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# The Expression: An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal

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## **THE HEROINES OF HENRY JAMES**

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### **Abstract**

Henry James is a real master of the art of creating wonderful female characters. He had a better access to the minds of his heroines than his heroes. We can find long passages of the psychological analysis of these heroines' mind very frequently in James' prose. James often gives us an insight into Isabel Archer's mind. That's why we get worried about her when she rejects two good proposals on her personal whims. We are made to feel Maggie's tension and her dilemma and with Milly, we too are able to perceive the fear of death. We are able to see Nanda's tragedy more clearly as we know that despite everything, she can neither hate Vanderbank, nor love Mitchy. Fleda's internal struggle make us feel sorry for her though at times we strongly feel that she herself is making things difficult for her. But then this is the speciality of Jamesian heroines that they are made of such a finer stuff that their lives are bound to be full of complex emotions and thoughts for they just can't do away with anything (which disturbs them) easily. With his finer art of characterization and deep psycho analysis, James has rendered his heroines very interesting and fascinating characters. Though James himself remained a bachelor throughout his life, love and marriage play the most important role in the lives of his heroines. Socially and morally Jamesian heroines are superior to his heroes and a constant source of inspiration to them. If some of them are very simple, others are extremely witty. Most of them possess the great qualities of courage, renunciation, loyalty, tenderness and justice. They are aesthetics with a strong moral sense. Drawn from Henry's real life experiences, these females are filled with the colours of Henry's own imagination. They have pleasant appearances and rich minds. They are so full of life that we can't deny the realistic touch in them. James has succeeded in making all of his heroines interesting enough to make a lasting impact on the readers.

### **Keywords**

American Girl, innocence, New World, Other, Self Theme.

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Henry James, born on (April. 15, 1843 - Feb.28, 1916) emerged as a writer during the 1860s. Leon Edel, who devoted a great many years of his life to the study of Henry James, ranked him among the greatest novelist of all time. Henry James, an American by birth and a European by choice, was well talented in literature, psychology and philosophy. The author of more than twenty novels, over a hundred short stories, scores of essays and reviews, and two volumes of autobiography, Henry James who became a British subject in 1915, stands as a towering and magisterial figure in American letters. In a career of nearly five decades, spanning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, he both reflected and transcended his place and time. If he felt more at home in Europe than America, still his forthright, intrepid characters ring true as nothing if not Americans; and if he had been seduced by the rich palimpsest of European civilization, still he was a sharp critic of the secrets and lies that this civilization held and perpetrated.

In spite of his decision to live abroad, James remained essentially an American in his sympathies. His greatest characters or protagonists are almost always American. But at the same time some of his most unpleasant characters are also Americans. But the important thing is that the characters who change, mature and achieve an element of greatness are almost always American. James was the first American qualified to develop the theme of the American in Europe. By the time, he made his decision to settle in Europe, he had made several trips there and had lived and attended school in several parts of Europe. Thus the subject matter of most of the James' work is concerned with an American of some degree of innocence meeting or becoming involved with some European of experience. The powerful grasp that James had of American history and American myth is unparalleled in any other contemporary writer. His knowledgeable American characters try to learn to adapt European values to American interest.

By the early definitions, James is not a realist. In other words, the realist was supposed to make an almost scientific a record of life. But James was not concerned with all aspects of life.

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There is nothing of the ugly, the vulgar, the common, or the pornographic in James. He was not concerned with poverty or with the middle class who had to struggle for a living. Instead he was interested in depicting a class of people who could afford to devote themselves to the refinements of life .

This is an unarguable fact that Henry James was a perceptive analyst of human emotions, a tireless experimenter who freed novel from the thrall of moralistic comment and told his stories through a series of psychological masks. Although his notebooks reveal careful attention to plot, 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' reality. Henry James had a very active social life which reflects in the vivid description of the social life of the characters created by him. He was a true cosmopolite. He was a citizen of the world and moved freely in and out of the drawing rooms in Europe, England and America. He had a vast experience with a huge number of people across the continents Europe and America which began as early as when he was just a child. His father Henry James senior, a wealthy and eccentric philosopher, initiated his young son into what would become a lifelong habit of travel.

James believed that one's society has a great influence on one's life. The richer and denser the society is, the more knowledgeable a person is. This is the reason that as an artist James found Europe more conducive. Whereas life in America was a void, Europe was a plentitude, or, to follow his own imagery, it was an ocean in which the gasping American conscience could at least find an element to swim in . That a person, particularly an American, might well drown in those deep and dangerous waters was a part of James' sense of the complexity of the American fate. But as a novelist he clearly felt that there was more to be learned from a swimming fish than from a landed one.

