



## Benefaction of Henry James in English Literature

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**Abstract:** *The English literature development has been greatly influenced by Henry James. His use of realism has contributed to this effect in part. On the other hand, James has most often been criticised for not being realistic enough. James does not write about life, claim many critics, and his books are full of characters you would never encounter in the real world. James' writings, according to one critic (H. L. Mencken), needed a good smell of the Chicago stockyards to breathe a little life into them. Some have argued that James' view of the world is too constrained and fragmentary to qualify as a genuine portrayal of life.*

**Keywords:** *Henry James, English, Literature, Novelist.*

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### Introduction

Actually, James' brand of reality is distinct. James does not fit the early criteria of realism. According to early definitions, a novelist should correctly portray life and their work should "hold up a mirror to life"; in other words, they should provide a record of life that is nearly scientific in nature. James, though, didn't give much thought to everything in life. James is devoid of anything that is unpleasant, vulgar, common, or obscene. He showed little compassion for those living in poverty or the middle class who had to work hard to make ends meet. He was more interested in portraying a class of people who could afford to dedicate their time to life's finer things.

So, what distinguishes James' kind of realism? James' faithfulness to his own source material is what we mean when we talk about his realism. We must immerse ourselves in James' unique world in order to fully appreciate his writings and his realism. It seems as though we climbed a staircase to another planet. As soon as we enter this unique universe and embrace it, we realise how realistic James is. That is, he never transgresses the fundamental nature of his character in terms of his surroundings. Hence, in the ultimate sense, James' realism entails being true to his persona. In other words, characters from previous novels frequently do actions or engage in behaviour that doesn't appear to fit with who they are at their core.

James, however, justified his own realism in terms of its opposition to romanticism, such that the actions of the Jamesian character are always understood in terms of that character's genuine nature. For James, the realistic reflects those experiences that everyone will have sooner or later and in some capacity. But, the romantic stands for those things that, despite our best efforts, resources, and amenities, we will never be able to directly experience. Hence, it is feasible that one could go through the same circumstances that the characters in a James novel do, but one could never genuinely experience the occurrences described in the romance novel. James establishes a particular type of character early on in the book, and that character will act consistently throughout the rest of the book. Being practical, this. The character will never act in a way that is inconsistent with his realistic nature, our expectations of what that character should do, or logic.

Later, while discussing realism, James said that he was more concerned with accurately portraying a character in any specific circumstance than with accurately capturing all facets of life. As a result, when he depicts a character like Winterborne or Daisy Miller in one circumstance, the reader may predict how they will behave in any subsequent circumstance. The governess also always acts in a consistent manner, despite any potential ridiculous apparitions. We can always rationally comprehend any action taken by any character. James' reality ensured that none of the characters ever did anything that went against who they really were.

### Review of Literature

Wang (2013) Huge efforts have been made over the past few decades in China to study Henry James' corpus, which demonstrates a steadfast interest in this author among academics working in the subject of comparative literature. This essay examines Henry James research conducted in China during various historical eras in an effort to understand how Chinese history and the reception of foreign classics interact. Henry James critics in China constantly demonstrate a general interest in his main works and his novel



theory, ranging from a significant reliance on the “travelling theories” in the 1980s to a selective use of Western paradigms later. This essay provides a historical review of Henry James studies and publications in China from the mid-20th century to the present. This research addresses both the phase aspects of these studies and the factors that affect the formation of these features, in particular cultural context. First, from 1934 to 1945, translators introduced Henry James’s writings into the literacy criticism in China, although the research at that time was limited by the historical circumstances. Second, there wasn’t much research done on Henry Ames between 1949 and the 1970s. Scholars didn’t start delving into Henry James’s writings from numerous angles until the 1980s. Initially, Henry James was viewed as a bourgeois author who idolised the aristocracy and ignored the working class. Henry James was seen as a humanistic author who had thoroughly investigated human consciousness as a result of the Cultural Revolution’s reflection on political thought in literature studies and the nationwide resurgence of humanism in culture. Nonetheless, aestheticism was essentially missing during that time, both in his late works and novel theory. Last but not least, since the 1990s, Henry James has been analysed using a variety of critical traditions, including the formalist tradition and the deconstructive tradition.

Nutam (2012) One of the most significant American writers of the nineteenth century was Henry James, a creator of novels, short stories, plays, essays, literary criticism, and theorising. He is still regarded as one of the best writers to have written in English today. His novel’s innovations and contributions paved the path for 20th-century modernism and modern literature more broadly. James is credited by many academics with developing the modern psychological novel, which connects to the early 20th century stream-of-consciousness books. He was determined that any work of fiction should not contain any information that the characters in it could not reasonably have access to. In order to do this, he focused on narrative viewpoint and used a literary device known as the core consciousness, which is typically but not always associated with the main character. This demonstrated his viewpoint that one person’s perception is limited.

