# The Image of the Artist in Henry James's Two Tales: 'The Aspern Papers' and 'The Figure in the Carpet'

# صورة الفنان في قصتيّ هنري جيمس :"اوراق أسبرن" و"الشكل الفني في السجادة "


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## Authorization

**I, Sajeda Daifallah Gbailat, authorize Middle East University to supply copies of my thesis to libraries or establishments or individuals upon request.**

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## Thesis Committee Decision

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# Acknowledgment

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I would like to express my gratitude to the examining committee members and the panel of experts for their valuable inputs and encouragement. Thanks are also extended to the faculty members of the department of English at Middle East University.

# Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my dear husband;

To my two beloved daughters;

And to my dear mother and sister.

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# The Image of the Artist in Henry James`s Two Tales: 'The Aspern Paper' and 'The Figure in the Carpet'

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## Abstract

This thesis is an attempt to study the image of the artist in general and of Henry James in particular and how this image is viewed through his art. The problem which is raised is related to the artist`s feeling of alienation and pain because of those who betray his personal life`s secrets. The current study also explores the nature of the connection between the artist's personal life and his art. Two tales of Henry James were chosen here to illustrate this connection; **'The Aspern Paper'** and **'The Figure in the Carpet'**. This study consists of four chapters; the first one is an introduction which begins with an overview of the writer`s life and work. The second chapter; the review of literature that presents different studies, opinions and approaches that discuss Henry James`s life and art. The third chapter is a detailed analysis of Henry James's two tales depending on the basis of psychology.

# صورة الفنان في قصتي هنري جيمس :" اوراق اسبرن" و "الشكل الفني في السجادة "


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## الخلاصة


إن الدراسة الحالية هي محاولة لدراسة صورة الفنان بشكل عام وهنري جيمس بشكل خاص وكيف تُرى هذه الصورة من خلال فنه . وتهدف الدراسة الحالية ايضا الى كشف طبيعة العلاقة بين حياة الفنان الشخصية وفنه.

تم اختيار قصتين من اعمال هنري جيمس لتوضيح هذه العلاقة وهما حكايتا "**اوارق أسبرن**" و"***الشكل الفني في السجادة***". تتألف الدراسة من اربعة فصول ، أولا:المقدمة وتعرض نبذه عن حياة الكاتب.

يتضمن الفصل الثاني عرض الدراسات والأراء التي تناولت حياة هنري جيمس وفنه، أما الفصل الثالث فيتضمن تحليلاً مفصلاً لحكايتي هنري جيمس "***أوراق أسبرن***" و" ***الشكل الفني في السجادة***" تحليلاً أدبياً يعتمد على أسس علم النفس .

# Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter will introduce an overview of Henry James`s life and work, it will discuss the influential stages in the writer`s life and the most important achievements in the literary world. The whole thesis is a record for Henry James`s experience in the field of literary work, it tries to capture the most distinguished changes made by the writer in the development of English literature.

## 1.3 Henry James: The Man and the Artist

Henry James was born on April 15, 1843 in Washington Square, New York, into a wealthy New England family. His father, Henry James Sr. was one of the best-known intellectuals in mid-19$^{th}$ century America, whose friends included Thoreau, Emerson and Hawthorne. His older brother, William, earned fame in his own field of pragmatic philosophy. Henry James found a very encouraging and stimulating environment for developing and nurturing his artistic and intellectual views.

In his early years, James studied with tutor in Geneva, London, Paris, Bologna, and Bonn, acquiring languages and an awareness of Europe that few

Americans could enjoy at the time. A "shy and bookish young man", James devotedly read the words of Hawthorne, Balzac and Sainte- Beuve. He attended Harvard Law School for one year when he was 19, but found that his interests lay not in law but in literature. (Bloom 2002, p.12)

The first identified piece of fiction is an unsigned tale, '**A Tragedy of Error',** (1864) published in the *Continental Monthly*, a New York magazine, then came many tales; '**The Romance of Certain Old Clothes'** (1868), '**Poor Richard**' (1867), '**A Light Man'** (1869) and many other tales. As shown in their titles, these works do not reflect the full engrossment in the world of art and culture to be explored in his mature works later.

During 1869 and 1870 Henry James went abroad on his first adult journey. He was twenty-six and the experience was unforgettable. For the first time he crossed the Alps into Italy, but before doing this he renewed his old boyhood impressions of London. Here he found Charles Eliot Norton, the Harvard professor of fine arts who published him in the *North American Review*, and through Norton met William Morris, Rossetti, and Ruskin. These influential figures certainly would open James`s mind to the richness, values and significance of art, culture and intellectual life.

As he travelled, he gradually became aware of the theme that was to be central to his writings: he observed his journeying fellow-Americans in hotels and pensions, captured their sense of dislocation while trying to imbibe foreign culture; he studied particularly the itinerant American families with passive mothers and undisciplined children, and noted the absence from their lives of any standard of culture and behavior. (Edel 1960, p.22)

Wandering for about a year in England, France, and Italy− the countries in which he was to travel for the rest of his life− he wrote ***The Passionate Pilgrimage*** (1871)***, The Portrait of a Lady*** (1881) and ***The Wings of the Dove*** (1902)**.**

In the autumn of 1875 he settled in Paris and one of the first acts he did was to call upon the Russian novelist Ivan Turgeneve. James had greatly admired his work and he found in this older writer congenial mentor. From Balzac James had learned how to set a scene and launch a drama and from Hawthorne how to suffuse the drama with charm, and from George Eliot the value of endowing his story with intellectual illumination. (Edel 1960, p.15)

Among James`s masterpieces is ***Daisy Miller*** (1879), in which the protagonist, the young and innocent American Daisy Miller, finds her values in conflict with European sophistication. It is significant to note James`s interest in

presenting the female world with precision and subtlety. One reason for this practice is his recurrent mixing with women in parties and social gatherings and his ability to observe keenly their reactions and intents. James and his critics considered ***The Ambassadors*** (1903) his most perfect work of art. Here the meeting or the clash between the values of the New World and the Old one is presented with great skill and success.

After these remarkable works, the novelist now entered upon a new period of his writings. It was marked by his decision to attempt new subjects. He was tired of the international theme and he felt that he had exhausted it. James, with his experimental attitude toward the novel, had done more than switch from his main theme: he had tried naturalism but he was an incomplete naturalist− naturalism relying on literalism and the portrayal of primitive passion. (Edel 1960, p.44)

What James created was a series of subtle studies of individuals caught in forces and movements beyond their control, undone by conflicts between their temperaments and their environment. James`s determinism was essentially psychological, whereas Zola`s was physical. ***The Princess Casamassima***(1886) anticipated by five decades the major theme of the twentieth century_ the young man who seeks to overthrow the very society in which he actually also seeks acceptance.

From ***The Tragic Muse*** (1890) to the end of his career in fiction more than fifteen years later, James developed an increasingly complex style, marked by meaningful ambiguities and ellipses in the dialogue together with convoluted and modifier-ridden exposition. Thus the functions of prose rhyme were enlarged as by no other author in English fiction before Joyce. As the same time, the psychological motivations of his characters became more intense and more complex, while the social situations possessed increasing subtlety. (Perkins 2002)

Leon Edel in his significant biography of Henry James said that James was one of the rare writers of fiction to grasp the psychological truth that an action properly derives from a character, that a novel creates the greatest illusion of truth when it grows out of a personage`s observations and perceptions. (Edel 1960) This is why, in James, we find an insistence upon the fundamental truths of human behavior, rather than the cheerful coloring of these truths indulged in by so many of his contemporaries.

In 1889 Henry James faced the fact that if he had had great success a decade earlier, he was now a distinguished man of letters with several distinct public failures in his hands. He knew that he was a finer artist than ever; he had, as always, a sense of his destiny; but he had written three big novels which were destined for posterity rather than for his time. The income from his writings had been reduced to a low point, so he decided to revive his fortunes by turning to the

theater. He wrote dramatization of ***The American*** (1877) and ***Guy Domville*** (1895)**,** but they had not been accepted by the public. (Edel 1960 p.28) James`s failure in drama maybe due to the absence of his narrative skills explicit in all his fiction.

So James decided to turn his back on his public altogether. He withdrew from London, purchasing Lamb House, in Rye, Sussex. It was in Lamb House that his final works were written, and here that he partially resolved the deep feeling of frustration and failure engendered by public indifference to his art. But critically, his work received great acclaim. The Cambridge critic, F. R. Leavis, chose James to be part of the 'great tradition' in fiction along with Conrad, Laurence, George Eliot and Jane Austen. He was at the top of his narrative power just before plunging into the theater, as '**The Aspern Papers**' of (1887) and the delicately conceived '**The Pupil'** of (1891) show.

Henry James wrote for fifty years; he was a prolific writer and several times glutted his own market in the magazines, never a "best seller", as we know best sellers today, he nevertheless earned an honorable living by his pen. He was fortunate in being born into an affluent family; but from his early twenties he began to earn his own way and wholly by literary work. He was alone among major American writers in never seeking any other employment. He was devoted

to his art; and his "productivity did not influence his meticulous style- that style by which he believed a writer gains his passport to posterity". (Edel 1960, p.5)

In his final decade there is evidence that Henry James was drawn increasingly to consider and even to account for his past, both directly, and, more obliquely and perhaps revealingly, through his fiction. The substantial critique of American culture and society, ***The American Scene*** (1907), which resulted from the years (1904- 5) spent revisiting and exploring his native land, returned him to his youth and to what his past represented after a lifetime spent predominantly in Europe. Many of its landmarks "are, however, less topological than subjective, recognitions of moments that contributed to the formation of selfhood within a personal narrative"; (Collister 2011, p.17) he abandons himself to impressions and memories with freedom, even indiscretion rarely found in the fiction.

On 26 July 1915, the novelist took the oath of allegiance to the Crown, explaining that he had lived and worked in England for the best part of forty years, and had developed such an attachment to the country and sympathy with its people that he had desired to throw his moral weight and personal allegiance into the British cause in the European war. He died on 28 February 1916; the funeral took place in Chelsea Old Church and the ashes were sent to the United States, where he was buried in the James family plot in Cambridge, Massachusetts. (Bloom 2002)

## 1.4: James Two Tales, "The Aspern Papers" and "The Figure in the Carpet"

Out of the account already given in this chapter, it has become obvious that the reader is in the presence of a great artist and critic whose visions transcend the local and national. It is his contact with writers and artists from Europe and assimilating their ideas that gives his entire work its flavor−subtlety, irony, grace and stimulating ideas. The artist`s images as presented here are seen to be always those of men persecuted by others. They are restless in their lives while their memories, obsessions, their most intimate affairs and mysteries and often turn into a possession of egotistic intruders, biographers, scholars, critics and students. The artist is not a happy person, an alien. ***'The Aspern Papers'*** is a novella written by Henry James, originally published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1888, with its first book publication later in the same year. One of James`s best-known and most acclaimed longer tales, '***The Aspern Papers'*** is based on the letters Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote to Mary Shelley`s step sister, Claire Clairemont, who saved them until she died. Set in Venice, '***The Aspern Papers'*** demonstrates James`s ability to generate suspense while never neglecting the development of his characters. '***The Figure in the Carpet'*** is a short story published in 1896 in London by American writer Henry James. The short story is usually referred to as a novella and is told from first person. The narrator, whose name is never

revealed, meets his favorite author and becomes obsessed with discovering the secret meaning or intention behind the author's works.

## 1.5 Statement of the problem:

The problem which is raised in the present study is related to the artist's feeling of alienation and pain because of those people who are curious to betray his personal life`s secrets. Henry James`s two tales: 'The Aspern Papers' and 'The Figure in the Carpet' were chosen here as an example of this situation. In contrast to the ordinary man, the artist appears in these two tales as a target for the intrusion of researchers and journalists.