James greatly admired the culture of Europe- that is why he ended up living there. He advocated that life changes with the change in place. Life is best at the place where one is most comfortable. This is the reason that Europe inspired him more than America for his literary achievements and most of his best work was written in Europe. James' disengagement from America was a long process. Though James kept shuffling between America and Europe for the next three decades, it was Europe where he was more at home. He spent most of his time there and wrote most of his work there.

James was ever a distinguished writer. He gained popularity for his long exploration and vivid depiction of inner life of his characters. We may find long passages of such exploration in all of his books. Sometimes the characters have unvoiced exchanges. Biologically or physically his characters never change but there are always discoveries about hidden motives which keep on driving the characters. As woman are supposed to be more complex than their male counterparts, James chose to devote his creativity especially to the portrayal of female characters.

James became very popular for his portrayal of the American Woman. She is the frequent subject of his short stories, lectures and novels and causes much debate among today's critics of

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Henry James. He was reputed as a social snob and knew women only by observation and fancy. James always felt an imaginative kinship with women which made him concerned with all the social, psychological and personal problems of women which makes his empathic communion with feminine structures of subjectivity unparalleled elsewhere in the work of nineteenth-century male writers.

We can better understand James' attitude to life in the way he declined to participate in love or war, and stayed on the sidelines in the battle of sexes as well as the war between the states. His wound caused him to identify with doomed women and passive men, but it allowed him to transmute his anxieties about his masculinity into insightful, if ambivalent, studies of the American girl yearning to be free of confining conventions. His choice not to marry or to fight was linked to his desire to be "Just literary" to dedicate himself to recording the impressions society made on his finely tuned sensibilities. That is why his portraiture is so true and brilliant, he seizes the salient points with unerring skill, and there are faces and figures in his books that live in our memory as part of the more intimate experience of life.

When we think about the female characters of Henry James, Isabel Archer is the first name that comes to our mind. Critics have done different analyses of the strength and weaknesses of this character; some of them have described her as a true portrayal of the contemporary woman, while others have dismissed her as a weak woman with shallow knowledge. In spite of all this, Isabel remains the most important and extensively studied of Jamesian characters. In the end Isabel chooses life, and the love that is disclosed by the renunciation of love. After having studied this character in detail, we can perhaps explain her decision to save her marriage. May be she now returns to Osmond to seek compensation for whatever he has done to her. She returns to Florence as another Madame de Mauves to bring home to Osmond the force of her cherished but now forfeited self-conception. After the truth of Osmond and Madame Merle's relationship and Pansy's parenthood is revealed to her, she is in a state of utter shock. She is extremely sad but she doesn't actually show any resentment. It doesn't mean that she might not be angry. In fact she is someone who always presumptuously insists that people suffer too easily.

Due to this self-esteem of hers we may expect her to resist admitting injury and, consequently, to suppress any revenge feeling. But her returning back to Osmond without the slightest sign of forgiveness or renunciation, or even without giving any reason is disappointing. We can console ourselves that Isabel returns to him to keep the "honour" of their marriage which was her own decision. In this way, she will again prove her supremacy. At the same time, she will "know" Osmond in his insufficiency and shallowness, "know" him without ever saying what she knows. She will be a permanent reproach to the man. So, she returns to her husband not only to seek compensation, but for an act of resentment, an act that is presumably a prelude to a life long revenge through righteousness.

Milly Theale has all the qualities of the typical Jamesian American girls from Daisy Miller to Isabel Archer which makes her prone to a high tragedy. She is tender, generous, gay, and full of zest for 'life' for knowledge, friendship and love, which she passionately desires to have in

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abundance and in the greatest possible intensity. She is solitary, having lost in rapid succession her parents and all other near relations; she is stricken by a mysterious but mortal disease, which must cause her to die young; and above everything, she is rich colossally, unbelievably rich.

All these qualities her American ignorance and innocence, her consciousness, her solitude and pride diminish Milly's chances of being happy, which according to Sir Luke Strett, is the only condition for her survival. It is not that she doesn't want to be happy, she longs to the very last moment to be happy and to live. The way Milly takes the truth about her impending death makes her at once the most heroic, most legendary, element in the heroic and legendary tale and also the most real and exemplary for exhibiting one of the deepest aspects of James' mature vision of the human condition. She achieves an ideal and real triumph over those who have wronged her. The deeds of spiritual and intellectual strength enable her to impede the evil of Europe.