### **Benefaction of Henry James**

James begins by discussing “the mystery of story-telling” (1884: 44), and it is important to remember that the word “art” was commonly used in the mediaeval era and beyond to refer to practical abilities. Originally, the word “mystery” referred to the mysteries of a particular trade, or craft. James aims to recover this earlier, more pragmatic concept of “art,” along with the meaning that emerged during the Romantic period. His perspective in this essay is very much that of the author and producer (in literature, from around the 1780s through to the 1830s). Artists were revered at that time as creative geniuses responsible for the creation of exquisite artefacts. In the nineteenth century, art was increasingly defined by its distance from the real world or by its apparent lack of a clear goal. James believes that the best fiction is an art because it demonstrates both the kind of craft mastery that comes from a lengthy apprenticeship and the unique creative brilliance praised by Romantic writers like the English poets William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and John Keats (1795-1821). James makes an effort to counter criticism that the book lacks strong characters and is a “commodity so swiftly and easily created” by combining both definitions of “art” (1884: 49).

James places the novel’s duty to accurately depict life at the centre of his definition of the genre. He claims that this is “the sole reason a novel exists” (1884: 46). But it immediately becomes clear that James is dedicated to a nuanced and fluid understanding of what this duty entails. James’s view that “a novel needs to be aesthetic” (1884: 47) in addition to being a picture of life contributes to these issues. James aims to place as much distance as possible between the novel and crass reality in a time of expanding popular photography. According to him, “[a] novel is, in the broadest definition, a personal, direct image of life” (1884: 50). The ability of the author to use imagination is crucial in this context; it is what separates the good novel from the terrible or popular fiction. The author must possess “[t]he power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implication of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern” in order to write creative novels as opposed to just novels. (1884: 53).

James’ books are largely all organised similarly. There must be a focal point, something that “supremely matters” and to which all lines lead. In essence, James is describing his framework in this way. The item that “supremely matters” is the primary idea of the novel or that idea around which the novel revolves. The endeavour of Winterborne to ascertain Daisy’s degree of innocence “supremely matters” in *Daisy Miller*. That is, is she merely reacting to life so naively and spontaneously that she disregards all social norms, or could she potentially be a mistress of the art of deception and in actuality be essentially an unsuitable girl? Every scenario is therefore designed to highlight a different aspect of Daisy’s character. The innocence of the young children is like what “supremely matters” in *The Turn of the Screw*. So, every scene and every action serves to further shed light on this query. People often wonder whether young children are more or less innocent or malevolent.

Understanding James’ creative process is essential to comprehending the organisation of his works. His books begin with a setting and a character. James’ writing style is the complete reverse of that of many other authors, such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, who



would start with an idea or topic in mind before developing a scene and people to further explain it. He would first develop a certain scenario before inserting his characters into it. James would then, in essence, take a step back and see what would transpire when a character was put in this novel circumstance. James admitted that when he started a novel, he frequently didn't have a conclusion in mind. Instead, he would leave the conclusion up to the character and circumstance. This gave him more freedom and gave him the chance to see his character in a number of scenarios in order to "get to know" him.

Daisy Miller's basic plot revolves around a charming young girl who feels constrained by the structured social norms of Europe as she arrives there. She is seen improperly by many people due to her disregard for certain social norms. Some, though, believe she is innocent and acknowledge that her acts are consistent with her free American ways. Daisy is thus put in numerous scenarios so that we may watch what she does and gauge how naïve and impulsive she is.

The governess' perspective of her charges is essential to *The Turn of the Screw*. So that we may see how the governess responds to her students' goodness or evil, various scenarios are set up. All lines, as we have stated, must point in the direction of the item that matters most. Nevertheless, these lines do not travel in a straight line. James does not write his works in this manner. The fundamental situation is the focus of the entire book, yet the author goes away from it by examining all the associated topics. In other words, a succession of circles encircling the centre would most accurately depict the construction.

Each circle represents a distinct occasion that only partially illuminates the centre. Then, each circle frequently involves a conversation among numerous individuals. One character can see something and then approach another to share his observation. Then two other characters might talk about the same incident. At the end of the several discussions, James had looked into every psychological ramification that this specific circumstance had. This would stand for a single circle. We then move on to another occurrence or circumstance, which will be thoroughly explored before moving on to the following. James has so delved and examined every moral, ethical, and psychological facet of the fundamental scenario by the book's conclusion, and the reader has heard many different perspectives on the same issue. As a result, James' works have circular plotlines that approach their fundamental themes, but each circle somehow highlights what is most important. Every incidence serves to reveal more information about a person or circumstance. There is nothing extraneous or superfluous.

## Conclusion

James was always aware of the distinction between life and art. He thought that while life is chaotic, art is deliberate. At the end of his life, James stated, "I know of no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of its process. It is art that makes life, produces importance, for our consideration and application of these things. In his opinion, both life and art are "all selection and discrimination," respectively. He does not imply that there is no possibility of bridging the gap between Art and Life. In reality, he was able to transform the fleeting and inchoate elements of existence into art before securing it with permanency. Furthermore, art organises and idealises life. He stated in *The Art of Fiction* that "humanity is huge and reality has numerous shapes; the most one can declare is that some flowers of fiction carry the odour of it and some do not; as for advising you in advance how your nosegay should be assembled, that is another affair. Saying that one must write from experience is both excellent and inconclusive; an aspirant might take offence at such a claim. Where does it start and end, and what kind of experience is intended? Experience is a gigantic sensibility, a kind of giant spider-web of the finest silken threads hung in the chamber of consciousness and capturing every airborne particle in the tissue. It is never limited and it is never complete. It is the very environment of the mind, and when the mind is imaginative—much more so than when the mind belongs to a man of genius—it seizes onto the tiniest clues of life and transforms them into revelations.

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