## 1.6 Questions of the study:

1- What is the final image that James`s two tales 'The Aspern Papers' and 'The Figure in the Carpet' present about the writer?
2- How does Henry James deal with the conception of art in his two tales?
3- What kind of relation ties the creative writer to his biographers and reviewers?

4. To what extent can the psychological insights of Freud, Jung and Lacan help in highlighting the writer-milieu dialectics?

## 1.7 .Objectives of the study:

This study aims to:

1- Explore the image of the artist in his own community.

2- Show how Henry James deals with the conception of art in his two tales.

3- Explore the extent to which the artist`s personal life is presented in his creative work and disclosed by biographers and reviewers.

4- Discuss the help provided by psychology in perceiving the artist`s reactions to the outside world.

## 1.7 Significance of the study:

The significance of the study lies in the fact that these two tales of Henry James represent the idea of the artists` sense of alienation. Therefore writing about 'The Aspern Papers' and 'The Figure in the Carpet' is considered to be vital in emphasizing this aspect of James`s work. Therefore this attempt may fill some gap in the field of disclosing the artists` misgiving.

## 1.9 Limitations of the study:

The present study is limited to the investigation of 'The Aspern Papers' and 'The Figure in the Carpet'. Therefore, Henry James's other works will not be emphasized. The study as a whole cannot be generalized to Henry James`s other fictions as it concentrates exclusively on two tales selected out of a vast number of short stories and novels.

## 1.10 Research Methodology:

The method which the researcher is going to follow throughout this research is both descriptive and analytic. The present study describes the relation of Henry James with his community and the reflection of his own personality on his fiction through the analysis of the two tales 'The Aspern Papers' and 'The Figure in the Carpet'.

## 1.11 Definition of Terms

* **'Art for Art`s sake'**: the usual English rendering of a French slogan from the early 19th century, "***l'art pour l'art***", and expresses a philosophy that the intrinsic value of art, and the only "true" art, is divorced from any didactic, moral or utilitarian function.

* **Utilitarianism**: a theory in normative ethics holding that the proper course of action is the one that maximizes utility, specifically defined as maximizing happiness and reducing suffering.

***Jingoism**: extreme patriotism in the form of aggressive foreign policy. In practice, it is a country's advocation of the use of threats or actual force against other countries in order to safeguard what it perceives as its national interests.

***Idiosyncratic:** an unusual feature of a person. It also means odd habit. The term is often used to express eccentricity or peculiarity.

***Contemporaneous:** existing at or occurring in the same period of time.

***Architectonics**: systematization of all knowledge.

***Phantasmagorical:** characterized by fantastic imagery and incongruous juxtapositions; a great concourse of phantasmagoric shadows the incongruous imagery in surreal art and literature.

# Chapter Two: Review of Literature

## 2.1 Preliminary Remarks:

Any passing look at the huge number of books, articles and essays written about Henry James, the man and the artist, shows that controversy pertaining to his art, writing and life is obviously endless. This is because James lived and mixed with the great celebrities of his time both in America and Europe. He himself did a similar step to those of Eliot and Auden in leaving his own country (U.S.A.) and settling in England as a British subject. This broad cultural life and background can explain this great interest in James and his works.

Indeed, Henry James`s life and art were and still a controversial issue for many biographers and critics. Throughout his career of writing, he has been a fertile topic for discussion, and there were always speculations about him and his art. Many of these speculations are related to James`s personality, because he was an individualist who disliked public gathering. This made it difficult for those who wanted to probe the depths of his private life. And this may lead to that great curiosity to know the nature of the connection between James`s art and his private life, and how he dealt with his own characters as will be shown in the following examples. Some light will be shed also on the moral, religious and

psychological side of James`s writings, as well as his reception in Europe. Moreover, his arguments about feminism will be briefly discussed, as they are relevant to the presented discussion of James`s work.

"The artist is present in every page of every book from which he sought so assiduously to eliminate himself"~ Henry James

Edel`s significant biography (1960, pp.40-41) states that the publication of James`s letters in 1920 tended to establish for posterity the "Old Pretender" James, the heavy long-winded figure of Rye and Chelsea, rather than the robust bearded creative James of the turn of the century. This was due to the fact that much of the earlier correspondence was not available to Percy Lubbock, the editor of the letters, who in particular did not have James`s "working" letters, his correspondence with editors and publishers; he assembled two volumes which show James the social "being and theorist" of fiction. James had been a constant letter-writer from the first. His letters are the surplus production of a writer who, having done his day`s work, is unable to stop, and writes on with a free flow and an easy play of imagination. More than ten thousand letters survived, the majority unpublished, and his professional letters, no less than those written in friendship, are filled with remarkable observation of the people and places of his time.

Leon Edel, again, in the edition of 1963 biography of Henry James argues that to read the essays and reviews, as well as the books, devoted to James since the beginning of this century, in the attempt to discover the contemporary view of the man and his work, is to encounter some large and crudely built “sphinx”, over whom has been “flung a prodigious coat of motley.” James has been likened to Goethe, to Shakespeare, to Racine−and to Marivaux. He has been called a “tragic visionary−and a melodramatist.” A rootless expatriate, who came to write “more and more about less and less,” he is also called the wisest man of his time. Once a critic says that he was a “magician”; but another that he was a “soporific bore,” enchanted with his own words. He has been a characteristic American intellectual; but he turned his back to America. He was called a “religious visionary” and an “allegorist”; sometimes a realist and a naturalist. (Edel 1963, pp.1- 2)

Obviously, so many names and characteristics were related to Henry James throughout his writing career, and this is evidence that he was a controversial writer and at the same time, had a really wide vision that enabled him to adopt all these different ideologies and approaches in his literary work.

Putt`s (1966, p. xi) mentions that in a notebook entry of 1880, James described himself “as an artist and as a bachelor; as one has the passion of observation and whose business is the study of human life”. It was the mask he

chose to wear to the world. He seems to have worn it, too, in solitude. Putt`s also asks, why he spent a lifetime fashioning an immense persona for himself is a problem for the psychologist. The critic, the man of letters, can only express a grateful wonder that he did. One is at liberty to pry for the spiritual secret (the physical is anyone`s guess) of his magnificent impotence. The notion that James himself was unaware of his own psychology is a statement to be dismissed as an absurdity. Other writers have sought to demonstrate the active impulse; he has made himself the poet and scholar of passive states of consciousness.

Graham`s (1975, p.xii) for example, argues that the connection between James`s life and his art is one that readers will always, and very properly, wish to explore at various times. The result of such conjecture is often unhappy, since it tends to reduce the complexity of the fiction to a “sham” covering up the real truth which often proves to be itself something of a “sub-literary metaphor and Freudian cliché”, such as James`s “voyeurism”, or his wound, or his sibling rivalry with William. Indeed his physical injury which was the reason for his celibacy is an issue for many arguments and even mockery.

Schneider`s (1975, p.447) argues “From beginning to end, as we know, Henry James`s fiction is concerned with the unconsolidated man, the “divided self”, a soul so deeply split in its inclinations, so checked and inhibited by its “variety of imagination.” The creation and handling of this divided self may be

regarded by formalist criticism as a necessity of James`s art. A critic may be tempted to assert the divided self required by James`s art is not, in truth, much different from the divided self known in psychology."

Sicker`s (1980, p.vi) points out that James`s attitude toward his characters reveals an ambivalence deep within the writer himself. Clearly, the "insecure, hyper-imaginative, self-defeating" heroes of the early tales represent a part of James-the oppressed and romantically frustrated young man who felt overshadowed by his father and brother and doomed to aloof, passive observation in a "turbulent" world, who loved his cousin from across an unbridgeable divide, and who found himself trembling with a sacred terror at the thought of feminine destructiveness. Sicker, in his book, mentioned George Moor`s fascination with James`s personal life; Moore`s fascination was an early instance of a critical "prurience" from which James himself has yet to be liberated. In his ***Confessions of a Young Man*** (1886), Moore writes: "The interviewer in us would like to ask Henry James why he never married, but it would be vain to ask."(qtd. in. Sicker 1980, p.vi) Obviously, the line of argument does not move very far from the previous one in that James the man is the centre of a controversy and his personal experiences are seen as the explanation of the behavior of his characters.

According to Budd and Cady`s (1990), a great body of criticism came from Henry James`s prolific pen, particularly in his earlier years. The editors of the

highly respected and widely read periodicals for which he wrote- the *North American Review,* the *Atlantic Monthly,* and the *Nation*- assigned him the most important reviewer of the issue, the one to which their readers would turn first, because of the deep influence of his persuasive arguments. His style was direct, easy, and rapid, yet lucid and powerfully expressive, the style of a man whose ideas are clear-cut and integrated.

Bell (1991, pp. 4-5) argues that James`s novels may be said to participate in the general tendency of impressionism−"a movement in the arts which attempts to dispense with formal traditions of conceptualization and invites the painter to appear to record reality as it is impinges on unprepared perception." James`s development of a "restricted point of view" becomes a discovery of the subjective interest which gives its own outline to what is "accidentally" perceived. James`s impressionism is an (attired) toward experience and a principle of composition that can be felt throughout his work. It reaches fullest expression in ***The Ambassadors,*** and in ***The Princess Cassamassima***, James opposes impressionism to the view of the naturalists, often assumed to be Impressionists, aesthetic siblings because they were their personal friends and defenders.

Woolf`s (1991, pp.1,2) points out that the initial stumbling block with Henry James, for many of his readers, is not so much the fact that his novels are "complex" and "oblique" and "idiosyncratic" as a suspicious feeling that such complexity is willful and unnecessary. This reaction is not by any means confined to James. Readers frequently approach writers as different from each other. Woolf, in her book tries to tease out the "complexities and display the virtue" of some of James`s major works; and to put James into his context in the history of the English novel. Thus to show him for what he was, as a writer using an essentially comic medium to convey an increasingly tragic vision, and so compelled to force the language of narrative prose to carry the charge and "register the subtleties" of the language of poetry.

Wolf`s (1995, p.iv,v,1) underlines Jamesian "other worldliness" which consists of the painterly and literary mediums of the European aesthetic, a "vestigial data codified in the crucial Lambinet landscape painting." James invests the American quest to retrieve the lost epic consciousness with special urgency, creating American characters who travel in Europe like epic adventurers drifting through the world of the dead. His brand of modernism thus describes a "shadow-existence where the alien ideals of the bygone epic world return James`s American home ward" by allowing them a hybrid linguistic experience that mediates between two European past and the American present, the

European epic and the American novel. Henry James`s lifelong obsessions with Europe are show the “archetypal” character of another world “quest narrative”. James, himself, and Lambert Strether in the ***The Ambassadors,*** the hero he termed “a man of imagination,” become Odessean adventures in “heroic quest” of their home, their national identity. They fashion this identity by engaging with their European otherworld.

Salmon`s (1997, p.2) argues that James was concerned with the modern phenomenon of “publicity”. From his early book reviews of the 1860s and 1870s to his fiction and cultural criticism of the early twentieth century, references to this term recur with a remarkable frequency. The word itself appears to have borne a “peculiarity intense” and evocative meaning for James, although it is used to designate a wide range of cultural forms, practices and assumptions, it also seems to suggest a meaning that is singular and overbearing. From the earliest writings onward, James revealed an acute concern with the cultural space of authorship, and its movement across a shifting boundary between private and public spheres. His reviews of such figures as Hawthorne, Flaubert and George Sand are full of rebukes directed towards the “invasion of privacy” practiced by biographers, journalists and publishers of authors` private manuscripts, and these concerns were also translated into numerous, admonitory stories such as ‘**The Aspern Papers’,** and ‘**The Real Right Thing’.**

Salmon`s article (1997) states that James wrote a series of fictional tales which consecrate, however ironically, the distance between the solitary artist and the vulgar public, and addresses these tales to the elite readership of avant-garde periodicals such as *The Yellow Book*; also, he was actively engaged in cultivating a popular audience within the theater. While these projects run parallel to each other, each postulates a radically different conception of the relationship between artist and public.

