort. It is then, indeed, art "that makes life, makes interest, makes importance... and I know of no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of its process."⁵² The artistic reduction and ordering of

experience imposes a "structure of meaning" on reality and achieves a mutually complementary relationship between art and life.

There are authors who believe themselves capable of registering the surrounding reality like a camera and reproducing it in their work.... In extreme cases a catalogue of the fragmentary perceptions and experiences of the author is the result. Life with its innumerable false trails and cul-de-sacs, its often senselessly extravagant fullness, and its simultaneous meagreness and absurd narrowness is held by such authors to be in itself worthy of portrayal. Nevertheless, their novels can never become mirrors which merely reflect their vision of this chaos. Here the interpretative power inherent in the novel form is especially striking. Even rudimentary structural elements such as beginnings and endings, chapter divisions, selection of the fictional world by leaps in time and compression, choice of point of view, and so on, impose a structure of meaning on the fictional world. All this has an interpretative effect on the reader's imagination.⁵³

The "circle" which James refers to as the prime artistic problem coincides in principle, although with a very different emphasis, with two necessary features, in phenomenological terms, of the literary work of art: schematization and reduction. To shift, then, the emphasis from the artist's dilemma when confronted by an experiential or psychological actuality to James's literary constructs per se, that is, to the latent patterns of intentionality imminent in a text, we may observe, from a phenomenological perspective that emphasizes the essential difference between art and life (and yet implicitly asserts their interconnection), the question as it is resolutely evolved in the artistic process, the problem as it is effectively determined

by the literary construct.

The Coxon Fund was singled out by James as central to the genre. An analysis of this nouvelle should establish the generic implications of its effective placing of lacunae of indeterminacy as well as indicate the typical features of the form on the level of the sub-strata that variably constitute what Ingarden has established as the four essential strata of the literary work of art. The scope of the present investigation demands a large degree of "side-stepping" of the various important philosophical and ontological issues at stake in Ingarden's phenomenological investigation of the literary work of art. An analysis of the generic features of the Jamesian nouvelle may most usefully restrict focus to the strata of schematized aspects and presented objectivities. However, recourse to the two language strata insofar as they establish the Jamesian style and its "metaphysics" may usefully guide us in a correct actualization, objectification, and concretization of a specific work. And The Coxon Fund, as Edel points out, is "perhaps the first story in which James's 'later manner' begins to emerge: and one has the impression that he struggled in the writing of it to express, in a bolder way than ever before, his belief in the supremacy of the artist whose vagaries and idiosyncracies society must learn to tolerate."⁵⁴ Concretization of the higher strata of the text will bring into focus the specific "shape" of the nouvelle that enables its categorization as a distinct genre.

James was aware that the idea "that subject and style are - aesthetically speaking, or in the living work - different and separable things" is a "perpetual clumsy assumption."⁵⁵ But, as Judith Leibowitz has pointed out: "Over-all aesthetic effects of the narrative, such as elaboration or compression, are different from stylistic effects within the narrative.... Stylistic devices are in themselves

relatively unimportant to generic distinction."⁵⁶
 It is such differentiation that led James elsewhere
 to remark:

It has been said that what makes
 a book classic is its style. We
 should modify this, and instead
 of style say form. Madame Sand's
 novels have plenty of style, but
 they have no form. Balzac's
 have not a shred of style, but
 they have a great deal of form.⁵⁷

But he placed high value on those authors (Compton Mackenzie is his example) in whose works style and form are inextricably fused: "... the value of the offered thing, its whole relation to us, is created by the breath of language, ... on such terms exclusively, for appropriation and enjoyment, we know it, and that any claimed independence of 'form' on its part is the most abject of fallacies."⁵⁸ Style alone, however, cannot determine genre: as James also pointed out, "an expressive style [is] only, after all, ... a means."⁵⁹

The unnamed narrator of The Coxon Fund admits that the pivotal figure in his tale--the impoverished, alcoholic, but benignly articulate and dazzlingly brilliant Frank Saltram--"fairly pampered my curiosity" and that "it almost appeared to me that his massive monstrous failure - if failure after all it was - had been designed for my private recreation."⁶⁰ He establishes himself immediately as a typical Jamesian observer and also implicitly establishes several significant clues as to the structure of the Jamesian nouvelle. "How the art of portraiture would rejoice," he exclaims, in the figure of Frank Saltram "if the art of portraiture had only the canvas!"⁶¹ The "art of portraiture" here is analogous to what Martha Collins has noted as characteristic of the Jamesian "portrait": "[It] is seen from many angles until, finely conscious but still complex, it sees and speaks for itself."⁶² But, the narrator of The Coxon Fund adds, his story is not

to be such a "large canvas" since "that experience would take me too far" and "I wouldn't have approached him with my present hand had it been a question of all the features." His focus, his point of view, is to be much more confined:

Frank Saltram's features, for artistic purposes, are verily the anecdotes that are to be gathered. Their name is legion, and this is only one, of which the interest is that it concerns even more closely several other persons. Such episodes, as one looks back, are the little dramas that made up the innumerable facets of the big drama - which is yet to be reported.⁶³

His "anecdote" is one selected, he recognizes, from many. But, he concedes, his story, strictly speaking, is "George Gravener's story" which, in turn, "was still more that of another person," a young and beautiful Bostonian, Ruth Anvoy. She is to become engaged to Gravener and administrator of the fund which her aunt, Lady Coxon, establishes, under the auspices of her late husband, for any great but impoverished philosopher. The "two stories are distinct - my own, as it were, and this other," the narrator claims yet he makes no attempt to distinguish them. Indeed, he presents a triangular situation with himself at the apex and Ruth Anvoy and George Gravener at the two other points. With regard to the narrator and these two characters, the lacunae of indeterminacy, in contrast to what is stated expressly, are arranged according to a certain kind of determination of the portrayed characters and according to the kind of situations in which these characters take part. Certain characteristics of the portrayed characters are often suppressed in order to make other characteristics of these people stand out. The three principal characters, the narrator, Ruth Anvoy, and George Gravener, are characterized by a considerable number of features

of their external appearance and of the mental states indicated by their modes of behaviour, whereas the other characters are distinguished by only a few selected traits and otherwise consist of "indeterminacy." As Ingarden suggests, this may be a characteristic trait of the novella or nouvelle as a particular literary genre.⁶⁴

Frank Saltram, who only rarely in the narrative is directly presented (we piece together the aspects of his being mostly through hearsay and the narrator's comments), remains largely as nebulous as the "great suspended swinging crystal - huge lucid lustrous, a block of light - flashing back every impression of life and every possibility of thought" to which he is compared by the narrator at the end of chapter three and later by Ruth Anvoy. One of the few direct accounts of any determinacy and the only one of any extent as to Saltram's physical appearance occurs near the end of the tale when he appears to the narrator on Wimbledon Common, the "image of a massive, middle-aged man seated on a bench, under a tree, with sad, far-wandering eyes and plump white hands folded on the head of a stick...." We learn too of "the beauty of his rich blank gaze," of his "majesty," his "big soft shoulder."⁶⁵ Otherwise this figure, central to "both" stories, remains largely indeterminate throughout the narrative; his alcoholism is only euphemistically hinted at ("too enslaved for the hour to the superstition of sobriety") and his intellectual brilliance alleged but never demonstrated.

