
The latest collection of contemporary appraisals of Henry James’s fiction, this volume contains selected American and British reviews and checklists of additional considerations of twenty-one novels, including *Daisy Miller* (1878), *The Two Magics* (1898), and *The American Scene* (1907). Accordingly, it is more generally useful than its predecessors—*Henry James: The Critical Heritage*, edited by Roger Gard (1968); *Critical Essays on Henry James*, 2 volumes, edited by James W. Gargano (1987), and *Henry James: Critical Assessments*, Volume 2, edited by Graham Clarke (1991)—though these collections, frequently composed of excerpts, also offer general considerations of James’s work and selections from reviews of his books of tales.

Hayes’s edition benefits from the publications of Gard, Gargano, and others (including Linda J. Taylor [*Henry James, 1866–1916: A Reference Guide*, 1982; he does not mention Clarke], but he improves upon them by printing the full texts of reviews (“overlong quotations” have been “abbreviated”), appending checklists of additional reviews for each book, and, in general, offering the “most thorough gathering” of newspaper and magazine reviews of James’s fiction “ever assembled.”

Hayes presents in his introduction an overview of the responses to James’s novels from *Roderick Hudson* (1875) to *The Golden Bowl* (1904), with an additional chapter on *The American Scene*. He describes James’s growing disillusionment with the 1880s reviews that culminated in the negative reception of *The Princess Casamassima* (1886) and the poor sales of *The Tragic Muse* (1890). Hayes characterizes the critical fault-finding with James’s novels to that point and beyond: the characters are frequently unsympathetic, the author’s tone is cold, there is little action or story, the endings are unsatisfactory (“the action simply stops” [xii]), there is too much psychology and analysis, and the author expects too much of his readers. All these points led to what came to be known as the Jamesian novel, for which the audience eventually became very small and select indeed.

The reviews themselves were published in many of the best periodicals of the day. They appeared in such newspapers as *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* in London; the *Guardian* in Manchester; the *Times*, the *Tribune*, the *Sun*, and the *World* in New York; the *Tribune*, the *Inter-Ocean*, and *Evening Post* in Chicago; the *Evening Transcript* and *Daily Advertiser* in Boston; and a solid assortment representing cities throughout the country, from Philadelphia and Charleston to Cleveland and New Orleans, to San Francisco and Portland. They were printed in such weekly journals as *The Academy*, *The Athenaeum*, *The Saturday Review*, *The Spectator*, and the *Pall Mall Gazette* in Britain and the *Literary World*, *The Nation*, *The Independent*, and *The Critic* in America. Finally, they appeared in such monthly and/or quarterly American magazines as *The Atlantic*, *Scribner’s*, *Century*, *Harper’s*, *Lippincott’s*, and the *North American Review*. The *British Quarterly Review*, the *Contemporary Review*, and the *Westminster Review* are represented only infrequently.
Authors of reviews were seldom acknowledged in the late nineteenth century, even in the quarterly or semi-annual volumes in which the issues were eventually gathered, but James knew W. E. Henley, R. H. Hutton, and George Saintsbury were among his British critics and that William Dean Howells, Thomas Sergeant Perry, John Hay, and Horace E. Scudder were among his American reviewers. After the critical reception of *The Bostonians* (1886), *The Princess Casamassina*, and *The Tragic Muse* in the 1880s, James was so irritated by reviews of his works that he thereafter frequently advised his publishers not to send him copies—though, of course, he was always pleased to hear about favorable notices. With the publication of *The Spoils of Poynton* in 1896, an aspect of the well-established judgment of James’s work already mentioned—that it was available only to the “most deeply initiated few”—became an important element in the consideration of James’s “later manner”: being for the “cognoscenti,” those who know. Edmund Gosse, an old friend, touched on this view in his laudatory essay on *The American Scene* in 1907: “‘The American Scene’ may be read by some Americans with bewilderment and impatience, but it constitutes the most durable surface-portraiture of an unparalleled condition of society which our generation is likely to see” (439).

Others expressed a similar judgment, but from an entirely different angle of vision. As early as 1877, a reviewer of *The American* in the *New York Times* described two possible reactions to James’s fiction:

Undoubtedly there are people to whom almost all that Mr. James writes is either distasteful, or simply unsympathetic, who rather avoid reading his books and shun any examination of his merits or demerits. But he has also enthusiastic admirers, respectful readers, and incisive critics, who find his writings worthy of some sort of regard, ranging from one pole of appreciation to the other. (26)

By the turn of the century, this bifurcation had become even more complex, as Montgomery Schuyler, in an essay on *The Wings of the Dove* (also in the *New York Times*), observed:

There is still a certain number of readers to whom the experience of a new novel by Henry James is the most interesting event in current fiction. We say “still” advisedly, for it is doubtful whether there are as many of them as there were ten years ago. . . . The novelist has never spared his readers any more than himself, and of late years he has become a harder taskmaster than ever. His exactions cannot be evaded except by strictly leaving the book alone. (372)

Schuyler later focuses on James’s “obscurity” and his lack of interest in “the general reader” in that regard. “One is tempted to say,” he observes, “that the sentences are in the minority that do not require to be read over twice. And there are very many whole pages that do require so to be studied” (374).