Pearson`s (1997) discusses the consideration of James`s motives for attempting to colonize a segment of the literary marketplace. Rather than adapting his art to suit the prevailing desires of the market, James stood firm in his devotion to his aesthetic of fiction and sought instead to create desire. The problem became a formal one: on the one hand, James must guard the integrity of his novels and tales by maintaining their formal boundaries and remaining as a literary guide outside the house of fiction, on the other, he would position himself close enough to those texts to guide the reader to the threshold of the house of fiction, in other words, but he could not risk being detected inside; that would destroy the effect of the fictive world and of the art itself.

In the point of view of Rowe`s (1998, pp. xi, x) Henry James, as a novelist, has been held up as the master of realism, modernism, and postmodernism in

quick succession. As a theorist, he has been claimed by New Critics, phenomenological and reader-response critics. Cultural critics have identified his limitations, but often in ways that have testified to his generally progressive ideals and the subtlety of how social power works. Rowe adds that James`s figure as master of the novel -"captured perfectly in John Singer Sargent`s famous portrait of James at seventy"- into the "vulnerable", sexually anxious, and lonely writer struggling with the new modern possible, the latter James, decidedly more human and accessible. How liberating it is to discover how much James needed other people, and how desperately lonely he could be when visitors failed to appear, cancelled, or left early. The ambitious Henry James vigorously committed to his successful literary career must now be understood in conjunction with the other James, who challenged ideas of literary authority and mastery in ways that would help teachers announce the "death of the Author, grant now respect to readers, and reduce the myth of literary authority to the rhetorical features of an "author-function."

Kaplan`s (1999) recreates the world of Henry James: his friendship with Edith Whartoon and Joseph Conrad. He points out that the twenty-one-year-old Henry James, preferred to be a writer rather than a soldier. His motives for writing were clear to himself, and they were not unusual: he desired fame and

fortune, whatever additional enriching complications that were to make him notorious for the complexity of his style and thought.

Walker`s (1999, p.3) discusses that the idea that James was devoted to his art to the point of excluding the practical side of life which arises in part from the fact that James was an intensely private person who avoided the public spotlight. The mania for publicity, he felt, was one of the most striking signs of our times. He warned that the art and the artist are not the same and fielded direct questioner to the fiction itself: "One `s craft, one`s art, is his expression….not one`s person, as that of some great actress or singer is hers ….Why should the public want him to splash himself, reveal his person on paper?" (qtd. in Walker1999, p.3)

Harland`s (1999, p.17) argues that the criticism of Henry James is roughly "contemporaneous "with Aestheticism. Like the aesthetes, James draws heavily upon art for his images and points of reference; like the Aesthetes, he distrusts criticism by general or abstract principles; and like the Aesthetes, he combines in his approach both forward-looking and backward looking elements. But whereas the Aesthetes` focus is poetic even when not specifically upon poetry, James`s focus is novelistic, and the whole tenor of his criticism differs accordingly.

In Tintner`s (2000, p. 91) James`s connection with his art comes on a different level, he states that James`s texts, in the twentieth-century universe, have become endowed with a greater density of references of all kinds. Among

these are the distinguished portraits he drew of his last novels. If not to the reader, at least to the sitter himself, the identity might be obvious, but then again he might never know he had been included. It was part of the real world James was now including in his fictive world.

Tintner gives us examples of the idea of James portraying his friends; for instance, ***The Wings of the Dove*** "exhibits this tendency to plant actors in the drama of James`s life squarely within his fictive drama", he claims that this novel of 1902 "includes Minny Temple, who here becomes Milly Theale, doomed to early death as Minny Temple had been" Morton Fullerton, who was a close friend of James during these years, "becomes Morton Densher." And there are much more examples of this kind of relation.

Kennedy and Gioia`s (2000) states that as a true representative of the realistic movement in American writing, Henry James valued fiction as a high art. Though no innovator himself, he surely did much to refine the form. Subjected to constant shifting from one place to another and having seen the American Civil War from a close quarter and shared the national gloom, he tried to be true and real in his treatment of theme and character. While portraying life in all its real hues, Henry James did not choose to remain detached and dispassionate. He loved to read in his characters` minds and takes delight in psychological probing and revelation.

Tambling`s (2000, p.2) points out that much recent criticism, some of it negative, some tinged with nationalist appropriations, has focused on James as an American, and raised questions about his engagements with race and colour. Earlier criticism took a different direction, in 1882, after the appearance of ***The Portrait of a Lady***, the American novelist William Dean Howells "credited" James with a "new art of fiction" (qtd. in Tambling 2000), writing "the international novel". But if James is a cultural comparatist, moving between America and Britain, with France and Italy two other important sites and contexts, there is a question of his centre of gravity, and from where his judgments appear. "Are they American, or English and European?"

As for Henry James the biographer,Tolliver`s (2000, p. xi) points out that, throughout his writing life, James maintained an ambivalent relationship to the art of biography. Although he offered no coherent, formal theory of the genre, and in fact was no real theorist, in his criticism, letters and fiction, he wrote about biography from a core of aesthetic convention that when isolated constitutes a kind of informal poetics. His approach to biography focuses on a "cluster of issues: privacy and the ethics of biographical revelation; the worthiness of the biographical subject; the comparative claims and limitations of fact and truth; the necessity of selectivity and appropriate form; the attributes of the ideal biographer; and the ultimate biographical goal of psychological depth." It is in a

consideration of the aspect of a character, or by extension the nature of the biographical subject, that James engages in his most explicit and complex "discourse on unity", to which he would give a special place in his system of artistic value.

About how Henry James dealt with his characters, Simon`s (2001) argues that James was more concerned with probing the depths of his characters' minds and hearts, investigating the consequences of emotional crises, and testing the boundaries of freedom. Finely attuned to social conventions and proscriptions, he was passionately concerned with morality, and his abiding interest was in confronting his characters with complex moral dilemmas. He never lost sight, however, of what he considered the true object of fiction: to enrich his readers' awareness.

Many studies discussed the moral, religious and psychological sides of Henry James`s writings; In Pippin`s (2001) the argument is that Henry James is as aware as we are nowadays that moral categories can be ideological reflections of the requirements and interests of social position and power, or can be understood psychologically, as a reflection of needs and desires and especially anxieties, never a part of but always behind and motivating the great work of interpretive consciousness that is so much his theme. He also adds that moral categories are often just weapons in this sense. But this is certainly not always or

exclusively so in James`s fiction, and he also has something to show us about the nature of the moral claim itself.

From a psychological viewpoint, Kness`s (2002, p. xii) states that James`s writings display a repeated effort to portray consciousness even while he questions its existence. His metaphors, at once, direct the reader inward to a stable, individualized self and propel him outward to find consciousness materializing in the "fluxional cycle" of the natural world. He adds that Henry James, struggles over appropriate names and terms for consciousness, a "gesture that presupposes some clearly delineated concept around which one might wrap a verbal expression".

During `s (2002) argues that Henry James insists that relations between an author's life and his writings, though at one level private and contingent, are transfigured through association with the finished work to become proper matter for public criticism. The finished work is so much a public object that private entanglements with it lose their merely personal nature in being attached to it. He also states that, in taking the autobiographical approach, James is recuperating his fictional narrative technique for criticism, since his method itself requires that objects in the world be presented from the perspective of private consciousness.

In an article in *The Washington Times* (2003) it has been shown, that there's no disputing, that Henry James is one of the great American writers, unless, of course, there is a quarrel with the idea of greatness itself or there is an issue taken with the convention of classifying as "American" a writer so immersed in English literature and culture. But although it would be misleading to pretend there are no real differences between English and American literature, there are any number of cases that testify to the confluence and mutual influencing of these two closely entangled streams. English and American writers have long intrigued and affected one another. Anthologists have puzzled over how to classify the American-born Henry James, who went to live in England and became a British citizen a year before he died.

At the level of style, Haralson`s (2003, p.29) argues that where the expression of gender and sexuality valences was at once highly resonant and highly ambiguous, James encouraged his readers to disdain the “sickly and unmasculine tone” (qtd. in Haralson 2003) of overly elegant writing, to stick with the traditional view that the “masculine hand” of authorship was superior to the feminine, and to appreciate type of prose that displayed “masculine firmness, a quite force of……style” (qtd. in Haralson 2003,p.29)

From a Feminist viewpoint, Habegger`s (2004, p.6) states that James may have known that good fiction does not force author`s opinions on the reader, but he could not keep his ideas, prejudices, and conflicts out of his writings. He was not only a man, of his time, with a collection of opinions about the difference between men and women and a strong point of view on the women`s rights movement, but his own masculinity was problematic to a great extent. The basic fact according to Habegger is that up to his late middle age, Henry James was for the most part contemptuous of women`s suffrage and women`s entry into the professions. An early letter of his, makes a "passing pejorative" reference to "free thinking young ladies." (qtd. in Habegger 2004)

Roy`s (2006, pp.1, 2) states that during five decades of creation, Henry James brought into being twenty novels and one hundred and twelve tales. He was one of the great psychological realists. He was a remarkable innovator, constantly "fertile", bold, and independent and a man with a style in his productivity and high level in writing, in his insight into human motivation and his possession of the "architectonics" of fiction. He "projected" drama of consciousness, all his "virtuosity" in his fiction was addressed to discovering how to capture in words the subjective, the reflective and even the "phantasmagorical" sides of man.

In spite of the different views of Henry James`s innovation as a realist, no doubt that he was not only an innovator but he was a leader in this field.

Izzo and O`Hara`s (2006, p. 14) shows that Henry James died in 1916 and few noticed, especially in America. To a large degree this was personal, as James, in his last years, became a British subject, thus "substantiating" what many felt was his rejection of America, from which he had removed himself for most of his adult life. One of the most respected and well-read critics of the 1920s, Van Wyck Brooks, himself now eclipsed, wrote ***The Pilgrimage of Henry James*** (1925), with the title a "deliberate stab" at James`s "antipathy" toward the land of his birth, and in which he declared that James was not an American writer at all but, in effect, a "snob", whose later books were "magnificent pretensions, petty performances!" the fruits of an "irresponsible imagination," of a deranged sense of values, of a mind working in a void, uncorrected by any clear consciousness of human cause and effect.

Warnes` (2007, p.6) shows that Henry James`s influence is everywhere, in Baldwin`s work- in the title ***Notes of Native Son***, along with Wright`s transatlanticist`s ***Notes of a Son and Brother*** (1914), and in the "labyrinth" in the sentences of his "meditative, introspective, essays". And this Jamesian heritage flows further, seeping into the criticism that ***Everybody`s Protest Novel*** makes of

***Native Son,*** among of which closely match these ***The Art of Fiction*** makes of literary naturalism in general and of Emile Zola`s "oeuvre" in particular.

Concerning his French reception, Brooks` (2007) argues that the novelist that emerged from Henry James was not American or an English exemplar; it was Balzac. It was probably Balzac`s Paris that lured James abroad more than anything else. He was like one of Balzac`s ambitious young men arriving in Paris from the provinces, to make their way by the power of the pen. Henry James was intent on living from his pen, as a professional writer, in the manner of Balzac. His travel writing, collected in *Transatlantic Sketches*, published in April 1875 by J.R. Osgood in Boston, was proving a modest commercial success. He produced literary essays in addition to book reviews and he planned a volume on French poets and novelists.

Zacharias`s (2008, p.400) argues that the story of Henry James and Britain has biographical and public aspects, but both are mediated through a third term: the literary. Britain, for James, is a "cultural myth" articulated through writers from Shakespeare to Dickens and Thackeray, absorbed, emulated even resented and recast, by an author constructing the reality of his own achievement through the development of fictional world. The "deliberate adoption" of a culture at once familiar and "inexorably alien" assured James the ideal stance for his narrative and critical persona, that of the intimate outsider.