The narrator's "anecdote," as he claims, "concerns even more closely several other persons" and is to entail a succession of "episodes"--"the little dramas that made up the innumerable facets of the big drama" or "the large canvas." As he admits, all facets of the drama at large "equally began, in a manner, the first night of my acquaintance with Frank Saltram."⁶⁶ So the narrator betrays the true

nature of his covering guise: he is to fill an observational role but his admission that it is "furthermore remarkable" that the Saltram compendium has as its impetus the first night of his acquaintance with Saltram betrays the true nature of his own anecdote. It is to be really just that, his anecdote, his observations and impressions, aspects of a situation all confined and controlled by his perspective. The story begins and ends not so much with Frank Saltram as with the narrator himself and the relationship he establishes with the other characters, relationships that are sustained by Frank Saltram and carried along to a large extent by one of the most insidious and ubiquitous of Jamesian ficelles, Mrs Saltram. The narrator's point of view, however, establishes the pattern of the narrative and gives it its form. And underlying all is the suggestion of his love for Ruth Anvoy which he constantly suppresses, the attempts only serving to assert the more the real motivation for his narrative, its "absent cause."⁶⁷

The Coxon Fund was first published in the July 1894 issue of The Yellow Book. In contrast to many of James's other works, it has received very little critical scrutiny. It is also the one tale in which James did not exceed the length that he first conceived it to be. It is in the fluent but irresponsible genius, Frank Saltram, that the fund itself, the interest of the action of the story, is vested, so providing the impetus for the interplay between the other characters. He provides their motivation and his elusiveness (he has a habit of "forgetting" each time he is due to deliver a public lecture) places in doubt the generosity and sincerity of Ruth Anvoy and even the humility and self-justification of the narrator himself while bringing into sharp focus the mercenary bent of George Gravener. It is because Saltram is not pinned down that the action is allowed development,

much of which is, in fact, only suggested, far beyond the confines of the concise anecdote. In relation to James's novels, however, the action of The Coxon Fund is "condensed," while at the same time it maintains its dimension as "a rich subject," albeit "summarized." The action is extensive insofar as the characters surrounding the pivotal character strive to justify or denigrate him and so, indirectly, justify or denigrate themselves: Saltram's indeterminacy gives rise to a structure based on an indeterminate centre and it is out of this that the ambiguity of meaning of the nouvelle arises. The whole notion of the Coxon fund itself is, subsequently, brought into question since the centre of the narrative is itself ambiguous; the reader is unable to understand Saltram fully from impressions alone. Saltram even renders the narrator's story slightly suspect. The narrator tries to place at one remove his involvement in the story of Ruth Anvoy and George Gravener yet his plaintive tone near the end on remarking that neither he nor she ever married provides the final indication that perhaps he has been in love with her all along. But this is never finalized. "There never was the slightest opening," he claims in parenthesis, "and of course the question can't come up to-day. These are old frustrations now. Ruth Anvoy has not married, I hear, and neither have I."⁶⁸ The pattern of indeterminacy in his own narrative, that which he may be said to be deliberately suppressing, merges with the indeterminacy of the figure that has given rise to all the complications of the plot, and allows for a degree of flexibility in the delineation of the narrator's story which, at the same time, is the story of every other character.

Saltram, then, is the "germ" of James's nouvelle; the potential for development resides in this elusive figure. In the Notebooks James describes him as "The figure of the rare eccentric, the bone of contention himself, who is so (potentially) fine, I think, that

one must hold one's little story - je tiens mon effet - from the moment one puts one's hand on the action that throws him into relief" (N, p. 152). The figure of Saltram, the Notebooks reveal, was based, through Dykes Campbell's biography, on Samuel Taylor Coleridge. James was struck by the fact that Campbell's biography, as excellent as he considered it, could have profited from a more suggestive delineation of Coleridge: "... how much better a little more the power of evocation might have made it" (N, p. 152), and he proceeded in some detail to outline the essential aspects of the figure in the Notebooks. He foresaw that "the fine central genius" of his tale would give rise to an "action capable of making the thing a little masterpiece":

... what is 'obvious' in the action required... is precisely the element of opposition in the two modes, the unimaginative and the imaginative, the literal and the constructive manner of dealing with him. If I can embody this opposition in a little drama containing adequately the magic of suspense, make it amount effectively to a story, I may do something capable of being admirable. (N, pp. 152-3)

Here James expresses his realization of the need for the reconciliation between the mechanistic and the organic that is the informing impulse of his conception of the nouvelle. This is the structural opposition that, as earlier noted, underlies so predominantly James's theory of prose fiction. Judith Leibowitz, echoing James's conception of the nouvelle, has recently claimed that the "narrative purpose" of the novella (or nouvelle) is "so to shape its narrative that the effect will be that of intensity and expansion."⁶⁹ In his nouvelles James attempted to capture the complex pattern of interpersonal relationships, of intellectual existence,⁷⁰ within a strictly controlled structure--to reconcile the impulse towards development with a "deep-breathing

economy." The typical impulse of the Jamesian nouvelle reflects an attempt to compose a literary form simultaneously "from its outer edge in" and "from its centre outward." The Jamesian nouvelle displays these two "rhythms" insofar as it characteristically conveys two related "crystallization centres."⁷¹ The "reduced sphere" of the fictional worlds of the nouvelles, that "circle" within which relations "happily appear" to be enclosed, and the apparently free direction of their development typify the two main cores of value of the nouvelle.

To produce the double effect of intensity and expansion in The Coxon Fund, James had to revise somewhat his initial conception of the tale. His first conception of the tale was more complex than his restriction to 20,000 words allows. He described the action as "the contention between the girl and her young man about the application of the fund" and, of course, the "bone of contention" was to be Saltram himself; but the whole, James added, "must be d'un serré."

It must be d'un serré! but after a single morning (April 18th) spent in starting the above (The Coxon Fund) and starting it fairly well, I recognize that the theme is far too fine and brave to be spoiled by mutilation - compression into the compass of 20,000 words. Indeed that operation is utterly impracticable - I see the folly of undertaking it. 20,000? A good 100,000 are already required. Some day it shall have them. It is so much to the good. Let it stand there as the admirable subject of a fine short (1 vol.) novel, all ready to my hand; and let me for my present job address myself patiently to something much simpler. (N, p. 154)

Despite this first admission of defeat in the constrained treatment of his tale, James finally managed, through foreshortening and pictorial method, through greatly schematizing aspects of the presented

world of his tale and rendering the "germ" indeterminate, to treat its complex theme in only a little over 20,000 words. The Notebooks indicate the techniques he employed to compass a "rich subject" worthy of novelistic treatment within the tighter structure of the nouvelle.

After having committed himself to The Yellow Book for a story of 20,000 words, he again speculated as to how he could formulate the "superior" subject matter of The Coxon Fund "in a way to make it go into that limited space." The formula, he decided, "is to make it an Impression - as one of Sargent's pictures is an impression" and the way to achieve this most successfully and succinctly was to "do it from my own point of view - that of an imagined observer, participator, chronicler":

I must picture it, summarize it, impressionize it, in a word - compress and confine it by making it the picture of what I see. That has the great advantage, which perhaps after all would have been an imperative necessity, of rendering the picture of Saltram an implied and suggested thing. I should probably have had, after all, to come to this - should have found it impossible to content myself with any literal record - anything merely narrative, with the detail of narrative. But if the thing becomes what I see - what is it I see - in the way of action, sequence, story, climax. The subject remains the same, but the great hinge must be more salient perhaps, and the whole thing simplified. A strong subject, a rich subject summarized - that is my indispensable formula and memento. (N, p. 160)

Compression was to be achieved by carefully restricting the point of view and this technique, at the same time, would allow for the expansive theme to remain uncramped by making the figure of Saltram "implied" and "suggested."

