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The "international" motive in H. James's stories : its thematic variations and function = Motyw "międzynarodowy" w opowiadaniach H. Jamesa : warianty tematyczne i funkcja

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The "International" Motive in H. James's Stories: Its Thematic Variations and Function

Motyw „międzynarodowy" w opowiadaniach H. Jamesa: warianty tematyczne i funkcja

„Интернациональный" мотив в рассказах Г. Джемса: сюжетные варианты и функция

The literary reputation of Henry James (1843—1916) has been growing steadily since his death until there seems hardly an aspect of his writing left that has not been fully elucidated by eminent critics.[1] Yet because of the sheer bulk of his works together with their variety and unevenness it is difficult even now to arrive at a full understanding of his subjects and his fictional techniques. This is especially true of his shorter fiction, which has aroused less interest than his novels. The reason for this comparative neglect can be sought in the conventional form of the stories and the somewhat longer *nouvelles*. Yet even if it is assumed on the evidence of simply reading the stories that they are — *in toto* — inferior to the Jamesian novels, the fact remains that they constitute an important part of his literary output, that at least a few of them have been long regarded as masterpieces[2] and that,

[1] Among the most eminent American and English critics whose essays or full-length books discuss the writings of James are: J. W. Beach: *The Method of Henry James*, Philadelphia 1954; F. Dupee: *Henry James*, London 1951; F. R. Leavis: *The Great Tradition*, London 1948; F. O. Matthiessen: *Henry James. The Major Phase*, Oxford 1944; M. Bewley; *The Complex Fate*, London 1952.

[2] *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) and *The Beast in the Jungle* (1903) are among those acknowledged masterpieces.

since Henry James was writing shorter works of fiction throughout his productive years, roughly from 1864 to 1910, their analysis can throw more light on his whole artistic development than the analysis of any other group of works.

Needless to say, a collection of more than a hundred stories written over a period of nearly fifty years, often as mere potboilers, will display varied characteristics. A careful analysis of all of them cannot be attempted here, but the space of even a short study suffices for the discussion of a group of about half a dozen stories belonging to the same period and revealing similarities of subject and technique. The stories selected for analysis here are those written in the late 'seventies and early 'eighties presenting international contrasts of manners and attitudes in the form whose most prominent features are: avoidance of a single protagonist, presentation of several mutually contrasted individuals with a tendency towards social satire, shift of the point of view within one story, uncomplicated plot and reliance on a single situation, finally — scarcity of imagery.

By virtue of these characteristics the group of international stories stands apart both from the earlier "romantic" stories, which deal mostly with love ad courtship, and the later works, more varied thematically. The early ones were examined by C. P. Kelly[3] who studied all the writings of James written in the period of his apprenticeship.

Less attention was paid to the stories that appeared after James had transferred his residence to France and then to England, and yet this was an important period in his life and his career, both because the range of his observation increased substantially when he began to live in Europe, and also because his knowledge of the craft of writing became sufficient for the writing of a full-length novel in 1876 when he published *Roderick Hudson*. The stories that appeared after this novel, i. e., in the late 'seventies and the early 'eighties, were written when James was already an acknowledged figure in American letters and was developing into a major realistic novelist having emerged from his romantic phase. Thus they seem to offer good material for some conclusions about his maturing craft as a fiction writer and about the relationship between the novels and the short stories of the period, about their thematic connections and the similarities or differences in the way of presentation.

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[3] *Early Development of Henry James*, Urbana 1930.

James's fiction has been variously termed as "romantic", "realistic" and "poetic", and there is certainly ample justification for each of these names; his early productions, both shorter and longer, display the writer's preoccupation with an individual rather than with a social group and a leaning towards the obviously dramatic or even melodramatic in the construction of the plot; the fiction of the late 'seventies and the whole following decade marks the shifting of his interest towards different societies and the ways in which their approved patterns of behaviour mould an individual [4]; finally, the closing years of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth bring a concentration on the consciousness of an individual and an ensuing intensity of dramatic effect which deserves the name of a "poetic presentation". The closing of one period and the beginning of another can hardly be indicated with precision, as the shifting of interest and the corresponding change of technique were usually gradual, but both are reflected in a group of works chronologically close to one another.