Maggie Verver has to restore what has been lost, or damaged by the unexpected adultery of her husband Amerigo and her best friend Charlotte. This means that she has to get her husband back from Charlotte and restore Charlotte back to her father so that both the couples may resume their happy married life. So what Maggie wants is a simple, personal and domestic act of restoration but this act of restoration becomes a symbol of a restoration of the universal moral order which has been disordered by the immorality of an ugly, betrayal.

Maggie has to prove to the Prince that she is not the charming simpleton he and Charlotte have taken her to be but a person with wit and intelligence. In this, Maggie succeeds; she succeeds by showing her possession of the essential worldly qualities. To gain her victory Maggie uses all the sensible and practical methods of the worldly-wise people. She becomes a deceiver, aggressor, and mistress of intrigue. But then she has the right to do this to save the sanctity of two marriages. What impresses us the most about Maggie is that unlike many other Jamesian heroines, she doesn't give up when she comes to know about the betrayal by her loved ones, nor does she turn rebellious. She knows that crying or criticizing won't get her back what she wants so desperately-her husband. She achieves a final victory by defeating Charlotte with her intelligence and patience. Maggie has grown from a simpleminded girl to a real princess who has the power to redeem an act of adultery and not only return her father his wife and but also win her own Prince back.

The tragedy of Daisy Miller is her innocence and her incaution. Her incaution leads her to defy Mrs. Walker and to risk contracting Roman fever in the Colosseum. Her innocence is both a fault and a virtue. Had she been more worldly-wise she might have been more cautious and thus saved her reputation and her life. Had she been less innocent, the appearance of her behavior would have been the truth about her real character. This discrepancy between appearance and reality is the theme of Daisy Miller. The appearance of her behavior is different from the reality of her character which Winterbourne realizes in the end. James therefore hands a really favourable intellectual judgment to neither Geneva nor Schenectady. He gives is full approval neither to the manners of restraint nor to those of freedom. His irony touches both the Europeanized Americans and Daisy herself. James eases his criticism of Daisy and bears down more heavily on the Europeanized Americans on the judgments of winter bourne, Mrs. Costello, and Mrs. Walker. Though our heroine Daisy is innocent exuberant and free, but she is also unreflective and insensible of the world around her. She has to pay too much for this. We reach the conclusion that

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Daisy dies as a result of social indiscretion. What began as a comedy of manners, ends in the pathos, if not the tragedy, of a lonely Roman deathbed and burial.

Francie is one of the simplest of James' heroines. Many critics have condemned Francie as a very thin character, who is frivolous and ignorant of the environment around her. But then ignorance is the very part of innocence of most of the American heroines of James. Their ignorance invites their misfortune as does in Francie's case.

Catherine alone is the true and honest person in The Washington Square novel. Her love for Morris becomes the strength, the guiding force of her life. We are pleasantly surprised at the patience and loyalty of this girl. She is willing to give up everything for Morris and even defy her father on his part. She does all this because she sees him as an ideal man who will prove her father wrong about himself and give Catherine a married life of her dreams. Both Sloper and Townsend are without scruples or conscience in the methods they use to attain their ends. Only Catherine, though she suffers the most, is enriched in experience and depth of understanding. In the end Catherine accepts her fate, her life-in-death. Her experience has been one solely of suffering and frustration. She has been betrayed not only by the deceit of Morris Townsend but also by the relentless interference of her father and aunt and by her own innocence and unawareness. But Catherine can't disobey her father. May be if she were to disobey him, she would have lost the readers' sympathies.

Nanda Brookenham is one of a long line of Jamesian heroines whose careers can be read as moral fables, variations on the theme of the fall from innocence. It is the ultimate falsity and sterility of the 'good talk' in Mrs Brookenham's drawing-room that, more than anything, has corrupted and demoralized poor Nanda. Nanda is in many ways the victim of unsought emancipation. She accepts the social flexibility and freer mores of her mother's society, but clings emotionally to their ideals and forms they have destroyed, including the ideal of pure womanhood. If only she had been able to embody it, she would have ended up in a happy marriage to Vanderbank. We sympathise with Nanda and consider her tragedy that of the human condition because she is also somehow responsible for her misery, fully aware of her responsibility, yet helpless to change it. Nanda values the kind of innocence that life in Buckingham Crescent has denied her.