In The Coxon Fund the first-person narrator fulfills many of the authorial functions of an omniscient narrator but avoids what James saw as the pitfalls of intrusion and discursion that pertain to the authorial mode, so strengthening the unity of the *nouvelle's* structure while at the same time allowing for the degree of moral commentary, psychological analysis, and philosophical generalization that its expansive theme calls for. The first-person narrator engages in the very same analytical tasks as an authorial narrator without breaking the strictly defined hemisphere of the presented world. Spatio-temporal definition and foreshortening are features of his narration and by defining the circle within which the action is played out, the narrative vantage point controls the development of the action "from the outside in" by embodying and encompassing the perimeter of the portrayed objectivities. His personal vision wholly controls the story.

The next step, James recognized, was to make "Saltram himself put the girl in relation with the narrator" (N, p. 161) and through the narrator conserve the relationship between Ruth Anvoy and George Gravener. To achieve this, James provided the detail of the narrator's having previously known Gravener at Cambridge in order to bring his three characters into relation around a single point.⁷²

The picture of Saltram, James decided, must be both impressionistic and highly suggestive; by leaving areas unfilled or quickly sketched, it must imply more than its mere surface. Furthermore, this picture must be circumscribed or framed by a limited spatio-temporal vantage point if the maximum economy and richness were to be achieved. On April 29th, 1894, he had completed a little over 3,000 words of his "little tale... putting sufficiently well en scène my Frank Saltram and my George Gravener (N, p. 160). He had eliminated extensive exposition by beginning the work in medias res, a characteristic technique of the concise anecdote. He was perturbed, nevertheless,

that he had left "less than 17,000 to do all the rest"; sufficient, however, he reconsidered, "if I get the proper grasp of my drama" (N, p. 160). He wanted to squeeze out of his "admirable" subject "the perfection of a condensed action" with Ruth Anvoy's decision to award the fund to Saltram, "in circumstances of the highest import for her," to be its "pivot and climax" (N, p. 160). It seemed to James that the density of his tale would depend on an "intensification" of the girl's determination which would resolve itself in her forfeiture of both her lover and the money. And the complexity and richness of her moral dilemma would be heightened by the treatment of Saltram.

In his later novels and tales, James, as R.W. Short has pointed out, tends to place his emphasis on relationships rather than on objects and subordinates character per se to the "tie" between characters.⁷³ Of The Wings of the Dove James wrote that his "accepted task at the outset has been to suggest with force the nature of the tie formed between the two young persons first introduced - to give the full impression of its peculiar worried and baffled, yet clinging and confident, ardour" (P, p. 303). The Coxon Fund, too, illustrates this special emphasis. Space and time are rendered in only partially determinate terms. The spatial milieu stretches roughly from Wimbledon to various scantily specified points in and around London: a lecture hall, the narrator's lodgings in Ebury Street, the Mulville's drawing room, Lady Coxon's "fine old house... with 'grounds'... the faded red livery, the big square shoulder, the high-walled old-time garden of this decent abode,"⁷⁴ or a railway carriage. Elsewhere, space is presented in general terms, for example, "at somebody's house," and sometimes no more definitely than "Ramsgate," "Clockborough," "New York," and "the Continent." In the description of Lady Coxon's house, significant and highly selective details with general or typified

referents are presented as in a quick sketch, leaving the reader to fill in as necessary. Locality is only fleetingly described and time--"several years"--is foreshortened: like the presentation of space, it is highly selective in its successivity, comprising only the barest details. The action of the tale is expansive but there are fairly frequent large temporal leaps: from the descriptive and expository preamble of the first chapter and our introduction to George Gravener in the second, for example, there is a jump of four years to chapter three. Elsewhere, time signals are often vague and generalized: "a few months later," "in those years," "later on," "one Saturday night," "a fortnight later," etc. At one point in his narrative, the narrator even expresses indifference as to the linear sequence of events: "I forget to-day the exact order in which, at this period, sundry incidents occurred and the particular stage at which it suddenly struck me, making me catch my breath a little, that the progression, the acceleration, was for all the world that of fine drama. This was probably rather late in the day, and the exact order doesn't signify."⁷⁵ Indeed, large sections of the narrative unfold in a kind of spatio-temporal "limbo" where only character and action are presented; this is further heightened by scenic presentation. The wide temporal expanse that the narrative does cover is presented rather as Nick Carraway admits to presenting time in The Great Gatsby: "I see I have given the impression that the events of three nights several weeks apart were all that absorbed me."⁷⁶ The narrator of The Coxon Fund is less self-conscious (and, hence, the less definite tension between narrating-self and experiencing-self than one finds in Fitzgerald's work which, applying James's criteria, would be classified as a nouvelle), but he does often create the impression that events occurring over several years or months apart are telescoped.

The setting of The Coxon Fund appears as highly

schematized and certainly in contrast to the more detailed presentation of space and time in James's novels it is indeterminately rendered. The three central characters and the action are, however, developed. Within the selective milieu of James's nouvelle, motivation and psychological rendering are given free rein. The treatment of space and time, however, contributes largely to the "impressionistic" effect, as does the treatment of Saltram and the peripheral characters.

The meticulous and sharply adumbrated structure of The Coxon Fund is the frame whereby the presented world is ordered in a fine selection. It provides concentration upon a section of the screen of ordinary perception.

The act of framing, of literally surrounding a canvas with sides of wood or metal, is the astonishing sorcery of the art apprentice. To frame a picture is to separate a part of experience from its context. This is the first meaning of reduction. To create, then, is to separate, to exclude, to deny a whole by intending a fraction of that whole. The daring and inventiveness of the artist lie in the risk he takes in rejecting both the traditional picture of experience and the traditional way of comprehending that experience. In this view the art object becomes the resultant ultimately of an act or acts of segregation and placement.⁷⁷

The concern here is with phenomenological bracketing or Husserl's epoché as performed in both the creative act and the reading process. Such dual reduction is a phenomenological precondition for the possibility of an aesthetic object.⁷⁸

Embracing all the elements of a literary work is the horizon which defines and limits the world created. The writer brackets the everyday world of common experience in the act of creation and focusses

attention upon a set of happenings and meanings (or, in the case of the typical short story, a single happening only) that prevail apart from the rest of experience. In The Coxon Fund, a set of incidents ("Wheels within wheels!" as the narrator exclaims at one point) are presented in a form that unifies these events and in describing them, sets forth the meanings and significances they contain. James constructed his nouvelle by selecting from the mass of possibilities only those aspects which he wished to set apart. The very act of setting apart, here, is the artistic venture that results in the world of The Coxon Fund presenting itself as meaningfully reduced. "The setting apart is not haphazard: it is self-conscious, figured, and permanent in the sense that what is set apart or reduced is given form and endurance."⁷⁹ In the process of concretization, the reduced elements of the work are reconstituted as a part of reality but as a special part, an independent unity, a noematic totality, the "reflexive reconstruction" of the work as an aesthetic object.⁸⁰

... in order to do justice to the intentional nature of the selected world the reader must perform an analogous or aesthetic reduction. Only if he can suspend, for a while, his everyday assumptions about the real world can he fully appreciate the as-if nature of the literary work.... On its own, however, aesthetic reduction cannot guarantee adequate reading. Firstly, it is quite impossible to leave our knowledge of the real world out of play, since the reading process relies heavily on our typifications of exactly this world, and, secondly, we could not understand meaning... if we did not ultimately compare a work's ideology with our own.... Performing the aesthetic reduction, then, should be understood to mean to waive the insistence on links between the fictional world and its real analogue until a pattern of central interpretative abstractions can be plausibly inferred.⁸¹

In The Coxon Fund the action which characterizes the reduced sphere of the presented world is subjectively defined, in the first instance, by the first-person narrator and the presented action is indicative of the axial horizon of the presented world which has been pre-interpreted by its fictional inhabitants;⁸² that is, action is disclosed through interpretation and interpretation in turn points back to the circumscribed horizon of value and purpose which the narrator indicates, as it were, with a sweep of his hand. Valuing takes place within a pre-established horizon that encircles all elements of the literary construct. The antecedent and future history of the presented world, the outer boundaries beyond the specifically given horizon, are excluded in the opening chapter as insignificant to the scale of values to be presented; to all intents and purposes they exist only insofar as it is the essence of space and time in general not to have any discontinuity.⁸³ This last factor, in turn, contributes to the creation of the illusion of a circle within which relationships and developments "happily appear" to be contained.