Thus it is possible to ascribe James's shift of interest from an individual to man or woman as a national and social product to his change of residence in 1875. In that year he moved from America to Paris for what seemed only a temporary stay in Europe and which led to his final expatriation and life-long residence in England. Whether without this change in his life he would have begun to pay so much attention to varying social customs is a matter of speculation. He began to see the differences between Americans and Europeans earlier, when he was visiting Italy, France and England during his first trip in 1867, but a minute analysis of those differences in literary works came later, at the time of the composition of *Daisy Miller, An International Episode, The Europeans* and the much longer *Portrait of a Lady*. There already James spoke as a moralist as well as a painter of society, but for the moral tone he needed more length, and the shorter works of the period are in a way studies and sketches preparing the way for longer comments on his native country and the adopted country — England. Possibly, apart from wider opportunities for observing members of

[4] Writing about James's fiction of the late 'seventies and the 'eighties Leavis strongly emphasizes his mastery in the presentation of national "types": [...] an English reader can know how well James renders essential characteristics of English civilization and representative English types [...] And any reader [...] can see that he is, more generally, an incomparable master at differentiating national tones and qualities [...]" (*The Great Tradition*, Peregrine Books, London 1962, p. 163).

different societies [5], his interest in them was further stimulated by his contacts in Paris with Turgenieff and with the eminent French naturalists of the period: Flaubert, Daudet, Maupassant, Zola. Earlier he had admired the works of Balzac and George Sand for the richness of their imagination, but in the younger writers whom he met in Paris he respected chiefly the serious preoccupation with their craft, even though he regarded them as provincial.[6]

Unlike the Frenchmen, living in a world of their own, James was a constant observer in strange worlds, on the look-out for differences rather than for similarities. In an era when local-colour fiction was gaining ground in his native country and when in England provincial literature found its great spokesman in the person of Hardy, he was persistently widening his field of observation and exploiting the contrasts, as Conrad was to do later using still more varied human material. James wrote of his tendency in retrospect in the prefaces to the New York Edition: "On the interest of contrasted things any painter of life and manners inevitably much depends, and contrast, fortunately for him, is easy to seek and to recognize; the only difficulty is in presenting it again with effect, in extracting from it its sense and its lesson." [7]

The major contrast that he was to present throughout most of his productive years was the one called by himself "the international theme". This contrast between the Americans and the Europeans appeared first in a romantic *nouvelle* written in 1873 — *Madame de Mauves,* but there the general effect is dimmed by the poor characterization of the French husband of an American woman — a conventional villain, worldly and suave but not very convincing. His falling in love with his wife, conversion to virtuous life and melodramatic suicide at the end when she refuses to forgive him his infidelity make the whole piece a melodrama, in which there was no room for introducing social differences apart from the division of the main characters into black and white. The next international couple was presented in a full-length novel, *The American* (1877). Equally melodramatic in plot — the heroine,

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[5] In 1881 writing down briefly in *The Notebooks* his reminiscences of his residence in Paris James mentioned his Russian friends: Ivan Turgenieff, Madame Turgenieff, Paul Joukowsky as associated with that period, and also the group of French writers whom he met at Flaubert's; then he added: "Of course I saw a great deal of the little American 'set' — the American village encamped *en plein Paris.*" (p. 26).

[6] Edel suggests that this was James's view, explaining his unwillingness to seek closer friendship with the French writers. (Henry James: *The Conquest of London,* Philadelphia — New York 1962, p. 218).

[7] *The Art of the Novel,* New York 1934, p. 198.

forced by her villainous brother and proud and criminal mother rejects her American suitor and enters a convent — it became something of a popular success probably not on account of the precision of its social background, because James knew little of the French aristocracy that provided most of the characters in the novel, but owing to romantic complications of the plot.[8] Another novel on the "international theme" was *The Europeans* (1878), and there instead of one couple we have three, while the action is moved from Europe to Boston, with which James was, at the time of writing the novel, much better acquainted than with Europe, so the social background is more vivid. Also, there are no aristocrats if one does not count the Baroness Münster, who is one only by marriage, being really an American brought up in Europe and thoroughly de-Americanized when the story begins.