Fleda has been endowed with the qualities that harmonise with the opposing forces. With the factual Mona on one hand, and the wildly imaginative Mrs. Gereth on the other, Fleda Vetch is caught in the middle. In trying to assess Fleda's choice, one should consider two things, her dependence as confidante, and her independence as a woman. In the former capacity she takes the simple view of Owen's duty, he must keep faith. In the latter position she wants him exceedingly; but a deep concern for herself warns her against encouraging him to break faith, for she has seen his want of manly courage. Also her self-respect rejects the thought of implication. She is willing to sacrifice her happiness in order to do "the right thing." This unselfish act is an ethical choice based on a code of fine conduct rather than a pragmatic action, the same code of conduct that motivated Madame de Mauves, Isabel Archer, and Catherine Sloper. She lost her chance for happiness, but she retained her dignity and integrity.

James has been successful in creating not only American and English heroines but also the European and Europeanised heroines. These heroines are quite complex and ambiguous figures

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for the American heroes who are both attracted to and disappointed with them. While Christina Light and Eugenia are the heroines from the early works of James, Madame de Vionnet is from a later novel of James when James had grown in style and complexity. These heroines are grown up in different parts of Europe which, definitely, has enriched their individual personalities and brought variations to them. What is common about these heroines is that they all have an air of mystery about them and are quite unpredictable. Eugenia confronts her American relatives and an American suitor while travelling to the continent, whereas Christina Light and Madame de Vionnet confront the American men on their tour to Europe, whom they ensnare with their beauty. Eugenia leaves the scene quietly after realizing that America is not meant for her and she can never be actually liked by the Americans. Christina and Madame de Vionnet bring pathos and destruction to the lives of the men attracted to them. Till the end these ladies are unsolved riddles to their men. While Christina is capable of numerous passions and appearances, Madame de Vionnet's frailty, deception and mortality are also exposed to Strether at the end. In short, all these three heroines represent the corruption of Europe in some way or other, but they, too, are helpless of they can't change.

The "Type" of woman that James portrays in Madame Merle is the smooth but hardened society woman. For Serena Merle, her role as villainess in a tragedy destines her for a dark future. Her frustrations are more numerous than those of other confidantes: a loveless marriage; an episode in another man's life, from which she could emerge only as the loser; the sacrifice of her child for the sake of respectability; the failure to contract a brilliant, second marriage all these are truly great disappointments. Ironically, the only sympathies that she gets are only from her victim. Her shapely hand is discernible even in Isabel's final decision to return to Rome; for it was she who primed the latter to her selfless devotion to the child. Even though she fails in her last attempt to secure Lord Warburton, or to extract the answer from Isabel to her last question, she still triumphs over the latter's fate, and to the end she is almost completely mistress of herself. Mrs. Tristram tries to function in this capacity, but fails. Mrs. Assingham tries, and for a time succeeds, but finally is relegated to the background. Madame Merle alone among James's confidantes remains supreme mistress of the protagonist's fate.

James portrayed people so vividly, so visually in *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Bostonians*, and *The Washington Square* but we hardly get to see the faces, bodies, glances and gestures in *The Wings of the Dove*, *The Golden Bowl*, and *The Ambassadors*. This has made the study of Kate Croy, a fine Jamesian intelligence, a difficult task. Still there is no doubt or debate about the popularity of this so-called bad woman by Henry James. The reason, is that she is very much a real character. She is not a born bad character, neither does she really want to harm or hurt others for her own gain. The fault lies with her extremely practical approach to life which makes her want to use every possible opportunity for her advantage. She doesn't mind if this approach deprives her of the essential sentiments desired of a woman.

*The Wings of the Dove* is the underlying melodrama of Milly's situation as well as that of Kate Croy's. Both the dramas intensify each other. Kate's vow to "sacrifice nobody and nothing" can be met with only a few alterations in the truth. Whatever the moral wrongness of her twisted logic, Kate is no melodrama villain. James rarely creates characters who are essentially evil. She

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really wants everyone to get everything they want, and, as far as she can see, this is the only way that can happen: Kate's father and sister will get the financial support they crave, Milly will experience love, Susan will get to see Milly die happy, Maud won't lose her prize niece to a pauper, Merton will get Kate, and Kate, herself, will get Merton and the money. Would it not therefore be an act of loving-kindness to 'give' her Densher for that time, in order that she might die in the blissful belief of having 'lived'? Where is the harm? Asks Kate Croy, with all the sincerity and good faith with which the worldly always ask the question whenever there are, or seem to be, vast splendours of power and pleasure to be gained by means only minutely tainted.