Closely linked to the writer's bracketing of the real world as a precondition for his intending a fictional one is the concept of reduction in the sense of selection. The reader experiences this selective reduction in each stratum of the work (choice of words, degree of schematization, choice of narrative situation and spatio-temporal elements, etc.). In terms of genre, however, it is most useful to consider selective reduction in The Coxon Fund on the level of the imagined world.

In the literary work, reduction is concomitant with horizontal qualities: both presented world and presentational process are horizontal.⁸⁴ The outer horizon or framework of The Coxon Fund is defined in much less detail than that of The Turn of the Screw: it is "the large canvas." Both both nouvelles, characteristically, concentrate on a single inner

horizon: this is in accordance with James's ideas on point of view in the novel (which, with the "breaking up of the register," usually has several horizons) and "the shorter piece" as well as with the merging of presented world and presentational process that one finds in James's nouvelles.

Compression of time and spatial indeterminacy, that is, rendered summary, place the emphasis on selected incidents in The Coxon Fund and move the narrative along at a heightened pace, bringing into sharp focus the action.

What I must consistently establish is the summarized exhibition of Saltram's incorrigibility - make the climax of it, as it were, match with the climax of her exaltation about his deserving the endowment. The picture becomes the picture of the opposition of these two states. I see that my leaps and elisions, my flying bridges and great comprehensive loops (in a vivid, admirable sentence or two), must be absolutely bold and masterly. I see, I think, that the thing must consist, that my safety and facility must reside, in a division into numbered sections which insist on remaining short and succeed in being rich and each one a fine dramatic and pictorial step; so that, each making from 12 to 15 pp. of my MS., there shall be some 15 in all. I think I catch my next step and a happy idea in making Saltram himself put the girl in relation with the narrator - that makes a long enjambée. That is III - she doesn't then know George Gravener; but she is presented, I introduce her, and she makes her first impression, for me, and gets her 1st as regards Frank Saltram. Four or five years have elapsed, and two, say, must elapse before the next section - the IV. This is a rough computation of everything; but it helps me, divinely, to make it. (N, p. 161)

James achieved the "intensification" of his

drama by working out a remarkably symmetrical and tight structure of twelve short chapters of almost equal length, so preserving an economy of means yet through the careful selection of incident sacrificing no real value. The way in which the selection of incident and the highlighting of event bring into relief the emphasis on relationships (the metaphor for which is strikingly suggested by the narrator's constantly being in transit, so preserving continuity and development in the presented action) is further indicative of the concentration on the particularized case which, for James, had high moral value.

The symmetrical structure of twelve short chapters of almost equal length once again epitomizes James's architectonic conception of the literary work of art by keeping his "rich subject summarized" within a meticulously planned and neat compass. Indeed, symmetry of structure and a carefully planned internal arrangement are prevalent features of the nouvelles, especially in contrast to the novels which, equally precisely organized, do not so apparently reveal an overall gestalt quality.

A special feature of the nouvelle is that it can maintain the aesthetic wholeness of shorter genres of fiction while at the same time employing the advantages of chapter divisions of the "uncircumscribed genre of the novel"⁸⁵ that contain and develop elements of signified experience, "each one a fine dramatic and pictorial step." It is this feature of the novel that James appears to be manipulating in The Coxon Fund.

If the impulse to make gestalts is universal, both in experience and art, it is not always equally possible to fulfil.... An observer, from a single point in space and in rather a short period of time, can respond to most paintings, even one so crowded, say, as an historical panorama by David, as a satisfyingly enclosed gestalt. In the case of extended narrative, this capacity to respond directly to the formal

enclosure of a work is frustrated, frustrated by those qualities that make it all but impossible to see figures and grounds in the Milky Way. Extended narrative, that is, is experienced at length; and inevitably it far exceeds most paintings, most sculptures, most lyric poems in the sheer bulk of its detail.⁸⁶

One of the first systematic attempts to describe the characteristics of the short prose narrative may be attributed to Edgar Allan Poe who stressed that "unity of effect or impression" is of great importance to the genre. However seriously we take Poe's somewhat rigid prescriptions, he does point to a difference between the short story and the novel in the reading consciousness:

We allude to the short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal. The ordinary novel is objectionable, from its length.... As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself, of course, of the immense force derivable from totality. Worldly interests intervening during the pauses of perusal, modify, annul, or counteract, in a greater or less degree, the impressions of the book. But simple cessation in reading, would, of itself, be sufficient to destroy the true unity. In the brief tale, however, the author is enabled to carry out the fullness of his intention, be it what it may. During the hour of perusal the soul of the reader is at the writer's control. There are no external or extrinsic influences - resulting from weariness or interruption.... In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one preestablished design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The idea of the tale has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed; and

this is an end unattainable by
the novel.⁸⁷

Narrative the length of the novel, Poe suggests, exceeds the limits of the reader's pattern-making faculty. The short story is more easily retained or "summarized" or "condensed" in "active memory."⁸⁸

The active memory of the condensed meaning of the parts of the literary work which have already been read thus constitutes only a particular case of active memory in general, albeit with the difference that what is retained in active memory from the literary work belongs not to the real world but to the special sphere of the literary work. The vividness of active memory decreases, the "earlier" the part of the work is to which it refers, or the earlier that part is read, and the less important that part is for the whole of the work or for the part now being read. Then active memory is as if extinguished, so that those early parts of the work disappear completely from the reader's field of awareness at some point as the reading continues. Individual readers can vary greatly in this respect, according to the type of memory each has and the external circumstances under which the reading is carried out, which permit greater or lesser concentration on the reader's part and produce in him a more or less lively interest. However, the following fact is important... in longer literary works, no one can ever retain all the parts already read in active memory; on the other hand, the reader is always conscious... of certain fragments of the work in abbreviated, condensed form.⁸⁹

In its theory and practice, the short story strives for an economy and intensity of form. Many theoreticians of the short story, Poe among them, have mistakenly confused such intensity with "unity," almost as though unity is something foreign to the novel. The economy and intensity of the nouvelle enables the reader to apprehend it as a gestalt in

close harmonic unity with its basis: "The act of apprehension is then certainly not absolutely simple, but nevertheless it constitutes a separate whole in which is apprehended the coalescent but still not absolutely simple whole of the aesthetic object."⁹⁰ The reflective cognition of the nouvelle leads both to an apprehension of the whole as well as of the multiplicity of tightly coalescent qualities. James referred to "the shapely nouvelle," indicating that even at the length of some eighty pages it was capable of making the reader respond to its form in its entirety. The form of the nouvelle tends to be more immediately accessible than that of the novel but not as singular as that of the short story, the value qualities of which, according to Poe, lead to the constitution of only a single derived unity of value: "totality" or "unity of effect."