Despite these and other criticisms, James sometimes received great praise. In the 1870s, W. E. Henley, the British poet and editor, characterized *The Europeans*
as a "remarkable book," "perhaps the purest piece of realism ever done" (49); *Roderick Hudson* he thought a "singularly readable as well as a singularly vigorous and clever book" (17); and *Daisy Miller* he asserted was "out and away the best thing of its kind in recent English" (49). Concurrently, Thomas Sergeant Perry, an old friend whose opinions were seldom swayed by friendship, found much to admire in *The American*, in spite of his "disappointment" with Newman’s conduct at the end (30); and Richard Grant White, a well-known American editor and scholar, praised James’s portrait of Daisy Miller as "very faithful" and predicted that she "will become the accepted type and her name the sobriquet in European journalism of the American young woman of the period" (68). Subsequently, William Crary Brownell, a member of the staff of Charles Scribner’s Sons and later the author of two important books on Victorian and American prose, praised *The Portrait of a Lady* in 1882 as "an important work, the most important Mr. James has thus far written" (145). William Dean Howells, conductor at the time of the "Editor’s Study" in *Harper’s New Monthly*, characterized the *Princess Casamassima*, a book roundly criticized by many, as a "great novel... incomparably the greatest novel of the year in our language" (193). Edward Garnett, the well-known British critic and publisher’s reader, concluded that *The Ambassadors* "will rank as the finest and subtlest piece in the long gallery of [James’s] many achievements" (402). Claude Bragdon, American architect and poet, in a review of *The Golden Bowl* in 1905, proclaimed James "the only Anglo-Saxon novelist of the first class remaining" (420), compared his handling of symbolism in the novel with Hawthorne’s treatment of it in *The Scarlet Letter*, and concluded that "the chronicle [was] accomplished with an art beyond all praise" (421). Francis Thompson, the British Catholic poet, observed in a review of *The American Scene* that was published in the last six months of Thompson’s life that James was the novelist "always wanting to get inside the picture,... instinctively seeking psychological problems," and possessing "the most fastidiously probing mind in present literature" (456–57).

All in all, Hayes provides a full-scale consideration of the reception of James’s novels. Others might wish to include the texts of reviews that are not printed here or are merely listed. I wish that Constance Fenimore Woolson’s comments on *The Europeans* in the “Contributors’ Club” in *The Atlantic* for January and February 1879 had been included in full—they are only partially listed and neither attributed nor printed (Gard reprints the January portion of them). In addition, it is odd that Howells’s essay on *The Wings of the Dove* in the *North American Review* for January 1903 is not even mentioned in the checklist. Furthermore, I think the authors of some unattributed reviews can be identified. It is worth knowing that George Parsons Lathrop, a frequent contributor to *The Atlantic* and Hawthorne’s son-in-law, reviewed both *Roderick Hudson* and *The American* for the Boston monthly (both included without attribution in the collection), H. W. Boynton, Elizabeth Luther Cary, and H. W. Lanier are surely worthy of notes of identification (if not for the Jamesian, at least for the general reader). Such notes on others would be very useful as well—Annie R. M. Logan, Cornelia Atwood Pratt, and Mayo William Hazeltine come to mind. However, these comments should not obscure the merits of this volume. It is useful, generally reliable,
and a handy compilation of contemporary reviews of James’s novels and *The American Scene*.

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Edith Wharton once told a friend that she had been born with “critical spectacles” on her nose, a truth that Frederick Wegener’s welcome edition of her uncollected critical writings makes abundantly—and Handsomely—clear. This book brings together all of Wharton’s fugitive pieces, her miscellaneous uncollected writings, including reviews, essays, and eulogies, as well as introductions and prefaces to well-known novels, such as *The House of Mirth* (1905) and *Ethan Frome* (1911). It includes items not often found in similar volumes: letters to the editor, a newspaper transcription of an early lecture, and even an essay written by Wharton’s erstwhile lover William Morton Fullerton—an essay that Wharton helped revise.

When arranging these pieces, Wegener decided to sacrifice chronology in favor of genre, but those readers interested strictly in the sequential development of Wharton’s thinking will find that they can easily reorder the selections. He has chosen to exclude essays that Wharton compiled into books—*The Writing of Fiction* (1925), for example—or those that became chapters in books—*The Secret Garden* chapter of *A Backward Glance* (1934), for example. Also excluded are Wharton’s articles on her war-relief effort, which Wegener felt were more appropriately classified with her other wartime writings. The pieces are arranged in groupings that in part reflect their chronology: “Reviews, Essays, and Other Writings, 1896–1914”; “Reviews and Essays, 1920–1934”; “Tributes and Eulogies”; “Prefaces, Introduction, Forewords”; and “Self-Reconsiderations” (including autobiographical sketches and revised prefaces).

Readers will find this book easy to use. Wegener keeps the “textual apparatus,” as he calls it, to a minimum, yet what he does include shows a keen literary sensibility. The notes—ranging knowledgeably from unpublished primary material to the letters, fiction, and secondary sources—provide an education in themselves.

The introduction to the collection falls into five parts and reads like an extended essay that Wharton herself could have written. The first part focuses on her familial and cultural background. Wegener maintains that Wharton, who saw the critical facility as “male,” felt torn between her desire to write criticism and her “cowardice and incapacity” when she sat down to the task. Each time she would swear: “Never again!” (4). When she did begin, it was usually under the