In the slightly later *Daisy Miller*, more than three times shorter than *The Europeans*, the setting of the plot is from the start presented with great economy and plays as important a role as does Boston in the earlier work. The story itself is also one of love between two young people, each with a very different background. The places are first Switzerland, then Rome, the former thus intentionally characterized as a meeting-place of different nationalities, specially invaded by American tourists: "In this region, in the month of June, American travellers are extremely numerous [...] There are sights and sounds which evoke a vision [...] of Newport and Saratoga. But at the Trois Couronnes [...] there are other features that are much at variance with these suggestions; neat German waiters [...]; Russian princesses sitting in the garden; little Polish boys walking about, held by the hand, with their governors [...]" [9].

Against this background unfolds the story of love between Daisy, charming, silly, innocent, brought up without any discipline or understanding of manners, scandalizing her Europeanized compatriots at every step; and Winterbourne, cautious, relying on social standards, cherishing the prejudices of his class, unable to perceive Daisy's innocence.

[8] Edel, who regards *The American* as a considerable achievement, admits that the novel presents "that Faubourg St. Germain about which Henry read in Balzac, and of which he himself was having only a passing glimpse." (*op. cit.*, p. 248). In spite of this shortcoming the novel became one of the most popular of James's books; it appeared in a pirated edition in London, it was later adapted by James for the stage and it was the only full-length Jamesian novel to be translated into Polish in his lifetime — it appeared in Lwów in 1879, i. e., only two years after its original publication.

[9] *Four Selected Novels of Henry James*, The Universal Library, New York 1946, p. 453.

There cannot be any understanding between the two, and Daisy dies because of her own spontaneity and carelessness, while Winterbourne is left with his realization that he made a fatal mistake in his judgement of her.

The plot continues the line of the earlier romantic stories, but there are new elements of realism in the motivation of the characters' behaviour. The love of the young people is doomed not because there is a villain in the background, as in *The American*, or because one of them is scheming and insincere and the other discovers it, as in *The Europeans*, but because each of the main characters is socially so conditioned that a happy union between them is impossible. The word "conditioned" may seem poorly applied to characters in a story with so obvious poetic touches as *Daisy Miller* but it is used here consciously, because my argument is that the piece, while still in the tradition of the earlier Jamesian stories, anticipates in the motivation of its characters the later novels, *The Portrait of a Lady*, and even more *The Bostonians* and *The Tragic Muse*. Winterbourne's words at the end of the story show that he himself sees his conduct as something that was determined in advance. "You were right", he says to his aunt, "in that remark that you made last summer. I was booked to make a mistake. I have lived too long in foreign parts".[10]

Daisy was regarded by James's contemporaries as a type, but he himself insisted that the typical features in her presentation were of lasser importance than the poetic touches. In the preface to the story in New York Edition he quoted what he regarded as very apt criticism offered him by one of his readers: "You know you quite falsified, by the turn you gave it, the thing you had begun with having in mind, the thing you had had, to satiety, the chance of 'observing' ".[11] If, by his own testimony, imagination had played a larger role in the characterization of Daisy than observation, in the stories that were written immediately after this one he clearly relied more on observation and was obviously searching more for the typical than for the dramatic. The first result of this change of attitude towards his material was the diminished importance of one figure on whom the action of the story previously depended. It seems worth pointing out that the fiction utilizing the "international theme" written in the years 1874—78 had the principal character in the titles: *Madame de Mauves, The American, Daisy Miller*, and lastly, *The Europeans*, where there are two title figures, the Baroness Münster and her brother. This fiction was followed

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 504.

[11] H. James: *The Art of the Novel*, p. 269.

by several pieces whose titles indicate the shifting of interest from one character to a group: *An International Episode, The Pension Beaurepas, A Bundle of Letters, The Point of View.* Not a single title is provided by the name of the main character. Moreover, the plot in this fiction dwindles considerably as there is a diffusion of interest which was formerly concentrated on one or two characters.