A significant feature of the Jamesian nouvelle in relation to its being a readily apprehended gestalt is that it is invariably broken up into sections, or parts, or small chapters. Here an apprehension of the whole is required which, although aiming at the whole, is yet sensitive to the multiplicity of its tightly coalescent narrative divisions. In contrast, in the typical novel, the inner structure is often by no means so compressed but presents instead a free and more complex structure:

Then, of course, the reflective cognition of the aesthetic object is also much freer and need not be carried out with the greatest concentration on achieving an apprehension which is radically orientated toward the whole. Various degrees of relative freedom are possible in the connection between several simultaneously appearing qualities and Gestalt qualities. The cognition of this connection is also part of the task of the reflective cognition of the aesthetic object and provides a characterization of the form of this object.⁹¹

In contrast to the sectionalizing that may occur in the short story for contrast, antithesis, or parallel, that of the nouvelle, as The Coxon Fund shows, tends to contain and develop the presented action in progressive configurations, so creating the illusion of extent and development. And in The Aspern Papers, as Philip Stevick points out, "one has the sense of growing familiarity with the nameless narrator who reveals himself, by stages, as he becomes more involved in his personal intrigue; at the same time, one follows those small events that mark the breakdown of Miss Tina's reserve as well as those other small events that mark the growth of Miss Bordereau's understanding. Again, it is not that chapter division interrupts the tale, it makes the narration possible."⁹² At the same time, the chapters in the nouvelle may be seen as subordinate, distinguishable parts, each of which can be seen, as James indicates in the Notebooks, as a formal unit.

If art in general, then, demands in creator and observer a heightening of the gestalt perception which organizes experience itself, then the writer of extended narrative is obliged to make his work out of subordinate, distinguishable parts, each of which can be seen as a form in itself. Thus the writer induces anticipations which can be fulfilled at different levels, days which begin and end, alliances which are made and broken, locations which are visited temporarily, antagonists that are vanquished. Since, as I have argued, the bulk of a narrative work exceeds one's gestalt perception, one sees the pattern of the whole work, the moral education of the hero, say, or the vicissitudes of a love affair, by seeing its subordinate configurations in turn. Or, to put it another way, one responds to the form of an epic by responding to the successive forms of its books; one responds to the form of a novel by responding to its chapters. And without the possibility of responding to the form of its chapters, as more or

less discrete units, an understanding of the whole work would be infinitely more difficult than it is now.⁹³

While Stevick's use of the term "chapter," as Visser points out, is at times ambiguous since it refers to a variety of "narrative phases" not always typographically distinguished in a text, the "narrative phases" of the Jamesian nouvelle invariably correspond to its chapter divisions.⁹⁴ But the nouvelle is unique in that while we respond to the intensity and wholeness of its form as a gestalt, we also respond to its successive narrative phases or chapters as well, as in the novel; that is, we see its "subordinate configurations" as well as its gestalt. This factor, furthermore, contributes to the simultaneous effect of progression or expansion and intensity or contraction.

The short story is meant to be read in one breath, as it were, without any sort of stop, without any deviation of the intention. Its pace must therefore be fast, and it will commonly have one single peak of excitement or interest, to which all its detail contributes. The novel, at the other end of the scale, must presuppose lengthy breaks in the reading, or must at least allow for that possibility. It will therefore favor not one peak of interest, but several of them, and a sectional type of construction will naturally result.... [T]he deliberate pace of the novel, its discursive breadth, its multiplication of character and incident, and its repeated alternations of tension and relaxation derive not only from its greater length, but even more significantly from its attempt to satisfy the spiritual requirements of the average reader under normal conditions of time-distribution. As to the novelette [or nouvelle], it combines to some extent the typical features of both short story and novel. Like the former, it may, despite an enlarged framework, assume a reader who will take it all in at

one sitting. Like the latter, which recognizes that the intensity of suspense varies inversely with its prolongation, the novelette will not normally proceed in one straight line from lowland to summit, but will allow the reader pauses to take breath, look around, and even sit and dream before resuming the ascent. Or it may - if its matter is sufficiently rich and varied - lead the reader over a series of peaks, with placid bottomlands in between. In any case, its character will be determined not only by the demands of structure growing out of its main theme, but also, to an extent not precisely definable, to the time it takes to read it.⁹⁵

James's definition of the nouvelle in the preface to The Coxon Fund is as ambiguous as the concept of organic form on which it is based and reflects the essential paradox of the genre: the nouvelle assumes a length proper to itself but at the same time it employs the science of control in order to suggest "a surface really much larger than the mere offered face of the work." The "trick" of the nouvelle is to make use of a variety of devices which will compress and unify a subject or a theme that requires expansion, extension, complexity. It is this tension between the organic and the mechanistic that makes the genre, finally, so difficult to define.⁹⁶

Notes

- 1 LWA, pp. 246-54.
- 2 Ibid., pp. 252, 269-70, 305, 332-55, 357-58.
See also Ruthrof, "Aspects of a Phenomenological View of Narrative," p. 88.
- 3 CLWA, p. 52n.
- 4 Fiedler, p. 140.
- 5 CLWA, p. 31.
- 6 Ibid., p. 52.
- 7 Ibid., p. 298n.
- 8 cf. Wolfgang Iser, "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response in Prose Fiction," Aspects of Narrative (English Institute Essays), ed. J. Hillis-Miller (New York, 1971), p. 11.
- 9 Visser, "The Novelistic Documentary," p. 14.
- 10 Iser, pp. 10-11.
- 11 Ibid., p. 11.
- 12 LWA, pp. 264-71.
- 13 Wolfgang Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," New Literary History, II (1972), pp. 282-83.
- 14 CLWA, p. 246.
- 15 Stanzel, Narrative Situations in the Novel, p. 9.
- 16 CLWA, p. 355.
- 17 Husserl as quoted by Michael Murray, Modern Critical Theory: A Phenomenological Introduction (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), p. 120.
- 18 Murray, p. 120.
- 19 Ruthrof, "Narrative Language," pp. 44-45.
- 20 Mario J. Valdés, "Towards a Structure of Criticism," New Literary History, III (1972), p. 267.
- 21 Ruthrof, "Reading Works of Literary Art," p. 88.
- 22 Ruthrof, "Narrative Language," p. 50.
- 23 Ingarden, "Artistic and Aesthetic Values," p. 208.