Alosman`s (2008, p.3) states that Henry James "employed the narrator to convey the inner monologue of the characters in a way that enabled his readers to dive deeper and deeper into his fictional world; it made them live the situation psychologically. He was interested in the psyches of his characters; he dramatized the characters` consciousness in a way that made his characters more realistic. This is a helpful and insightful study as it links between the psychological data and artistic creativity.

On a more personal and controversial level, Haralson and Johnson`s (2009) states that images of sexuality abound in the works of Henry James and are firmly linked with issues of sexuality on his own life. Biographers vary as to his sexual history; some conclude that he never experienced a consummated sexual relationship, while others point to the affectionate letters written by James to both women and men as evidence of an active sex life. Famously ambiguous on the subject, James hid his sexual history- or lack of it- and critics are left with the problem of drawing conclusions from this ambiguousness.

Nielsen`s (2010, pp.ii,iii,4) states that James's late writings might be described as evolving toward a "Conradian" view of history, a sense that the modern social order is inherently greed and violence. For instance, ***The Golden Bowl***, James's last major complete novel, is a fiction of moral, historical, and epistemological crises, intertwined in the form of an "all-encompassing,

tortuously convoluted late style". His old themes and their moral orders have evolved their own exaggerated convolutions; indeed have developed into irresolvable moral contradictions. Money, ascendant and aggressive, seems increasingly to define and control the moral realm. The American girl (a perennial James type) has become almost monstrous; self consciously using her money, she imposes an American innocence that now appears as a moral deformation, as a moral darkness. ***The Ambassadors*** suggests that in James`s return he began to understand his native country as forecasting the moral and economic darkness of modernity. America became for James a dark continent made dark by modern economic forces. Nielsen `s also argues that ***Heart of Darkness*** and ***The Ambassadors*** might be read alongside one another, that they tell one another`s stories.

McWhriter`s (2010, p.445) points out that translation, in non-English-speaking countries, preceded critical reception, but the process was rather slow. James`s prose was "disconcerting" and the author himself "fiercely resisted" translation. The very first text translated was ***The Last of the Valerii***, which appeared in the 15 November 1875 issue of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, as the young author was to discover on his arrival in Paris. Thirteen of his works were translated into French during his life time. The last decades of the nineteenth century can be considered as an effective, though timid, acknowledgement of the

Master`s work. Translations into German started in 1876, with a collection of six tales. The first Norwegian, Danish and Swedish translations came out in the late 1870s. Russian reception seemed promising: translations started in 1876 with ***The Last of the Valerii*** and ***The Madonna of future***.

Phipps` (2010, pp. ii, iii) underlines that Henry James`s fiction serves as the laboratory where the "ramifications of pragmatist representations of subjectivity" play out through the relationships his characters "negotiate" between their private beliefs and ideas and the evaluations of these beliefs and ideas in their social spheres. Among other things, James`s literary works reveal that the processes through which "Truth happens to an idea" (qtd. in Phipp 2010) are complex, "multilayered", and often unexpected.

Boyce `s (2010) states that what is philosophically most significant about James`s work is that his literary forms inherit a time-honored aspiration of philosophical writing, that of seeking to present a reader`s life to the reader himself in such a way as to allow him to overcome confusions that interfere with his living.

In *The Columbia Encyclopedia* (2012, 6th ed.) Henry James was described as a" master of psychological novel", he devoted himself to literature and travel, gradually assuming the role of detached spectator and analyst of life. More than

any previous writer, James refined the technique of narrating a novel from the point of view of a character, thereby laying the foundation of modern stream of consciousness fiction.

About Henry James`s reception in Europe, there were so many records of his travelling and exploring of the New World with all its aspects of life, art and culture.

According to Tredy, Duperray and Harding`s (2011, p.xiii) as an American in Europe, Henry James may have felt as “bewildered” and “beguiled” as some of his most memorable American protagonists abroad, such as Christopher Newman or Lambert Strether. However, in spite of statements that many assume to be critical of a certain lack of sophistication and lightness of cultural baggage among American abroad, James also spoke of this state with a good deal of praise. He considered being an American in fact “an excellent preparation for culture,” in so far as Americans, he felt, could deal, more freely than Europeans, “with forms of civilization not their own” and could “pick and choose and assimilate and in short (esthetically) claim their property wherever they found it.”

Rionda`s (2012, p.2) argues that Henry James`s position is subtle and difficult to characterize, especially since it is mostly found in his fiction, which is most often devoted to an “exploration of the ambiguities of consciousness”. His

characters often seem to be of "Goethe`s Faust", caught up in the immediacy of experience. His goal, however, may be to overcome this perspective and points the way to a "moral, Dante-type" approach to religion.

Concerning the relation of the artist to society, Anesko`s (2012, p.1) points that such a relation, which James singled out as one of the "great primary motives" available to him, a "pervasive and telling irony adumbrates" their autobiographical origins and implications, even when the author`s notebooks betray more immediate moments of genesis or particular forms of instigation in the private chronicle of his own career.

Out of the detailed account already presented of the works on Henry James`s life and art, the researcher feels that Mcwhriter`s book (2010) is relevant to her current interest, as it follows a certain orientation in dealing with James`s fictional world and his recurrent image of the artist in his/her society. It is very helpful to most of what the researcher intends to discuss in her study.

Apparently, there is a well-established critical tradition of Henry James`s personality and private life as well as his fiction. Many different perspectives, approaches and opinions have tried to solve, but at the same time, fed the continuous ambiguity of James`s life and art, which remains an almost insoluble mystery.

No doubt that Henry James has provided English literature with a noticeable amount and quality of works that laid the basis for a cosmopolitan fiction and paved the way to a new genre in literature.

## 1.1 Henry James and Art for Art`s sake

To discuss a topic essentially concerned with Henry James`s concept of the artist, entails giving a preliminary view how James dealt with art and its position in his final canon. Above all, it is necessary to specify his position regarding the two contesting views about art i.e. art-for art`s sake and art for life. If we bear in mind the number of works (both novels and tales) where the question of art engages a great position, it is logical to infer that James is pro art-for-art`s sake, or at least, many of his works concentrate on this topic. What is this trend and its implications?

In defiance of the view that the value of art is to serve some moral and didactic purpose, the principle of 'Art for Art`s sake' seeks to affirm that art is valuable in its own right, that artistic pursuits are its own justification. The very existence of the term 'Art for Art`s sake' is originally translated from the French

phrase' L`art pour L`art' which was invented by Theophile Gautier. 'Art for Art`s sake' is associated in the history of English art with the aesthetic movement, which was self-consciously in rebellion against Victorian moralism. Aesthetic movement was a European phenomenon that emerged during the latter part of the nineteenth century that had its chief headquarter in France. In opposition to the dominance of science, and in defiance of the widespread indifference or hostility of the middle-class society of their time to any art that was not useful or did not teach moral values, French writers developed the view that a work of art is the supreme value among human products precisely because it is self-sufficient and has no use or moral aim outside its being. (Abrams 2011)

The modernist credo 'Art for art`s sake' implied that art could be divorced from meaning or anything outside its being. Art could simply be art without other reference points. In terms of modernist sensibility, impressionist art, for example, was simply a visual feast for those who loved to look at the world in this way. The modernist notion of 'art for art`s sake' has been seen by post- modern theorists as self-indulgent elitism, far removed from the social concerns of the populace. (Emery 2002)

Many artists believed in this idea and dedicated themselves and their lives to their art, like Walter Pater and James Joyce. Henry James also believed in this idea and truly devoted himself and his whole life to his art.

It is Henry James who took the subject of artistic inviolability and ironically unpacks the social violence it might contain. Art objects, in James, are "spoils and trophies, buyable and collectible". They draw into their orbit the contextual problems of price, ownership, power; an aesthetic spoiling that is most intensely worked over in his last novel, ***The Golden Bowl*** (1904). The bowl is indeed worth" frankly nothing", because the crystal under its gold veneer is cracked. (Leighton 2007, p.42)

His voice joined that of a minority, including Walter Pater, who believed in "art for art`s sake". Pater`s doctrine completed James`s idea well, and James set out to design fiction that offered its readers beauty and pleasure with little accompanying moral dicta (Brackett and Gaydosik 2006, p.230), as will be felt in the examples chosen in the present study.

"Henry James did not begin his career with any theory of art for art`s sake," wrote Pound in 1918, "and a lack of this theory may have damaged his earlier work." Pound thereby implies first that James`s later fiction and criticism did indeed provide such a theory; second, that such a theory is a desirable thing to possess; and third that Pound himself speaks as one who possesses such a fully theorized notion of art. (Freedman 1990)

James`s commitment to the arts as a decent alternative to what he found uncongenial in social life was serious and passionate. The art produced by such an impulse of disengagement would, as a rule, tend to be inferior to that coming from an active use of total experience available to the artist. However, “the tradition of a high aesthetic temper” to which James gave his commitment should not be mistaken for that brand of aestheticism which we associate with the slogan of ‘Art for art`s sake.” For James the discipline of art did not mean an escape from challenges of life or a repudiation of moral concerns. It is in the name of “decencies,” “general self-respect” and “rudimentary intellectual honor” that he sets up this antithesis between the arts and the vulgarities of contemporary social life. (Grewal 1990, p.223)

The criticism of Henry James is roughly contemporaneous with Aestheticism. Like the Aesthetes, James drew heavily upon art for its image and points of reference; like the Aesthetes, he distrusted criticism by general or abstract principles, and like the Aesthetes, he combined in his approach both forward-looking and backward-looking elements.

However, many opinions questioned the view that Henry James adopted the creed of ‘Art for Art`s sake’, for example (Hanief 1990) claims that Henry James disliked art for art`s sake i.e., craftsmanship or beauty for itself without any moral significance. According to such a view, he was not only a craftsman but also an

artist in the vital sense of the term. Hanief took Henry James`s words for granted when he stated: " The artist is one, who, has the passion for observation, and whose business is the study of human life" and " One does nothing of value in art or literature unless one has some general ideas"(qtd. in Hanief 1990, p.8) that is for Hanief a morally tenable position.

In the same vein, Hayes` (1990) argues that the fact is that Henry James, together with his European neighbors, in forcing his "art", as he likes to call it, to such a point of refinement that its interest has come to be almost solely technical, has demonstrated incontestably the radical fallacy of l`art pour l`art, of art for art`s sake, for art must exist for something besides itself or else be reduced finally to the composition of rhetoric. (p. 384)

However, the fact is that Henry James defined Aestheticism as a "spectacle" but he saw its potential as a "bulwark against ugliness" (qtd. in Mcwhriter 2010), by which he meant "excess of moralism and utilitarianism". Underscoring its affiliation with sensuality and esoteric experiences, he noted that its activating principle was 'not easily formulated, but one which we may conveniently speak of as that of beauty at any price, beauty appealing alike to the senses and the mind'. James argued that it ought to be connected through art to the scope of human experience. (McWhriter 2010, p.94)

However, what critics from both ends of the political spectrum have agreed upon, is the proposed negativity of James`s own politics. For both, James`s concern with his own art precludes any interest in social density by which we customarily measure a writer`s alertness to the seemingly 'real' issues of the time. But James`s endless interrogations into his own practice, his analysis of the production of literary effects, from the early essays on Balzac and the study of Hawthorne, through to the Prefaces for the New York edition of the novels, exhibit exactly the opposite of such supposed negativity. Despite his preoccupation with the question of art and the craft of writing, James`s fiction does not rule out the social and intellectual sides.

To argue that James`s display is merely "a sophisticated version of art for art`s sake and then to claim this as politically innocent is to misunderstand the Jamesian enterprise and to abuse the equipment we have for dealing with it." (Bell 1985, p.8) If James admires greatly the positive role of art in human life, it is not fair to state that he has not stressed the beautiful things in man`s experiences and sentiment.

To sum up the argument of this section of the chapter, it is convenient to state that James`s main concern is art and artistry as seen through the number of writers, critics and artists in his works. However, a deep analysis of these works

and critical articles shows that James has not overlooked the societal and public issues pertaining to man`s daily encounters with reality.