An International Episode still has an anecdote at its core: a young English aristocrat falls in love with an American girl and while his family assume that she is eagerly waiting for his proposal, she quietly rejects him and goes back to America. This slight intrigue is clearly only an excuse for James to offer his readers a short study of British and American manners and social types; thus the setting is changed — a thing unnecessary for the development of the plot — and while the first part shows the English aristocrat as a guest of the Americans, the second reverses the situation and places the American girl in London. What is contrasted in this way is more the standards of hospitality than the characters themselves who are just types suitable for the presented situation: a serious, intellectual girl very appropriately brought up in Boston; her married sister, always seen without her husband who is busy making money that she spends every day in various shops; the English aristocrat, amiable but dull and rather inarticulate, finally — his disdainful and unimaginative mother who tries to snub the girl and never bothers to thank the foreign ladies for the friendliness they had extended to her son in their own country. With this search for the typical and with the little satirical touches in the presentation of the characters the *nouvelle* has unmistakably the tone of social comedy both in the well-written dialogues and in the indirect presentation of the characters, as in this passage discussing Mrs. Westgate's activities in London: "Mrs. Westgate, following the fashion of many of her compatriots, caused herself and her sister to be presented at the English court by her diplomatic representative — for it was in this manner that she alluded to the American minister to England, inquiring what on earth he was put there for, if not to make the proper arrangements for one's going to a Drawing-room." [12]

In general, Mrs. Westgate received a more ample characterization in *An International Episode* than her role in the plot warranted, and this is indicative of James's increased tendency to present social types. Indeed, the next story on the "international theme", *The Pension Beaurepas* practically dispenses with the plot and presents a group of characters incidentally assembled in a Swiss boarding-house. To give

[12] *Four Selected Novels of Henry James*, p. 559.

the group at least a semblance of temporary unity James presented the altogether static story of their mutual relations by means of a fictitious narrator, a budding American writer who comes to live in a boarding-house remembering that Stendhal and Balzac had regarded it as a unique vantage ground for the study of human nature. There he soon makes acquaintance of several compatriots: the Ruck family, with the father anxious to go back to business and the wife and the daughter shopping recklessly all day long; and two uprooted American women, a mother and a daughter, who remain expatriated because they have barely enough money to live comfortably and idly in Europe, but not in their richer country. Within the space of less than twenty thousand words the narrator makes several discoveries about these characters and then the story comes to an ending as arbitrary as the beginning: the inmates leave the *pension* and go in different directions.

The main contrast in the story is that between the two girls, Sophy Ruck, the genuine American product, and the much cleverer but also much more confused Europeanized Aurora Church who had lost her national and social identity in the course of her education abroad. Sophy has fine clothes but bad manners; she is vulgar and acquisitive, but for all her unengaging qualities she has frankness and spontaneity which the other girl lacks altogether being cold and calculating under the *façade* of her perfect manners and bearing. This is an important point not only for the proper understanding of *The Pension Beaurepas,* but of James's whole attitude towards the importance of nationality in man's outlook on life and morality. James was accused in his own country by Brooks and Parrington of deracination and cosmopolitanism[13] but his works show that he really regarded the loss of nationality as morally wrong, witness the really corrupted, or spiritually impoverished Americans in Europe: Osmond and Madame Merle from *The Portrait of a Lady,* Charlotte Stant from *The Golden Bowl,* Winterbourne from *Daisy Miller* and Aurora Church and her mother from *The Pension Beaurepas.* Contacts with foreing culture and manners may be enriching and may increase the understanding of humanity if they are experienced by a sensitive individual, imaginative and wise, such as Strether in *The Ambassadors,* but they carry with themselves the danger of unscrupulousness, of regarding all things as relative and of placing manners above morals. There is not a single character in James's fiction of a man or woman who lost the sense of belonging to a nation and became spiritually enriched; on the contrary, all the great characters of his

[13] See the discussion of these charges in F. O. Matthiessen: *Henry James: The Major Phase,* New York 1963, pp. IX—XI.

"international" novels — Isabel, Milly, Strether, Maggie Verver learn much from their contacts with the Europeans but remain Americans. And there is reason to suppose that the preservation of the sense of belonging to a nation was, according to James, vital not only for his compatriots; for, as Graham Greene pointed out,[14] James was writing about Americans because, being one himself, he knew them better than any other single national group.