- 24 "The New Novel," Theory of Fiction: Henry James, ed. James E. Miller, Jr., (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), p. 254.
- 25 R.W. Short, "The Sentence Structure of Henry James," American Literature, XVIII (May 1946), p. 77.
- 26 Ingarden, "Artistic and Aesthetic Values," p. 208.
- 27 Todorov, "The Structural Analysis of Literature: the Tales of Henry James," p. 79.
- 28 The Figure in the Carpet, New York Edition, vol. 15, p. 233.
- 29 For a detailed discussion of the linguistic strata of James's works see Seymour Chatman, The Later Style of Henry James (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972).
- 30 The Turn of the Screw, pp. 220, 183.
- 31 Todorov, "The Structural Analysis of Literature: the Tales of Henry James," p. 81.
- 32 Letters, II, p. 275.
- 33 Wilson, p. 136.
- 34 The Figure in the Carpet, p. 270.
- 35 The Turn of the Screw, p. 164.
- 36 The Coxon Fund, p. 320.
- 37 Todorov, "The Structural Analysis of Literature: the Tales of Henry James," p. 80.
- 38 Ibid., p. 82.
- 39 The Bench of Desolation, p. 391.
- 40 Todorov, "The Structural Analysis of Literature: the Tales of Henry James," p. 82.
- 41 Eliseo Vivas, "Henry and William (Two Notes)," Kenyon Review (The Henry James Number), V (1943), pp. 589-93.
- 42 William James, Letter May 1907, Henry James: The Critical Heritage, ed. Roger Gard (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 430.
- 43 Iser, "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response," p. 22.
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Chapter 5 : To Cut a Long Story Short

The world of a novel or short story or nouvelle presents itself as specially reduced in terms of its generic dimensions. This significant feature of fictional worlds is brought into sharp focus when we consider the fact that the literary text also lives in a context: the work always exists in association with something other than, but related to, itself. This other, related thing forms a further horizon for the work; it is something "against which" the work is experienced. There are, inevitably, several such horizons. But first the reader experiences the phenomenon of the literary work itself as something distinct from the rest of the world, that is, he experiences its immediate horizontal demarcation.

Reduction, as we have seen, involves a narrowing down and it is useful to see the literary work in this way as it distinguishes the fictional or artistic world from the outside world. In pre-aesthetic cognition, the inner horizon of the text establishes the sense that the text is a whole of a certain type and has certain limits that, when perceived, help the reader to understand and relate, one to the other, its individual parts. At the same time, in the critical attitude, it is also evident that "the various constituents of structure are inextricably intertwined and can only be tentatively isolated for critical purposes."¹

It is with the inner horizon of the text that the immediate search for generic identity and definition is largely, but by no means exclusively, concerned. There is also the horizon formed by other texts of a similar or different type to be taken into

account. And there is, above all, the horizon of life, "for the work lives for and communicates to the living."²

Focussing on the inner horizon of the Jamesian nouvelle, it has been noted that James effectively employs certain techniques to curtail material of broad scope without diminishing its dynamic potential. Many of these techniques, although employed in the novels as well, are central structure-carrying elements in his nouvelles and concise anecdotes.³

Norman Friedman has pointed out that: "A story may be short, to begin with a basic distinction, for either or both of two fundamental reasons: the material itself may be of small compass; or the material, being of broader scope, may be cut for the sake of maximizing the artistic effect. The first reason has to do with distinctions as to the object of representation, and the second with distinctions as to the manner in which it is represented."⁴ The artistic manner in which James treats the complex données of his nouvelles has, to widen the horizon of the work somewhat, a distinct aesthetic effect that characterizes the genre.⁵ The structure of the Jamesian nouvelle is made dynamic yet highly selective through the artful combination of narrative techniques that aim at the foreshortened presentation of complex, developmental themes.

James's preoccupation with character above incident and with point of view in the revelation of complex psychological states led him towards the principle of "the idea happily developed." As Ruthrof points out, his "preoccupation with character reaches a point at which any incident worth literary treatment imparts a story through which a portrait can be revealed."

As a result, the carefully presented process of the unfolding of a character interests James infinitely more than incidents. "A character is interesting," he writes, "as it

comes out, and by the process and duration of that emergence" (Pref., pp. 127 ff.). Necessarily, the emphasis on process and duration leads away from the concept of brevity and towards longer fictional forms.... All this appears to have little to do with narrative brevity. In fact, James himself preferred to use these devices in his longer works. But at the same time all these techniques have within them the potential for brevity, if the stress on development be replaced by an emphasis on singleness in situation and character. Indeed, later generations of short story writers have made extensive use of James's innovations and he himself, at times, strives for rigorous foreshortening in his narratives. Apparently, he is well aware of the effect on density which this foreshortening, the "excision of the irrelevant" can have (Pref., p. 278).⁶

Friedman, however, has suggested that "all this" is not a question of defining different forms, "if by form we mean, as we usually do, certain materials unified to achieve a given effect; for the materials and their organization in a short story differ from those in a novel in degree but not in kind."⁷ Friedman points to a "pluralistic formal criticism" as the method for confronting "the varying ways in which the forms of works and kinds of works may be defined ":

On the one hand... it believes in the uniqueness of individual works and distrusts a priori definitions of forms and kinds; on the other, it strives to develop principles for the analysis of forms and the definition of kinds. But the resolution of this apparent contradiction is found in its concept of independent variables. Substantively, if we cannot know in advance just what makes any given work what it is, we can know in advance the general principles of its making; that is

to say, if we know what sort of variables to look for, we nevertheless do not know what they will be or how they will be combined. Thus, while the principles of a work are general, their application and combination are unique. And procedurally, the concept of independent variables is related to the logic of making adequate definitions, in that we must decide what facet or facets of a work we are referring to, we must base our definition on multiple differentiae, test it according to the rules of exclusion and inclusion already discussed, and judge its use in terms of what it is designed to do.⁸

While the concept of "independent variables" is useful to genre criticism as it avoids fixed and closed categories and the "usual monistic definitions,"⁹ a "pluralistic formal criticism," it would appear, is also the road to madness, to extreme relativism, since, as Friedman concludes, "there are in reality no such things as preexisting forms or even 'inductively' derivable types of any fixed sort."¹⁰ This assertion fails, of course, to explain why a number, albeit rather small, of basic genre concepts have, nevertheless, prevailed over the centuries. Karl Popper has forcibly defended a less thoroughgoing relativistic concept of similarity: "things may be similar in different respects," and "any two things which are from one point of view similar may be dissimilar from another point of view."¹¹ On these grounds, Popper bases his argument that any group of things will display some similarity if we select an appropriate point of view to consider the group. It is within such a relative framework that we can posit "qualitative sameness" and typifying features in the definition of literary genres or forms.

From a phenomenological perspective, we have maintained the notion of the literary work of art as an intersubjective, intentional object that presents

itself as significantly schematized, stratified, and reduced. Beyond the uniqueness of each individual work, we are able as well to group literary works into genres on the basis of the substrata or "submerged units" which the essential strata of the literary work in general variously and not always necessarily allow.¹² At the same time, it must be realized that such groupings are generalities and that this is to assert "qualitative sameness." In terms of a specific work, then, we are dealing with general principles that structurally typify a genre according to the number of shared features that an individual work displays, thus bringing it closer to or further away from the centre of the conceptual framework. This method, while respecting the uniqueness of each literary text, avoids treating the work sine genesis.

As a working definition of the modern novel, N. W. Visser has suggested the following: "the novel is a written, developmental, fictional prose narrative which 1) projects a largely or wholly invented world wherein characters - some or all of whom are endowed with interiority - act in minutely discriminated time and space, and 2) places one or more of its structural elements in double or multiple perspective."¹³ The Jamesian nouvelle shares with the modern novel the impulse towards the developmental; in contrast to the novel, only one character (the narrator or figural medium) is, typically, endowed with interiority. Space in the nouvelle tends to be sharply curtailed and time, usually extensive, is foreshortened in treatment although its process is indicated through the highlighting of selected parts of the action and through chapter divisions, resulting, usually, in a series of closely interlocking narrative phases. These are unified by a single overriding arc of tension that is determined by the mediacy of presentation, that is, by the work's narrative situation.