## 1.2 Henry James and Europe

Initially, there is a need to justify giving such a heading in a research devoted entirely to art and artists. The fact of the matter is that James`s association with art and artistic life cannot be separated from Europe, particularly France, that is the cradle of art and avant-garde in the twentieth century. Henry James`s ***The Ambassadors*** (1903), for instance, is a homage to France and its central position in art and culture. In that novel the Americans who reach Paris feel fascinated by its art and grandeur, so that they feel unable to go back to the New world (America), for all its wealth and technological progress.

When American literature was still young and some of its writers were still sharpening their pens, Henry James crossed the Atlantic to the Old World and was able to create a great variety of fiction that enabled him to take his seat beside Goerge Eliot, Turgenev, Fluabert, Zola and many others.( Roy 2006 )

James`s fascination with Europe was ,of course, not limited to its people, languages, historical landmarks and observed cultural differences: it was also deeply rooted in its literary heritage, which James would also reinterpret, re-evaluate and make his own.

In Henry James we have an author who was born in the United States, grandson of an Irish immigrant, but chose to live in Europe, in particular in England, becoming a British subject formally in 1915, the year before his death, in order to show his community ( by then lifelong) with a country at war. James`s father, Henry James Sr., took him all over Europe while very young, and he was educated in many European cities, including Paris. This fact could explain this double love James had for both art and Europe (especially France), because these early experiences were inculcated in his impressionable mind. In this regard, it is useful to refer to the intimate relationships that James established with the writers and artists of the continent or outside it which eventually gave him a cosmopolitan touch, and broadened his vision.

Dupperray`s (2006) discusses the striking discrepancy between the writer`s familiarity with French culture and the critical reception of his work in France in the last decades of the nineteenth century. When he lived in Paris in 1876, James frequently met the French intellectual avant-garde and artists at his Russian friend Turgeneve`s or during Flaubert`s Sunday afternoon meetings. Later on, many French writers again crossed his path like Zola, Daudet, and Feuillet; he reviewed at length the majority of the leading figures of the time and quite intimate with Alphonse and Paul Bourget. (p.vii)

He lived again in Paris for much of 1875, where he was correspondent for the *New York Tribune*. Even though he settled for the rest of his life in England, his vision of writing is intertwined with France from the very first moments. He suggests that he learned to be an observer in his pram in Paris- to the last. On his deathbed he dictated letters, believing himself to be Napoleon, demanding that the Louvre be redecorated. Although France, particularly in the form of remnants of aristocratic and imperial Paris, is central to his fiction, it never appears without Atlantic mediation. (Marshall 2005) His relationship with Honore de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, Emile Zola, and Guy de Maupassant was intensive and ambivalent, as seen in his writing about them. These literary and artistic contacts helped in enriching James`s writing and giving it a distinctive touch.

In his early years in London, James met the leading literary figures of the day, including Thackeray, Tennyson, Robert Browning, Matthew Arnold and Leslie Stephen. He took a great interest in English social life and manners, in English personages, buildings, and the English landscape. In his novels written after his arrival from England, James managed to celebrate and dramatize the relationship between English landscape, English architecture and English manners. (Toibin 2001)

In the opening scenes of novels such as ***The Portrait of a Lady*** (1881), ***The Ambassadors*** (1903) and ***The Golden Bowl*** (1904), for example, there is a sense

of England as what he called in ***English Hours*** (1905) “a country of tradition”, a place of ease in which much can enfold, with customs which can be both broken and observed by the foreigner and the native alike. (Toibin 2001, p.ix)

Henry James`s work shows his subject always to have been international, if finally beyond matters of nationality and origin, and concerned with the exploration of consciousness. Much of his early journalism was written for magazines that aimed to construct an American literature, independent of European inheritance, but his fictional models included, centrally, the novelists of the French tradition alongside the romanticism of Hawthorne and other U.S. novelists.

James`s writing participated in the development of notions of cosmopolitanism, within both U.S. A. and Europe, that remain influential today, and the basis of contemporary discussions of national culture, cosmopolitanism and globalization. James was concerned with the expansiveness of American commercialism, the “jingoism” of its political posturing and with the threat of warfare, and sought to “mitigate its effects by espousing a practical cosmopolitanism opposed to imperial and commercial swagger” and often deeply connected to ideals of femininity. On the other hand, his work constantly exposes the lack of connection to culture and the problematic “rootlessness” among many

cosmopolitans in Europe and highlights the danger it posed to both women and men. (McWhriter, p.139)

If James is the great novelist of consciousness, his mode of writing almost always shadows forth in some way the economic, sexual, and cultural complexity of the encounter between Americans and Europeans.( Marshall 2005) His main themes explored the conflict between the innocence of the New World and the sophistication and wisdom of the Old, which he most vividly depicted via sensitive portraits the young American heroines whose travels abroad inevitably lead to clashes of manner and ideology.

Henry James`s expatriation, for the history of the American novel, is "archetypal". Coming to maturity in a period of unparalleled economic and social "swinishness", James left America with one part of his mind, but with another part he remained there. His divided allegiance made him the first American novelist consciously to exploit the European theme. The result was a new kind of novel of manners; James was not rooted in the English society as George Eliot had been or, in French, as Stendhal had been. His novels of manners have nothing of the strongly regional aspect of the earlier European novelists. He observed European manners with detachment and with an un European, morally critical eye. (McCormick 1998, p.94)

## Henry James and 'Irony':

Henry James was interested in using irony in his fiction; he employed it to make the literary work more effective and to give it an aesthetic touch. James used irony in many of his works; in ***The Ambassadors*** the protagonist, Lambert Strether is supposed to fulfill his mission for his wealthy fiancé; go to Paris and rescue her son from Parisian life, but he himself get involved in this life.

In many works irony was used related to an important theme that Henry James was the first writer to talk about; the idea of looking for papers and manuscripts. He used this idea in **'The Aspern Papers'** and '**The Figure in the Carpet'.** And the researcher will talk about these tales later in details.

Henry James used dramatic irony as a significant principle in a number of his works. According to Gurewitch`s (1994 p. 18) in the preface to Volume15 of the *New York Edition,* a volume that deals with the figure of the artist in a number of stories, for example, **'The Lesson of the Master',** James speaks of an ironic spirit rather than an ironic method. Moreover, James relates "operative" irony to life`s ideal possibilities. That is, James`s "animating presences" are ironic in that they embody a "campaign….on behalf of ….something better," (qtd. in Gurewitch 1994) something rich and "edifying." The ironic spirit in this instance

signifies the power of the honorably creative imagination to produce alternatives to life`s "futilities and vulgarities and miseries." (qtd. in Gurewitch`s 1994)

Gruewitch presents another example, in the preface to volume 11, James envisions irony in '**What Maisie Knew'** as the "empowerment" of a higher truth, as the capturing of fineness, goodness, and confidence. According to James, ironic developments become salvational as they filter through Maise`s consciousness and ultimately prevent her from remaining locked into a degraded state brought about by the "machinations" of a quarter of parents clinging to multiple lovers.

Griffen`s (2002 p. 24) states that Jamesian irony promotes either identification or distance−the former if one gets James`s point, the latter, if the reader is excluded from it. Irony in general, constitutes what Lori Chamberlain calls the "political relationship between the user and the audience being addressed or excluded. Even while provoking laughter, irony invokes notions of hierarchy and subordination, judgment and perhaps even moral superiority. It is subversive." (qtd. in Griffen`s 2002) Irony produces the "ambivalence with which James "tantalizes and satiates his readers."

# Chapter Three

# The Main Argument

## 3.0: ‘The Aspern Papers’ Preliminary notes:

**‘The Aspern Papers’** (1888) is considered to be the most brilliant of all Henry James`s tales in his middle years dealing with the subject of the artist and the creative life. Those tales are preoccupied almost exclusively with the daily problems of the creative life and their effect on the moral personality of the artist. **‘The Aspern Papers’** is a short story of an unnamed narrator who travels to Venice in search of some letters by Jeffry Aspern, a famous and now dead American poet. It is inspired by a true story about a fan of the poet Shelley who sought out similar papers.

Among the themes James explores and dramatizes in these stories are the conditions and commitments of the creative life; the problems of the creative process; and most of all, the dilemmas and inner conflicts of the creative artist, of which the most persistent turns on the conflict in the soul of the artist between the demands of his art and the claims of his humanity. This is the key theme of **‘The Aspern Papers’**: the tormenting problem for the man who is both a dedicated

artist and a civilized human being of pursuing an ideal perfection in his art without losing his integrity as a human being.

The dilemma of the would-be biographer of the poet Jeffery Aspern is the dramatic center of James`s tale, which seems to belong to a whole family of Jamseian stories illustrating moral and emotional defection in the aesthetic personality. Henry James`s '**The Aspern Papers'** invokes and contributes to his legibility; James`s fascination with problems of privacy and publicity is well known and fairly explicit; he himself recognizes it as crucial to his project, writing in his notebook in 1887 that "one sketches one`s age but imperfectly if one doesn`t touch on…..the invasion, the impudence and shamelessness, of the newspapers and the interviewer, the devouring publicity of life, the extinction of all sense between public and private." (Otten 2006, pp.88-89) But what makes '**The Aspern Papers'** a most pertinent text to consider here is the extent to which its concern for privacy entails a concern for papers, and further, the ways in which it moves toward equating the act of reading with the act of physical intrusion. Such equations are most obviously rendered in the story`s broad outlines: the papers of the tale`s title are part of the trail left behind by an affair between the late poet, Jeffery Aspern , and the now aged Juliana Bordereau, who keeps herself shut up with her niece in a crumbling Venetian palace:

> I had made my way to it the day after my arrival in Venice (it had been described to me in advance by the friend in England to whom I owed definite information as to their possession of the papers), and I had besieged it with my eyes while I considered my plan of campaign. Jeffrey Aspern had never been in it that I knew of; but some note of his voice seemed to abide there by a roundabout implication, a faint reverberation

Henry James writes in his notebook describing the true anecdote on which the story is based :

> Certainly there is a little subject there, the picture of the two faded, queer, poor, discredited old English women−living on into a strange generation, in their musty corner of a foreign town−with these illustrious letters their most precious possession. Then the plot of the Shelley fanatic− his watchings and waitings−the way he *couvers* the treasure. The denouement needn`t be the one related of poor Silsbee, and at any rate the general situation is in itself a subject and a picture. It strikes me much. (p.54)

Henry James holds that it is a writer`s duty to clear away the approaches to his privacy. If documents did survive, it was questionable nevertheless whether others could take it upon themselves to destroy them as happened in the **'The Aspern Papers'.** The tale is an attempt by Henry James to recapture the visitable

past−the past which in any generation is still within the reach of its memory−and to convey “the poetry of the thing outlived and lost and gone.” (Edel 1963, p.157) This is what he achieved in his extraordinary tale of an old woman living beyond her time in a decaying Venetian palace and clinging to the precious letters written to her by the great American poet.

## 3.1 The Relationship between the Artist and his Biographers and Critics:

Henry James believes that the artist`s personal life should be preserved from prying hands, and that the artist should be read only through his art. Yet James is also on the side of the biographer who seeks the human elements in the artist`s work. The relation that ties the artist to his biographers has always been an unpeacful relation, and the artist`s personal life has always been a seducing mystery for the biographers, that needs to be discovered. Henry James believes that the artist`s life should be separated from his own writings and he/she should be seen only through his art. However, “persons feel themselves somehow present not just in papers they have written, but also in papers they have read or owned or even touched.” (Otten 2006) Characterizing secretiveness, which he classifies as an instinct, James notes:

> Some persons will never leave anything with their name written on it, where others may pick it, up−even in the woods, an old envelope must not be thrown on the ground. Many cut all the leaves of a book of which they may be reading a single chapter, so that no one shall know which one they have singled out, and all this with no definite notion of harm. (p.123)

This controversial relationship which can be called the cat-and-mouse game between the artist and his biographers, which Henry James devised in the story between his Silsbee character and the two ladies in the true version of the story provides the mounting tension. In the tale James uses his characteristic technique, that of making his hero his own historian−writing his story with such ingenuousness that he reveals his own duplicity, his easy rationalizations and his failure to grasp the fact that, in his zeal for literary history, he is an invader of private lives. In this sense the tale is a moral fable for all historians and biographers. It has dramatized their role, and it makes clear on which side the artist places himself.