Milly's death makes a radical alteration in Kate's relationship with Densher. But Kate seems to be refusing to be totally deficient in moral sensibility in having to the end no knowledge of what Densher's transforming experience might have been, yet being perfectly clear and self-consistent throughout, and capable both of inferring accurately from the minimal signs she receives what the experience has done to him and of drawing the inescapable conclusions. Though she too still wants him, yet clear-headed as she is, she perceives this is no longer possible. While Milly is made to embody earlier nineteenth-century ideals of fragile spirituality and sacrifice, Kate turns herself into a practical heroine representing a cluster of modern traditions.

James has made the case of Charlotte as 'difficult' as possible; and to determine the nature and extent of her 'guilt' is accordingly not easy. The causes of the act of adultery committed by the Prince and Charlotte are accordingly complex indeed. She suggests vividly a modern allegorical figure of the deadly sin of Pride placed against a symbolic background of the modern world at its worldliest. Charlotte's stupidity lies in her refusal to recognize her guilt. So Charlotte's pride with all its implications is the cause of her damnation and the reason for her terrible 'purgatorial' suffering at Fawns; but it is also the groundwork of her salvation. She finally tells her husband that she is ready to go anywhere with him if it pleases him. She is left with no other alternative to keep her secret covered up. Maggie has given her an opportunity to keep her pride and dignity maintained, so she has to act wisely. This is the only chance to save her married life as well as that of Maggie's and to rid herself of the guilt of indecent act.

Henry James is undoubtedly one of the greatest and leading American writers. He is famous for writing in an elegant and leisurely style and for dealing in the subtleties of moral life. Almost all of his work, including stories, novels and his full fledged novels, are equally good. He was also a major theorist of the novel and a perspective critic. His journey from *Watch and Ward* (1870) to *The Golden Bowl* (1904) reflects his remarkable growth as a man and a writer. The writer of *The Golden Bowl* is a richer and more accomplished artist who has a better understanding of human psychology and understanding. If his *Daisy* and *Isabel Archer* were subjects of criticism by many critics, *Milly Theale* and *Maggie Verver* stand for his final victory as the master of female portrayals. Henry James became immensely popular among the twentieth century American writers.

As discussed earlier, James' attitude towards women was a very balanced one. He supported neither the feminists nor the anti-feminists. James was very well aware of the plight of the women both on the individual level and the universal level. In his novels, he is primarily concerned with the individuals but tries to turn these individual figures into universal ones as

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human tragedy is the same everywhere. Most of the Jamesian heroines are endowed in an extraordinary degree with the gifts of intelligence, imagination, sensibility, and a rare delicacy of moral insight; and they are all extraordinarily articulate about all that they see and understand. Their intelligence is not of course of the academic kind and the sensibility is not 'trained'. The moral insight appears to owe nothing to the offices of teachers or preachers, on the contrary, it appears to owe everything only to their inordinate capacity for being and seeing: for life, that is, and for consciousness; for living and for understanding. In fact, each of James' heroines is endowed with a special quality be it her wealth, her beauty, her mind, her point of view, her ambitiousness, or her extreme simplicity or goodness, that makes her an object of others' curiosity or attention. The range of Jamesian heroines is quite ample if not very vast. Though most of his popular heroines are Americans Isabel Archer, Milly Theale, Maggie Verver, Daisy Miller, Catherine Sloper and many other some of his European heroines are also equally famous( Fleda Vetch and Nanda Brookenham for having a great moral sense and Kate Croy and Charlotte Stant for lacking in moral sense). Then there are a few heroines who are originally American but for having brought up in Europe, they are completely Europeanized. Whether these heroines are Americans or Europeans, beautiful or plain, intelligent or simple, rich or poor; there are certain qualities which surface up in most of the Jamesian heroines due to their common origin-the mind and imagination of James. All the heroines of James we have studied so far, besides being in the highest degree intelligent, imaginative and sensitive, are also in the highest degree what is commonly called 'morally earnest'. This is true equally of the 'bad' and 'good' Jamesian characters of Kate Croy, Mrs. Brookenham and Charlotte equally with Nanda Brookenham, Fleda Vetch, Isabel Archer Milly Theale, Maggie Verver. Renunciation comes naturally for the heroines whose moral sense is so acute.