James discovered that the developmental and gradual subjects he liked to deal with required considerable amounts of time in order to be credible, and thus his tales required considerable length. He usually failed in attempting to crowd such subjects into the conte, but in the nouvelle he found that an illusion of gradualness might be created. He used repeated references to the passage of time; he described habitual actions; he exploited long summarizing sentences and artfully-modulated transitions which would bridge wide temporal expanses; he used division of even a short nouvelle into several chapters, he used foreshortening of whole dramatic scenes into single descriptive sentences, fragments of speech, numerous sketchy incidents dramatized only by a phrase of recollection. In short, he learned to adjust the time it took to read the tale to the duration of the action itself. The technique had its sources in impressionism: that the quality of an experience should be conveyed, intensified, or imitated by the form. Especially James's ordeals and obsessions took advantage of this technique.¹⁴

The contracted scale of the Jamesian nouvelle tends to cover a relatively long timespan in a relatively short space by presenting selected incidents representative of the action but, at the same time, leaving the corresponding temporal lacunae relatively unfilled. In contrast, the temporal gaps that occur in the novel are, typically, "indirectly characterized or 'coloured' in such a way that the reader is given some notion of a filling-in of the lacunae by the 'transference of the quality, the mood, and the symbolic values of the realized time phases' or even by implied processes and developments relating to characters and their actions."¹⁵ In the nouvelle, the focus is primarily on the series of incidents that are filtered through the consciousness of a narrative medium. This results in a heightened narrative pace

despite James's preoccupation with the unfolding of consciousness and the complexities of human inter-relationships.

The Jamesian nouvelle tends to place its most predominant structural element--point of view--in double perspective, thus singularly affecting the structure of the work. The restricted point of view, as we have noted, becomes, in James's hands, a method of concentration and economy as well as, given James's psychological concerns, a means towards a more comprehensive treatment of a confined vision through limitation to and concentration on that vision. At the same time, the method of the restricted point of view within the close compass of the nouvelle enables James to indulge fully yet concisely in the ambiguous nature of perception and cognition. The method, then, turns full circle and in upon itself. The restricted point of view, furthermore, is closely linked to the inherent ambiguity or irony of the nouvelle: such irony, typically, is both structural and thematic, as so clearly evidenced by The Turn of the Screw. The "foreshortened progression of facts and figures" is its stylistic impetus.

Irony is a structural device in that it is a technique "of saying as little and meaning as much as possible."... foreshortening... is also a technique of saying as little and meaning as much as possible. The degree to which foreshortening is used in the nouvelle... is related to and is in fact an extension of irony.

That the nouvelle operates in the mode of irony is further substantiated by comparing the thematic descriptions of irony with the thematic focus of the nouvelle. Irony discovers the discrepancy between appearance and reality by pointing out that what was always assumed to be true is not necessarily so. This contrasting of appearance and reality is in fact the thematic core of the nouvelle, which seeks to criticize and analyse society, in part or as a whole, with the aim of showing that

what the majority assumes to be true may not necessarily be so. 16

James's use of scenic presentation enhances the foreshortened effect that he exploited in his nouvelles: his technique of foreshortening in the nouvelle involves the use of economic devices which help create a feeling of immediacy by eliminating extensive exposition. In James's nouvelles these devices include the use of dialogue, the use of a figural medium or first person narrator with its attendant emphasis on the experiencing self, the use of generic characters and ficelles as satellites surrounding the medium of narration, and an emphasis on pictorial treatment and single-stranded action.

Outward expansion from a limited focus is the aesthetic effect of the typical Jamesian nouvelle. This effect is, furthermore, the logical derivative of the nouvelle's position in the generic continuum between the short story and the novel. Contraction and expansion are further heightened in James's nouvelles by his tendency to enclose them in frameworks, of one kind or another, of their own, thus to some extent bypassing process by beginning the work in medias res while yet including a logical and developmental "circle" in which relations happily appear to stop. The focus given the developmental aspects of the form with its concentration on a single protagonist leads to heightened verisimilitude in that the particular and not the general is the immediate area of interest.

The problem of generic classification, however, arises when we are confronted with borderline cases. A work such as The Sacred Fount, for example, has invariably been classified as a short novel and evaluated in terms of the novel form. Yet The Sacred Fount appears to display sufficient characteristics of the nouvelle to make doubtful its definition as a novel; it seems closer to the centre of the conceptual framework of the nouvelle. At the same time, in its

presentation of certain features, it is not typical of the Jamesian nouvelle in all respects. Time, for example, is limited to the course of a week-end and so departs from the more usual foreshortened progression or a wider expanse of time that one finds in most other Jamesian nouvelles. However, this close temporal circumscription typifies rather the short story than the novel. Space, too, in The Sacred Fount, is closely circumscribed yet, at the same time, fulfils an important and detailed symbolic function that James usually employs more extensively in his novels than in his nouvelles. The Sacred Fount also makes consistent use of dense imagery in its introspective and obsessive unfolding of the perceptions of the narrator and his detached observations of his fellow guests at a weekend house party. Such use of extended imagery typifies the stylistic elaborateness of James's novels.

There is a limited number of central characters and the characters are sharply outlined, almost types, a common feature of characterization in the nouvelle.¹⁷ But most on the side of its classification as a nouvelle is the handling of point of view in The Sacred Fount. Development resides primarily in the consciousness of the first person narrator. And the use of the first person in the novel was deplored by James himself. There is, furthermore, the characteristic emphasis on the here-and-now of the narrator in the conscious act of exploring the situation that confronts him. The Sacred Fount, as Jean Blackall has commented, "begins as a short story and a joke. But as James's idea gradually took form, so his characterization of the narrator became more complicated, the story longer, and its tone increasingly ambiguous."¹⁸

Blackall makes the interesting claim that "the ambiguities of The Turn of the Screw have the same origin as those in The Sacred Fount. Both stories are complicated by a transference of James's interest from the donnée to the observer...."¹⁹ In the concise

anecdotes, James characteristically placed emphasis on the donnée so enabling him to structure and control his stories from the "outside in." A short story invariably became a nouvelle once he gave in to the impulse to transfer interest to a vessel of consciousness. This movement, in James's works, comes close to reflecting Mérimée's concept of the nouvelle:

Elle ne saurait être un conte,
 puisqu'elle introduit l'analyse
 dans le récit; elle n'est pas
 non plus un roman, puisque, rapide
 et courte, elle simplifie cette
 analyse et suggère au lieu
 d'expliquer.²⁰

In addition, where there is a splitting up of the register, the nouvelle develops into a short novel or novel, becomes a dramatic action. In The Sacred Fount, however, there is no splitting up of the register: the anecdotic principle prevails. The story remains, in the narrator's own description, an "anecdote."

If my anecdote, as I have mentioned, had begun, at Paddington, at a particular moment, it gathered substance step by step and without missing a link. The links, in fact, should I count them all, would make too long a chain. They formed, nevertheless, the happiest little chapter of accidents, though a series of which I can scarce give more than the general effect.²¹

The narrator's attitude to his tale is an echo of that of the narrator of The Coxon Fund: both acknowledge selectivity as the means to the presentation of certain links in a chain of events or a portion of a large canvas that is the delimited area of their respective narratives. Such selection of key events or key moments allowed James to present the "complicated thing" with brevity. As Gerald Gillespie suggests, the nouvelle tends to "crystallize" a large segment of experience by selecting important moments of that

experience or by selecting an event which alters its total pattern.²² Judith Leibowitz has further noted of the *nouvelle* that "while limiting the action to the important event or events, the writer implies the total pattern of experience."