The narrator in the story is a great admirer of Jeffery Aspern and so he is ready to do anything, and to sacrifice anything for the sake of getting the precious

papers:

> Mrs. Prest knew nothing about the papers, but she was interested in my curiosity, ……..I could see that she was amused by my infatuation, the way my interest in the papers had become a fixed idea. "One would think you expected to find in them 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 me the greater boon (p.3)

When he sees Miss Juliana for the first time, in order to convince her of giving him a room or two in her palace, he asks her of the sum that she wants; this scene underlines the narrator`s undefeated will of fulfilling his ambition, and this shows how strong and intense the desire of the biographer to intrude the artist`s life for the sake of publishing his secrets:

> The sum she had mentioned was, by the Venetian measure of such matters, exceedingly large; there was many an old palace in an out-of-the-way corner that I might on such terms have enjoyed the whole of by the year. But so far as my resources allowed I was prepared to spend money, and my decision was

quickly taken. I would pay her with a smiling face what she asked. (p. 26)

However, despite the continuing desire to interfere in the life of the great poet, the narrator has a subjective and somehow a fair point of view towards the poet:

> 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. (p.3)

Despite the tremendous suffering it may cause, feelings of curiosity to reveal a famous person`s personal life is not necessarily a negative thing. In '**The Aspern Papers**' the motive of the narrator seems to be of an innocent one. He and his friend want to get the papers for the sake of immortalizing the famous American poet in a great literary work:

> The world, as I say, had recognized Jeffrey Aspern, but Cumnor and I had recognized him most. The multitude, today, flocked to his temple, but of that temple he and I regarded ourselves as the ministers. We held, justly, as I think, that we had done more for his memory than anyone else, and we had done it by opening lights into his life. (p.4)

But this does not deny the fact that the artist is at the end of the day not a happy person because of all these attempts to intrude his life whatever the purpose it.

Henry James's **'The Aspern Papers'** introduces a more ironic tale in which art is commodity, and the narrator a capitalist set on making an exchange beneficial to himself. Here, "ambiguity cedes before irony, as the protagonist holds that the attainment of the Aspern Papers is and must forever remain superimposed to any moral consideration" (Levin 2007):

> I can arrive at my spoils only by putting her off her guard,
> and I can put her off her guard only by ingratiating diplomatic
> arts. Hypocrisy, duplicity are my only chance. I'm sorry for it,
> but there's no baseness I wouldn't commit for Jeffrey Aspern's sake.
> First I must take tea with her, then tackle the main job. (p.9)

One of the most important scenes in the tale, illustrates the deep effect of the biographer`s interference in the artist`s life; the moment when Juliana discovers the narrator trying to gain access to her desk and turns her blazing eyes upon him−those eyes which have been covered by a green shade−the eyes that had once looked into those of Jeffrey Aspern:

> her hands were raised, she had lifted the everlasting curtain that
> covered her face, and for the first, the last, the only time I beheld

> her extraordinary eyes. They glared at me [they were the sudden drench, for a caught burglar, of a flood of gaslight]; they made me horribly ashamed. 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 I turned, looking at her, she hissed out passionately, furiously:
> "Ah, you publishing scoundrel!" (p.112)

This is the climax of the story: the narrator has been caught red-handed; the hero-worshipper, the lover of poetry, the gallant gentleman, is nothing but a thief in his compulsive need to acquire a moment of the man he worships.

Another scene, in which the middle-aged niece, after the death of Juliana, suggests to the narrator that the Aspern papers could be his if he only becomes a member of the family, "If you were not a stranger…. Anything that is mine would be yours."(p.127) This scene has a dramatic effect; and it is too much for the narrator. He has been ready to steal; he has even said playfully he would be willing to make love to the younger Miss Bordereau. Now all he can stammer is "Ah Miss Tina−ah Miss Tina−It wouldn`t do!" (p.130) He flees the palace, and surrenders all hopes of getting the Aspern papers. The story moves with the "rhythmic pace" and tension of a superb mystery story; and the double climax−the unmasking of the "publishing scoundrel" and the proposal made to him by the middle-aged niece, that he marry her and receive the Aspern Papers as

a “dowry”−give this tale the high drama reflected in the extraordinary success of Sir Michael Redgrave`s play version. (Edel 1960, p.7)

Henry James`s **‘The Aspern Papers’,** is one of the tales where the author mixes successfully between the subjective and objective levels of experience. It explores some aspects of the mysterious life of the creative writer and how it can arouse the curiosity of scholars and researchers alike. He has been rightly viewed as a:

> critical examination of the literary scholar`s obsession with the mystery of creativity. There are numerous autobiographical resonance James`s own life in the tale, for instance, his interest in Pushkin, Walt Whitman, Julian Hawthorne, and Constance Fenimore Woolsen. A portrait of the ghostly Jeffery Aspern –not his papers- is the central and haunting object of desire in the story. (Hoeveler 2008)

The narrator`s thoughts and feelings are described as he is rowed through the canals by his gondolier after receiving Miss Tina`s proposal. The vision of the bright decaying city melts into his personal disaster. “I could not accept. I could not accept, for a bundle of tattered papers, marry a ridiculous, pathetic, provincial old women.” (p.131) He may have trifled with her affections; he now understands this; yet is not sufficiently without principle to achieve his ends at any cost. Late in the afternoon he finds himself standing before the church of

Saint John and Paul, looking up at the great equestrian statue of Bartolommeo Collenoi; the old buccaneer, who had grabbed at life with his two fists:

> I only found myself staring at the triumphant captain as if he had had an oracle on his lips. The western light shines into his grimness at that hour and makes it wonderfully personal. But he continued to look far over my head, at the red immersion of another day−he had seen so many go down into the lagoon through the centuries−and if he were thinking of battles and stratagems they were of a different quality from any I had to tell him of. (p.133)

This is the moment when the narrator searches the small square-jawed face of the statue; it is all but the end of the narrator`s stratagems. So tense a drama, unfolded step by step and with an inexorable logic−an old palace, two solitary ladies, and a bundle of papers as the principle properties and all Venice for a backdrop−would have been nothing without the measured tread of the narrative. (Edel 1963) The narrator of **'The Aspern Papers'** ends gazing upon a literary portrait−though here the portrait reflects the failure of his desire to obtain the knowledge he sought, rather than the failure of his faith to sustain that desire. "The literary question of the story is left unanswered, not undecided, and he remains isolated in his self-recrimination: "When I look at [the picture]**,"** the last

sentence reads, “my chagrin at the loss of the letters becomes almost intolerable”.” (Cohen 1996, p.234)

## 3.2 The Biographical Interpretation of the Tale:

There are so many links between Henry James`s life and his imagined tale. There are but casual hints and perhaps matters of coincidence, in the relationship between the narrator and Miss Tina:

> Her attitude was perpetually a sort of prayer for assistance, for explanation; and yet no woman in the world could have been less of a comedian. From the moment you were kind to her she depended on you absolutely; her self-consciousness dropped from her and she took the greatest intimacy, the innocent intimacy which was the only thing she could conceive, for granted

.

Analyzing Miss Tina`s personality, Walther states:

> Although Miss Tina is not presented as the typical mighty heroine right at the outset of the story, and is often initially seen as a simple-minded minor character, whose only function is to serve as a tool for the narrator to achieve his goal, there is so much more about her.
>
> (Walther 2010)

The way in which the narrator woos her sympathies, takes her sightseeing in the gondola, reenacts those gallantries James had bestowed upon Feminore Woolson during the first weeks of their acquaintance. The course of this story suggests clearly that James is beginning to feel uneasy about the familiar life into which he has been led with the deaf Miss Woolson:

> We strolled and strolled, though really not much passed between us save the recognition of her bereavement, conveyed in my manner and in the expression she had of spending on me now, since I let her see I still took an interest in her…..I forbore to press on that question, however, for I certainly was not prepared to say that I would take charge of her. (p.118)

It is believed that Henry James in picturing Tina, he is actually picturing Miss Woolson, his friend, and there is more than one proof for that; first the age, Tina is older than the narrator and so is Miss Woolson. Second, James and Miss Woolson have lived under one roof for a while, and so do Miss Tina and the narrator. The last proof is the controversial and the mysterious relationship between the two; Miss Tina`s feeling were clear and she knew what she felt and what she wanted. Unlike the narrator who sometimes denies any sort of love feelings toward her, but at the end of the story he admits that he has certain

feelings for her, to the extent that makes him rethink her proposal and nearly accept it:

> It beautified her; she was younger; 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 that could pay the price. (P.137)

These conflicts in feelings may be those of James`s feelings toward Miss Woolson as well. The relationship may have been propriety itself; of Feminore`s feelings James could never have been wholly in doubt; her letters to him, written when he was in America, had carried an implicit refrain demanding attention and affection. Miss Woolson would hardly suggest to James that they should find some more intimate ground of communication, or argue upon him as directly as Tina had argued the narrator, with the Aspern papers in her hands, the need for an alliance.

The narrator in **'The Aspern Papers'**, fleeing Tina and the palace, tells himself at the last that he had "unwittingly but none the less deplorably trifled." (p.132) He repeats to himself, "I had not given her cause−distinctly I had not." (p.132) He had been "as kind as possible, because I really liked her," (p.132) and asks himself. "since when had that become a crime where a women of such an

age and such an appearance was concerned?" (p.132) This seems to have been James`s logic as well. He treats Miss Woolson as a friendly and charming old maid for whom he has a feeling of kindness because she is devoted to him. And now through the wall of his ego, he is beginning to feel that perhaps she, on her side, nourishes more affectionate feelings than he suspects. The tale suggests that James had begun to wonder whether Feminore is not expecting more of him than mere displays of kindness. "At any rate, whether I had given cause or not it went without saying," (p.133) the admirer of Jeffery Aspern tells himself, "that I could not pay the price." (p.133)

The narrator may have told himself "I had not given her cause" (p.132), but the reader knows that he has. He has enlisted Tina on his side from the first by flattery; he has invited this middle-aged woman, to whom the very sight of a man is a novelty, to play his particular game and even to betray her great-aunt: even as James has allowed his own needs for friendship, companionship, understanding, to blind him to what might stand for in his relationship with Feminore, and what might be doing to her affections. In the tale, the unfeeling cruelty of the narrator is softened somewhat by his dedicated artistic nature, his sense of the past, his love for the great poet. Nevertheless his behavior has in it a quality of selfishness, a kind of easy innocence that does not conceal the end, but certainly not a warm-hearted gentleman. In life Henry James seems to have gained a glimmer of

insight, or senses the danger of incurring the same charge, or a charge even more serious−that of being so blinded by egotism that he might be held guilty of a total failure in awareness−he the novelist who of all writers could know and feel and understand. **'The Aspern Papers'** may have been a screen for deeper thoughts, nourished by the novelist, that somewhere, there might lurk some James papers.

The final lesson of the story appears to be that these conflicting claims of the relationship between the artist and the biographer are ultimately sacrifice of the artistic humanity−of honour, integrity, and sometimes even of simple human feeling and common decency.

'The Aspern Papers' initiates a line in modern fiction where the writer`s life becomes a topic of investigation and continuous search. Obviously, the artist`s life remains a source of magic and fascination for many curious people whether journalists, students or scholars. In James`s view, the artist`s mystery is of great importance for many people, although this tale has a strikingly ironic ending. The search ends suddenly at the discovery that the price of getting those papers is too costly: getting married to a spinster. This is typically the Jamesian art which mixes between irony and seriousness that is rarely found in other writers.