In spite of all their intelligence and all their imagination, these ladies get bewildered and fall into trap. Their suffering remains of the kind peculiar to the highly developed, the highly intelligent and imaginative. And since, as the great tragic dramatists have always known, it is the rise and fall of great spirits, of personages endowed with gifts and graces, weaknesses and vices, far above the common level, that is the only proper material for tragedy. It is because the suffering of the Jamesian heroines is of this kind because it is suffering illuminated by understanding, or the passionate aspiration after understanding that it is redemptive, even when in the end it destroys them; and because redemptive in this way, therefore also truly tragic truly exemplary and instructive.

As an observer Henry had seen a lot of the delightfully beautiful, intelligent and sweet American young girls travelling to Europe. With the real account of his observation Henry has made all his American girls remarkably vivid. He adds a moral glamour to these American girls which no other nation certainly not the English could equal. Next to the American heroines of The Portrait of a Lady, the Wings of the Dove and of The Golden Bowl, Madame de Vionnet of the Ambassadors must be adjudged his most sympathetic portrait of a woman. Henry describes his American heroines in the best way when they are confronted with the European characters and society. In fact, the tragedy of these heroines begins with their journey to Europe. The best drama, in the fiction of James, is created when his American heroines get involved with the European

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characters. His rich, intelligent but naïve American young ladies are always a soft target for the poor, but beautiful, clever, and opportunist Europeans (esp. women). These European ladies with their attractive personalities and pleasing manners never fail to influence the simple hearted Americans. What is common about Isabel, Maggie and Milly? They all are rich and thus, soon surrounded by the fortune- hunter Europeans. They all invite their downfall by thought lessly relying upon the shrewd Europeans.

It is not so that James has criticized only the European heroines and portrayed the Americans in a superior light. With *The Ambassadors*, he especially reveals the ugliness of American intolerance as well as the guilt that must accompany American wealth. With *The Wings of The Dove* he is concerned with the flaws of Milly Theale's innocence: her pride, her excessive reliance on money, and her hesitance to face life in its fullness. With *The Golden Bowl* he explores fully the underside of both American wealth and American innocence; the novel shows the essential destructiveness of imperceptions and immaturity which Maggie is forced to realize. What was before often comic or pathetic becomes serious and tragic. In addition, James's later Americans prove not only extremely limited in themselves, but also menaces to the values and achievements of Europe. There is a question frequently asked about James' heroines Why James gives a tragic touch to all his heroines? Tragedy is an integral part of life. The more accomplished a person is, the more prone he/she is to tragedy. Seeking perfection is a touch path which is sure to bring sufferings. As James is keen to show reality, his heroines can't escape tragedy. It is not only his American heroines who suffer, but his "good" English heroines also end up in tragedy.

The Jamesian heroines may be compared with the tragic kings, queens and princes of Shakespeare. This turns upon their being the repositories of supreme power and prestige in their society. But, besides this (or as a consequence of this), they are also rich, often very rich they are generally handsome well-bred; they live in elegant surroundings; they wear fine clothes; they have cultivated tastes and every opportunity to indulge them. In this more limited sense, too, they are 'uncommon' not of the common people; raised far above the common level of the majority of men and women, whose lives are a perpetual struggle for even a small share of the goods of life which these Jamesian heroines enjoy in such abundance. And in this too they resemble the high personages of the Shakespearian drama.

The characters of Henry James are not the realistic portrayals of the people we can find every here and there in our neighbourhood. This is true of his heroines too. We may have the good fortune actually to know in person Maggie Verver, Kate Croy and Fleda Vetch but that is just a possibility. I don't say that James has not portrayed them in a realistic manner. Though his fiction and characters have their roots in the real life, but their refined motives make them not look like the exact characters from the real life. A real Isabel may feel tempted at the marriage proposal of a rich and handsome British Lord who is a complete gentleman. But this is the specialty of the Jamesian Isabel that she is not like an ordinary girl with romantic enthusiasm. A real Maggie may not forgive her husband so easily. The act of benevolence done by Milly has so refined a motive which can only be appreciated by a highly sensible mind. The people we know appear to be more governed by passions, by the primitive needs, by dull unromantic obligations, by the cruder social requirements and limitations.

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It is true that Jamesian heroines do not change much and remain the same from the beginning to the end of the novels, but they definitely grow in maturity and experience. James exposes them to the reality of life and ultimately they come out of the shell of ignorance they have created around them. It is when their eyes are opened that they decide their final positions in life. The strength and growth displayed by these heroines is the proof of James' own development as a successful artist whose characters are so full of life.

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