It also seems to be the case that the total pattern, of which only key moments are included in the narrative (as in the novel and short story), implicitly relates to an attitude toward some large area of experience. Whereas the novel explicitly discusses various aspects of experience until the reader is involved in the fictional reality, the novella [or *nouvelle*] involves the reader in a large area of experience without explicitly developing its facets. The short story discusses or suggests a limited area of experience, usually implying the universality of the experience related but not its associated aspects.²³

The Notebooks, in their cursory treatment of the *donnée* of The Sacred Fount, indicate that James originally conceived of his tale as a short story. Rebecca West's often quoted criticism of The Sacred Fount typifies much of the adverse criticism that has been aimed at it: "A week-end guest spends more intellectual force than Kant can have used on The Critique of Pure Reason in an unsuccessful attempt to discover whether there exists between certain of his fellow-guests a relationship not more interesting among these vacuous people than it is among sparrows."²⁴ But Carl Van Doren's remark on the tale, while less damning, is more revealing: "The Sacred Fount... has the soul the size of a short story and a body enlarged to the size of a novel by the solicitude with which James walks round and round his theme, hinting, hinting, hinting."²⁵ In his *nouvelles*, James develops his "rich" themes, "by multiple associations, conserving both time and intensity by not spelling out but only suggesting the several aspects of the theme."²⁶ The novel, in contrast, explicitly develops several aspects of its theme or themes and does not aim

primarily at an effect of intensity. The nouvelle, in James's hands, achieves, through the "science of control," that "richly summarized and foreshortened effect" which, as Leibowitz points out, "arises from focus on a single subject in the context of several allied motifs. The short story, on the other hand, does not try to develop the thematic richness of the [nouvelle]." ²⁷

Wilson Follet was one of the first critics of The Sacred Fount to dispute its status as a novel and linked it, instead, to a series of James's concise anecdotes and nouvelles on the subject of the writer's art. As noted, the narrative shows features of both the short story and the novel, but in its handling of point of view the work gives rise to the ironic vision that the form of the nouvelle most suitably and functionally expresses. The Sacred Fount combines "the short-story, personal narrative approach and the urge toward freer psychological exploration that the novel form afforded." ²⁹

Critics who claim that The Sacred Fount is "much ado about nothing" have a point, but they invariably undercut that point when they fail or refuse to see that the work's obsessive and developed concentration on the seemingly trivial has many thematic ramifications, both in terms of the society portrayed and the imaginative experience of that society by the individual. Claims, then, like Rebecca West's, appear to overlook the artistic and aesthetic function of the form of The Sacred Fount by treating it as a failed novel. Such claims are also invariably critical of the work for not being a short story--a clear case of cross-generic evaluation.

The corrupt world of The Sacred Fount nourishes a society of vampires and the point of view is that of an observer, no less a vampire, who nourishes his perceptions by feeding off that society. The corruption within the world portrayed is mirrored by the corruption of the individual's vision of that world. But where

the corruption originates, whether in the society or in the individual, is the ambiguous and, correspondingly, portentous point of the narrative. This, indeed, supports Flower's contention that the nouvelle is a "problem genre" which presents problems without offering solutions.³⁰ By presenting a specific problem in depth without extensively developing its ramifications, a work such as The Sacred Fount emphasizes the act of narration and patterns of character relationships and so typifies the characteristic emphasis in James's nouvelles.³¹ The obsessive narrator is astutely summed up by one of the characters, Mrs Brissenden: "... you're carried away - you're abused by a fine fancy.... You build up houses of cards."³² As Van Doren has pointed out, "no book which James wrote holds to its point of view with more tenacity" than The Sacred Fount: "We have, save for deductions from slight hints, solely what the narrator revels in. There is a technical perfection in this that must elicit a grudging admiration."³³

The inconsistencies and ambiguities of perception presented in The Sacred Fount appear, however, most explicable if we see the work as a nouvelle. It is as a nouvelle that we can most directly fathom

... its continual operation of a special type of play with the reader, whereby the perspective in which the events narrated are seen is subject to modification (by means of frames or internal narrators, or other special techniques) and sometimes multiplication, with the result that the mode of narration becomes as important as the events themselves, and the story bears a meaning additional to that conveyed in the plot.³⁴

James achieved in his nouvelles a fine balance between complexity and "a strong brevity and lucidity" and discovered through the form a way of reconciling his love for intricate relationships and free development and economy and rigid control of his

subject matter.

James characteristically composed his nouvelles simultaneously from the centre of his imagined world outwards and from the circumference of that world inwards: it is out of these two tensions that the dramatic conflict in the nouvelles arises, out of a force working to close in upon and barricade experience and a force pushing out to explode it, in defiance of all barriers. The first is manifest in the severe selection of circumstances that the characters and, in particular, the narrator-observers find themselves in and the second in the highly intensified nature of that very circumstance, the explosive potential of the core of the action. In both these polarities there is an element of exaggeration: the selection of reality is more limited, the reaction to that selection more intense than one finds in real life.³⁵ The novella or the nouvelle is, as the German theorists recognized, an essentially "poetic" form: the German name for the writer of novellas, "Novellendichter," appropriately conveys this aspect of its dimension. And as Nabokov has so elegantly stated: "There is... in the dimensional scale of the world a kind of delicate meeting-place between the imagination and knowledge, a point, arrived at by diminishing large things and enlarging small ones, that is intrinsically artistic."³⁶ The reduced sphere of the nouvelle is its own aesthetic justification.

Notes

- ¹ Visser, "The Novelistic Documentary," p. 172.
- ² David Halliburton, Edgar Allan Poe: A Phenomenological View (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 32-33.
- ³ Ruthrof, "Henry James's Psychological Realism," pp. 370-71.
- ⁴ Norman Friedman, Form and Meaning in Fiction (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1975), p. 170.
- ⁵ Ingarden, "Artistic and Aesthetic Values," pp. 198-213.
- ⁶ Ruthrof, "Henry James's Psychological Realism," pp. 371-72.
- ⁷ Friedman, p. 169.
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 167.
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 169.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 168.
- ¹¹ Paul Hernadi, Beyond Genre: New Directions in Literary Criticism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 4.
- ¹² H.G. Ruthrof, "A Phenomeno-Sociological Approach to Fiction," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, XXXIII (1973), p. 399.
- ¹³ Visser, "The Novelistic Documentary," p. 11. See too Visser, "The Generic Identity of the Novel," pp. 103-104.
- ¹⁴ Flower, pp. 257-58.
- ¹⁵ Visser, "The Novelistic Documentary," p. 174, quoting Stanzel, Narrative Situations in the Novel, p. 105.
- ¹⁶ Mintzi Schnaidman Schramm, "The Art of the Nouvelle: Theme and Technique in the Genre," Diss. Michigan, 1971, p. 187.
- ¹⁷ Blackall, p. 72.

- 18 Ibid., p. 173.
- 19 Ibid., p. 174.
- 20 Mérimée as quoted by Leibowitz, p. 121.
- 21 The Sacred Fount (London: Hart-Davis, 1959),
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- 22 Gillespie, pp. 266-27.
- 23 Leibowitz, p. 52.
- 24 Rebecca West, Henry James (London: Nisbet &
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- 25 Carl Van Doren, The American Novel (New York:
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- 26 Leibowitz, p. 52.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Oscar Cargill, The Novels of Henry James (New
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- 29 Ibid., p. 295.
- 30 Leibowitz, p. 123.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 The Sacred Fount, p. 295.
- 33 Cargill, p. 295.
- 34 W.D. Williams as quoted by Leibowitz, p. 115.
- 35 Ward, p. 19.
- 36 Nabokov, as quoted by Marvin Felheim, "Recent
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