# ‘The Figure in the Carpet’

## 3.3 Preliminary Notes:

**‘The Figure in the Carpet’**, is the second of the two tales of Henry James to be discussed here in chapter three. As in **‘The Aspern Papers’**, **‘The Figure in the Carpet’** belongs to the tales of Henry James that discuss the creative life of the artist in general and his everlasting suffering from the deep feeling of alienation and isolation in his own community. The well-made plot of the story provides one aspect of its distinction in dealing with such a controversial issue, i.e, the relationship between the artist and his community in general and his biographers and critics in particular.

Concerning the plot of the story, the narrator, a reviewer, prides himself on his astute review of Hugh Vereker's latest novel:

> What explanation could be more to the point than my obvious fitness for the task? I had written on Hugh Vereker, but never a word in The Middle, where my dealings were mainly with the ladies and the minor poets. This was his new novel, an advance copy, and whatever much or little it should do for his reputation I was clear on the spot as to what it should do for mine. (p.360)

Vereker dismisses his efforts, explaining that all critics have missed his little point, the particular thing he has written most of his books for. It is that challenge or secret that the critic has to find, like a complex figure in a Persian carpet:

> By my little point I mean--what shall I call it?--the particular thing I've written my books most for. Isn't there for every writer a particular thing of that sort, the thing that most makes him apply himself, the thing without the effort to achieve which he wouldn't write at all, the very passion of his passion, the part of the business in which, for him, the flame of art burns most intensely? Well, it's THAT! (p.365)

The narrator tells his friend Corvick of the puzzle. Corvick and his novelist fiancé, Gwendolen, pursue the trick. Corvick finds the trick, but he refuses to divulge the secret to Gwendolen until after they are married, and then he dies in an accident. Gwendolen remarries, and after her death, the narrator approaches her new husband to discover the secret. But he is surprised and humiliated by his wife`s great secret. He and the narrator conclude by sharing the same throbbing curiosity:

> I told him in a word just what I've written out here. He listened with deepening attention, and I became aware, to my surprise, by his ejaculations, by his questions, that he would have been after all not unworthy to be trusted by his wife….. I may say that to-day as

> victims of unappeased desire there isn't a pin to choose between us. The poor man's state is almost my consolation; there are really moments when I feel it to be quite my revenge. (p. 400)

Obviously, there is an element of game or even a joke in the working out of the given themes or situations: “For the few persons, at any rate, abnormal or not, with whom my anecdote is concerned, literature was a game of skill, and skill meant courage, and courage meant honour, and honour meant passion, meant life” (p.380) The story has some bearing on a subject Henry James took with perfect seriousness. Fiction, according to James, was an art, or not worth bothering about. Unfortunately, this was a view the public at large did not share. The artist, at any rate as James and his contemporaries understood his role, could not quite ignore this difference of opinion, since after all the public provided him with a living and the means to carry on being an artist. But he could not but be aware of a distance between them, and even, on his side, of certain contempt. The artist took a view of life more specialized, and requiring a notion of the vitality of art inaccessible to the crowd; the crowd thought of him as a self-centered and probably self-destructive model.

The belief that art therefore imposes alienation and suffering−that the price of this higher kind of life is isolation− was not only maintained but lived through by many nineteenth-century artists, and Henry James was not an exception.

(Kermode`s 1986) James considered the relation between the artist and public from many angles, he wrote about painters and painting, and saw the novelist`s struggle for formal power and life analogues to the visual artist.

## 3.4 The Relationship between the Artist and his Biographers and Critics:

Since **'The Figure in the Carpet'** discusses almost the same themes that have already been discussed in **'The Aspern Papers'**−mainly, the theme of the relationship between the artist and his biographers− the two stories do share many common points to be discussed in the following:

The critic as an enemy recurs in **'The Figure in the Carpet'.** In ***The Art of Fiction*** James said of the novelist that "his manner is his secret, not necessarily a jealous one. He cannot disclose it as a general thing if he would; he would be at a loss to reach it to others." (p.61) But he would have liked to find critics, expert readers, who could disclose it, or something of it; and the failure of any such to appear was a cause of frequent lamentation. This is the broad idea behind **'The Figure in the Carpet'.** Reflecting on it later, James speaks first of the lack of "anything like close or analytic appreciation" (p.96) and puts the case for Hugh

Vereker`s story as a fit instance of his defect. The quest of Vereker`s undiscovered secret is therefore, in James`s intention, a figure for a more general critical failure, the failure to find out what the artist was trying for.

In contrast to the deconstructionists and New critics that strip the author of any intention or design, Vereker (and Henry James behind him) emphasize the central role of the author, his meaning and intention behind the literary text.

In his notebook, James imagines the possessor of the secret as believing "that they don`t *know* his work who don`t know, who haven`t felt, or guessed, or perceived, this interior thought−this special *beauty* (that is mainly the just word) that pervades and controls and animates them". (p.72)

In a very important scene, James pictures the deep gulf between the artist and his readers and presents the artist`s disappointment that readers did not have the ability to discover his general intention:

> I dare say they were in general rather stupider then; at any rate it always struck me they missed my little point with a perfection exactly as admirable when they patted me on the back as when they kicked me in the shins. Whenever since I`ve happened to have a glimpse of them they were still blazing away−still missing it.
>
> (pp. 364-365)

"Phonology" is the concept in **'The Figure in the Carpet'** that acts as a possible key to directing the reader`s attention to the secret of a writer`s work that every critic has ignored or marginalized. On the manifest level, the story is concerned with a noted writer, Hugh Vereker, who complains to a young critic that overall intention of his work has been "guessed by the countless analysts who have attempted to explain it, and the introduction of phonology in the tale implies that it is so classifiable". (Tintner 2000, p.168) The narrator argues in this scene that:

> 'Perhaps it`s a preference for the letter P!' I ventured profanely to break out. 'Papa, potatoes, prunes − that sort of thing?' he was suitably indulgent: he only said I hadn`t got the right letter. (p.368)

The following words of the narrator represent the hysterical desire of biographers and critics to reveal the secrets of the artist`s intention of his work of art:

> I`d spent half the night with him. At three o`clock in the morning, not sleeping, remembering moreover how indispensable he was to Lady Jane, I stole down to the library with a candle. There wasn`t so far as I could discover, a line of his writings in the house. Returning to town I feverishly collected them all; I picked out each

in its order……this gave me a madding month. (p.370)

Another scene that strongly illustrates the undeclared game between the artist and the critics is when the narrator argues with Hugh Vereker about the trick in his writings. Obviously, Vereker belongs to the list of writers who bear some grudge or doubt about the whole critical enterprise:

> I had pause. 'Don`t you think you ought– just a trifle– to assist the critic?''Assist him? What else have I done with every stroke of my pen? .....'But you talk about the initiated. There must therefore, you see, be initiation.''What else in heaven`s name is criticism supposed to be?..... Besides the critic just isn`t a plain man: if he were, pray, what would he be doing in his neighbor`s garden? (p.366)

This quotation represents the full understanding of the artist of his own role in the world of literary writings. The artist is aware of the nature of the relationship that should tie the artist to the critic. Henry James, as has already mentioned, insisted on the idea that the artist should only be read through his work, not through his personal life. The subjective and the objective levels of experience in the creative writer`s life are points in question here.

The narrator`s attempts to reveal the secret of the figure in the carpet were continuous and undefeated, and this shows the great desire of biographers and

critics to intrude the artist`s life in order to know his secrets. The narrator`s first success in his attempts is to make the great novelist (talk):

> I`ve always done justice to the generous impulse that made him speak; it was simply compunction for a snub unconsciously administrated to a man of letters in a position inferior to his own, a man of letters moreover in the very act of praising him. To make the thing right he talked to me exactly as an equal and on the ground of what we both loved best. (p.364)

The second attempt was to be close to the narrator`s dead friend`s wife, Gwendolen, he shows her every kindness in his power:

> I had at first found a way to persuade myself that I should soon get the better of the reserve formulated, the week after the catastrophe, in her reply to an appeal as to which I was not unconscious that it might strike her as mistimed. (p. 390)

But he fails to get anything from Gwendolen, so after her second marriage he decides to direct his attention to her husband, because he thinks she would surly tell him: “I began with due promptness to look for premonitory symptoms would be peculiarly visible in the husband.” (p.395) All these attempts fail, even

the narrator`s last chance to know the secret. When he meets Gwendolen`s husband in a club and tries to make him speak, he was shocked by the fact that he did not know anything: “He listened with deepening attention, and I became aware, to my surprise, by his ejaculations, by his questions, that he would have been after all not unworthy to be trusted by his wife.” (p.400)

In the late 1890s, Henry James turned increasingly towards another aspect of the theories of his brother William James, the famous psychoanalyst, the notion that thoughts were just as real as real things. **‘The Figure in the Carpet’** is a “first attempt to translate this idea into fiction. The story begins to look quite different if we regard the figure as a possible but not necessarily existent entity.” (Ryan 1991, p.87) The figure is nothing but an imaginary object that functions just like a real one in the world of real people and real things. The power that emanates from the never-discovered figure in the carpet is not just speculations but a whole train of real events. Reality regroups around this center. What quite possibly is nothing at all actually causes things to happen. In making the reader experience the same feeling of being manipulated that the idea of **‘The Figure in the Carpet**, crystallizes in the mind of the narrator, how the tale reinforces its point about the power of the imaginary in the world of the real: that thoughts are no less valid than things. However, it is these very thoughts that cause much pain and dismay for the artist.

## 3.5 The Psychological Interpretation of the Tale:

The narrator of Henry James`s **'The Figure in the carpet'** fails utterly to uncover Hugh Vereker`s secret: "I may as well confess objectly that Mrs. Corvick`s unexpected attitude was the final tap on the nail that was to fix fast my luckless idea, convert it to the obsession of which I`m for ever conscious". "(p.391) Psychoanalytic critic Melissa Knox believes that a certain secret is legible in everything James wrote, including the commas and that James in his tale avoids directly stating his homosexuality wishes, but nevertheless exhibits them. In Knoks` viewpoint Henry James uses a certain style which expresses his homosexuality despite his intention to conceal it, as Hugh Vereker says: it "governs every line, it chooses every word, it does every I, it places every comma," (p.363) Psychologically speaking, this is a typical resolution of conflict in which the defense against a particular thought or activity itself gratifies the forbidden desire.

The first gatekeeper of Vereker`s secret is Lady Jane. She arranges the social event that provides others, including the narrator, access to the famous author. Vereker`s wife, lurking in the background of the story, then becomes a shadowy gatekeeper in that her illness denies the narrator access to his beloved author:

> Three weeks after this came Vereker`s death, and before the year

> was out the death of his wife. That poor lady I had never seen, but I had had a futile theory that, should she survive him long enough to be decorously accessible, I might approach her with the feeble flicker of my plea. Did she know and if she knew would she speak ….but when she passed out of all reach I felt renouncement indeed my appointed lot. I was shut up in my obsession for ever. (p. 395)

In Lacanian terms, the symbolic order is "metonymic chain of desire originating in the primal loss of the mother," (McCormack`s 2000, p.80) And like sexual knowledge, the knowledge of Vereker`s 'trick' seems not to be paraphrasable. It is knowledge that exists outside of the symbolic, which is to say outside of the language and law of the father. The narrator wonders: "Was the figure in the carpet traceable or describable only for husbands and wives−for lovers supremely united?" (p.391)

Concerning theories of Freud and their applications in the tales of Henry James, it is known that Freud noticed that the child, contrary to the adult, plays in full light of day, plays openly, and even causes his or her creations to transform the external world of perception. By way of contrast, the adult can play in secret and often actively hides his or her creative activities. Adults are guilty; consequently, they have lost the innocence of play, have repressed it,

transforming the nature of play itself into an unconscious source of pleasure. At sometimes, even Freud noticed that the artist constitutes the exceptional case to this internalization and continues to play out in the open: “For the few persons, at any rate, abnormal or not, with whom my anecdote is concerned, literature was a game of skill, and skill meant courage, and courage meant honour, and honour meant passion, meant life.” (p.380). Freud exclaims with a certain amount of surprise, society allows it! Even if the artist must usually pay the price in terms of a suffering that compensates for the artist`s enjoyment and seems to satisfy the cruelty of society itself toward the artist for enjoying too much and in a manner the civilization first of all demands to be sacrificed.

This economic arrangement of cruelty and pleasure, according to Freud, is the guarantee that the creative writer or artist has to exist. This would imply that one should look for the sense of the process on the surface of the writer`s activity, for the process that seeks to hide nothing. It seems odd, that often the function of interpretation is to reveal or to expose a secret behind the appearance of the literary effect, underneath the more overt transformations to locate **‘The Figure in the Carpet’** or the figure of ideology. This activity can be seen as an extension of the earlier repression; to transform what is out and open, on the surface, to what is hidden and secret, as it is pictured by Vereker himself when he says:

> I can speak for myself: there`s an idea in my work without which I wouldn`t have given a straw for the whole job. It`s the finest fullest intention of the lot, and the application of it has been, I think, a triumph of patience, of ingenuity. I ought to leave that to somebody else to say; but that nobody does say it precisely what we`re talking about. It stretches, this little trick of mine, from book to book, and everything else, comparatively, plays over the surface of it. (p.366)

This would transform the very intentionality of the writer, so that the figure itself would appear to have been "ferreted away, and desire becomes the desire of the phantasm. This is why interpretations of ideology begin with a false premise; that the writer was hiding anything to begin with". (Lambert 2002, p.136)

All the narrator`s desperate attempts and his suffering to know the secret represent, in general, the difficulty in writing criticism. The narrator`s failure in revealing Vereker`s secret is expressed in his laconic way, he epitomizes the issue in terms of self-rebuke:

> I felt, on that occasion, I splashed along in the rain, that I couldn`t have done anything else, and yet I remembered saying to myself that it was hard, was even cruel. Not only had I lost the books, but I had also lost the man himself. They and their author had been spoiled for me, I know too which was the loss I most regarded. I had taken to the man

more than I had ever taken to the books. (p.372)

**‘The Figure in the Carpet’** finishes on a more mean-spirited note than **‘The Aspern Papers’**, for this narrator attains a measure of relief by transferring the irresoluble quest onto someone else−Gwendolen`s widower: “I may say that to-day as victims of unappeased desire there isn`t a pin to choose between us. The poor man`s state is almost my consolation; there are indeed moments when I feel it to be almost my revenge” (p.400). Obviously the narrator has certain affinities with the dead artist in that both of them are driven by sexual desires and motives which may explain this endless hunt for the writer. It has been pointed out in Cohen`s statement: It is all the more invidious for being a pyrrhic victory: rather than smashing the privileges of matrimony, the narrator simply recruits one of its former adherents for the cause of sexually debilitated literary compulsion. (Cohen 1996, p.234)

However, the two tales share a very important technique that James has perfectly used; the narrator in the two stories is anonymous, and he uses the first person pronoun to tell his story. And here an important question is raised; to whom is the narrator of this story talking or writing? As in all first person narrations, it is not easy to answer that question. Third person narration depends on the convention of an often anonymous narrating voice. In the case of a first

person narration like **'The Aspern Papers'** and **'The Figure in the Carpet'** it is as though readers have been made to overhear a murmuring internal voice of the narration, the narrator of these tales speaks as a witness. As James`s preface to ***The Golden Bowl*** states, he is "witness of the destruction of **'**The Aspern Papers'" (p.23) One of James`s critics shows the interrelationship between this short story and his other novels where the position of the artist engages the centre:

> James`s odd capitalization and punctuation here identifies the Aspern papers themselves and the story of that title. In what way the story itself is destroyed or what that might mean remains to be seen. The reader is put by the narrator`s disposition in the position of the conscience, the judge or jury. (Miller 2005, p.13)

A psychological portrait of Henry James is not easily drawn. He would seem never to have offered his contemporaries a direct and frank image of his personality; his letters and Notebooks are sometimes more elusive than revealing, despite the rich flow of style. Even James`s physical appearance is reconstructed with difficulty. However, it is possible to reproach James for a lack of a more extensive social vision and a more direct expression. But these limitations, partly the result of his life and character, he transformed into artistic qualities, psychological inquiry and portrayals; he always explored the areas behind mere

appearances and attitudes; his works are an attempt to describe man`s conflict with himself and with the world. In these two tales, the conflict centers on the hunt of critics or biographers for the artist in his life or after his death. It is a conflict that has grave consequences on the artist`s life and personal interests.

To conclude, James`s tale, in its skilful reading and omitting, raises more psychological questions than it answers and has become a mine for biographical critics, psychoanalytic theorists, and reader- response analysts. This is due to James`s skill in portraying the artist and his pursuers in a very interesting way.

Out of the preceding account, it is obvious that there was a well-established criticism for James`s two tales, in particular, and his art in general. And this may have given a clear idea about how Henry James dealt, in general, with the conception of art. Since James was one of the artists who believed in 'art for art`s sake', he has treated the concept of art in a very unique way. One can say that he has invented his own version of 'art for art`s sake'; he believed that art should be pure and only devoted to art itself, however, at the same time, his work showed that romantic touch in them. Those who intruded in the main characters` lives have nothing to do with art. In their view, art and artists have been commodified to serve the biographers` immediate interests and needs.

In these two tales, particularly, James presented the conception of art in a very professional way. He tried to teach the reader that art is, for James at least, the only thing in life that is worth living. Both tales are talking about secrets, and secrets are very suspicious and attractive and make people care a lot for it. This gave the texts the importance that the writer was willing to. The reader of Henry James`s two tales can imagine him saying "life is a secret, art is the way to express this secret, so life is art and art is life".

The secret of the life of the artist is what all biographers and critics want to discover, as in Henry James`s case. They want to get certain knowledge; this knowledge makes them, as in the two tales, sacrifice their precious things in life to know that secret. The relation between the artist and his biographers and critics is not by any means a peaceful relationship. This kind of people is always ready to seize the chance to intrude into the artist`s life whose only guilt is being an artist. Henry James suffered much because of such a relation, the curiosity to reveal his own life`s secrets continued even after his death. His relationships with women were always under speculation; he was largely criticized for not getting married and even his sexuality was crucially scrutinized. Such speculations about Henry James`s personal life paved the way to a large amount of psychoanalytical studies of his own literary work. These two tales and many others, interesting in

their own right, have much to say about their author`s life and his conception of art and artists.

Freud, as has been shown previously, illustrated that the artist plays the game of life in the open, like a child, unlike adults who play secretly. But the artist usually pays the price for that, by suffering because of the cruelty of the society, as seen in **'The Figure in the Carpet'**. Lacanian theories can be also applied here, because the knowledge of Vereker`s 'trick' seems not to be soluble, like sexual knowledge. In Lacanian terms, this symbolic order of the trick is a chain of desires originating in the primal loss of the mother.

As for Carl Jung`s psychological conception of the process of 'individuation', it seems very much related to what Henry James is interested in as shown in his fiction. James was concerned with the unconsolidated man or as it was called 'divided self' one may be tempted to assert that this phrase is not, in truth, much different from the divided self known in psychology.

Generally speaking, the interpretation of these two tales lies in revealing or exploring a secret behind the appearance of the literary effect. Self-assertion was one of the messages James`s literary work sought to embody; he wanted to determine the personality and the position of the artist, at the same time, he insisted that the artist`s life should be preserved from prying hands as these two

tales suggest. However, the artist will always be a fertile source for curiosity to people around him; in other words, he has to pay the price for being in such a different and vulnerable situation from other ordinary people. He has to accept the truth that he is an alien to his community and accordingly he is not a happy person in most cases.

# Chapter Four

## 4.1: Conclusion

Henry James`s works carried a huge emphasis on the position of the artist, his/her predicament and inability to understand the motives of others. In most cases, he appears to be in the defensive position regarding those who give themselves the right to intrude into his life, privacy and innermost interests. The relation between the artist and his critics and biographers represents the core in his tales discussed in this thesis: **'The Aspern Papers'** and **'The Figure in the Carpet'**. He pictured this relation in a very interesting ironic way and tried to portray the image of the artist in his community. He appears to be often misunderstood and even persecuted by others.

The artist`s life and experience always represent a fertile topic for researchers and critics. This curiosity about the artist`s life intensifies his feeling of alienation and isolation from his own community, and makes him feel as if he were stalked wherever he goes and whatever he does. Even when he is dead, people still have shown that curiosity to reveal the secrets of his life, as has been shown in Henry James`s two tales. Henry James, the great novelist and short story writer, is not an exception as far as this particular issue is concerned. He himself is one of those artists who have suffered from the feeling of being stalked .People around

him kept trying, especially in his later years and after his death, to intrude into his personal life and to benefit from revealing his own secrets. As such, it is not surprising to find James devoting many of his tales and novels to exploring this multiplicity of levels and meanings emanating from this persecutor-victim or subject-object relationship and its serious-comic implications. In other words, James has succeeded in rendering many subjective aspects a topic worthwhile to be studied in its own right.

As for Henry James the man, the notebooks simply tell us that, for better or worse, his professional view of himself was the same in private as in public. There will always be speculations about Henry James`s secret private life, for if he had a personal life in the usual sense of the phrase, it had remained a secret. That James chooses to write about this very touching issue in any writer`s life is indicative of the extent of pain and anger at seeing others poking their noses in the most intimate affairs.

**‘The Aspern Papers’** and **‘The Figure in the Carpet’** have tackled the issue of art and its sacrifices as well as the position of outsiders regarding this matter. These two tales have presented some of the aspects of Henry James`s personal life; sometimes the reader feels that he is reading James`s biography or he is hearing the inner voice of Henry James talking instead of the characters.

This is because of the great pain inflicted by others as they seek to fulfill their interests at the expense of his personal comfort.

As we have seen, **'The Aspern Papers'** tells the story of a narrator who is dying to get papers which refer to a famous poet, and he at some points was ready to sacrifice his whole life and future to get these papers. By a stroke of irony, the researcher has to change his mind when he realized that he has to get married to an ugly spinster in return. In **'The Figure in the Carpet',** almost the same issue is discussed; a reviewer seeks a secret for a famous novelist which is expressed in his writings and he devotes his life to know that secret. This theme which is common in the two tales represents a very important idea, a message which Henry James wanted to say through his works: the idea that the artist is always stalked in his life and also after his death and that people always want to intrude into his life. In brief, the artist is not happy all his life, and even after his death, there are those who are curious to excavate his secrets and private matters.

Henry James disliked this idea, and asserted through his writings, notebooks and letters the idea that the artist should be read only through his works and his life should be preserved from prying hands. All this, of course, was of no avail.

It is because Henry James wrote so much and experimented so widely, that criticism has found it difficult to see him whole or to place him within a historical

context. His critics have often regarded him as a curiosity, a secret to be unraveled. His method and purpose were peculiar to himself, because he seeks fullness of insight and perfection of form. He believed from the beginning that the artist in fiction is a historian of that part of life which is never found in books: the private life that goes on behind the walls of dwellings, but which is also a part of the society in which it is lived. Literature for him was the great repository of life; and he believed that if art is capable of reflecting many aspects of existence, the position of the artist in the very act of experiencing the world around him, is a central point in his fiction.

Out of the whole discussion, it has become obvious that the creative writer or the artist in general is a puzzling personality for biographers and critics due to his privacy and aloofness. As such he becomes a prey for those who interfere into his personal life, and he will always be an alien for his community. The artist does not live a normal life like ordinary people because his life and his work are always under discussion and speculations. Therefore, the artist, accordingly, is not a happy person, an alien. Obviously this is his/her lot which has to be accepted for all intents and purposes.

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