The problem outlined in the character of Aurora Church was far too weighty to be exhausted in a short story and James returned to it and gave it the fullest treatment in *The Portrait of a Lady* where he put in several uprooted Americans — Osmond, Madame Merle and Isabel's aunt. He also introduced it once more and only casually in a short story *The Point of View,* written in the form of letters. The letters purport to be written by various persons, among them by Aurora Church and her mother, to their friends in Europe during their stay in America. The title of the story indicates that James was aiming at presenting not so much America as the impression that the country makes on different people. As for the authors of those letters, the reader can deduce a little about their characteristics, and is informed that two of them are foreigners, one being French, and one English; the rest are Americans who spent considerable time abroad. Only one of those is still in sympathy with his country; the others are in various degree critical or stress their detachment; they indicate their attitude by such remarks as: "I have been so long away that I have dropped out of my place in this little Boston world",[15] or "I promised to tell you how I like it, but the truth is, I have gone to and fro so often that I have ceased to like and dislike."[16] Only Aurora Church, who left the country when she was a small girl, comes to it with high expectations and experiences disappointment of which she writes in her final letter. As could be expected from the earlier story in which she appears, she was so thoroughly alienated from her country by her European upbringing that she could never become an American.

Whatever personal interest James had in the problem of the alienation of an individual through residence abroad, it is too slightly outlined in *The Point of View* to give the story weight. As a work of fiction it fails, because of its distinctly essayistic subject. Its human interest is thin; most of the letter-writers remain in the background and their impresions form the proper substance of the story. Their observations

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[14] Introduction to *The Portrait of a Lady,* London 1947, p. IX.

[15] H. James: *The Marriages and Other Stories,* New York 1961, p. 88.

[16] *Ibid.,* p. 83.

concern both important social phenomena, such as the unlimited liberty of the American children and young people, and trivial peculiarities of everyday life, such as poor service in hotels and restaurants. With such varied material the story has too heavy a burden to sustain and consequently has little unity of effect. Yet James included it in the New York Edition, because he associated its composition with the impression that his native country made on him on the occasion of his first visit after a five-year residence in Europe. His impressions made him aware that different people could react differently to the same things and this prompted the writing of the story. The characterization of people through their impressions, however, yielded poor results, possibly because James himself had no clear conception of the fictious authors of the letters in the story.

Such interpretation of the cause of his failure is suggested by James's earlier and by far more successful attempt at producing a story in the form of letters — *A Bundle of Letters*. This earlier and slightly shorter piece consists of nine fictitious letters written by the guests of a French *pension*. Three of the authors are American, one is English, one German and one French; and each is broadly outlined as a type and embodies the characteristics of the nation that he or she represents. Their letters often contain their views of one another contributing satirical touches and making the characterization fuller, because each person is shown through his own observations and style as well as the comments about him in the letter of another boarder. Most of them also have telling names: the enthusiastic schoolmistress from Maine is called Miranda Hope, an unmistakable sign that she is, somewhat ironically, presented as a representative of the "brave new world"; the rich young lady from New York is Violet Ray — a name readily associated with shining; the silly English girl with aristocratic connections is called Miss Vane, so that only a slight change of the spelling of her name transforms it into an adjective that adequately describes her; finally, the pedantic German scholar is Dr. Staub. Such direct labelling of the characters was not frequently James's method, but *A Bundle of Letters* was so openly and broadly satirical that this obvious device is not out of place. The satire is rather mild, mixed with the comedy of manners of which much derives from the contrasting of the representatives of different nationalities. Fadiman wrote about them: "The types (they are not intended to be characters) are at once recognizable",[17] and in a satirical story this is an important point.

[17] *The Short Stories of Henry James*, ed. by Clifton Fadiman, New York 1945 (A Note on *A Bundle of Letters*, p. 78).

The absence of plot, the lack of a single prominent personage and the satire derived from international contrasts indicate that after several years of residence abroad James was still keenly observing European life and manners, comparing his observations with what he knew about America and thus collecting material for the social novels of the 'eighties. The original outline of *A Bundle of Letters* in his *Notebooks* shows that he had a plot for it and intended to limit the characters to three persons: a mother, a daughter and the daughter's suitor.[18] Why he departed from his first idea was not explained, either in *The Notebooks* or in the preface to volume XI of the New York Edition in which the story is reprinted, but it seems evident that the form of letters which he adopted for the story appeared to him better suited for the presentation of a loose group of social types, free from mutual bonds and permitting the introduction of some satirical touches.

A Bundle of Letters, The Pension Beaurepas and *The Point of View* were all experimental: James tried to present in each of them an international group, with the different views and reactions of its members who were only loosely connected with one another by place of temporary residence. With such inherently undramatic subject-matter the stories have intellectual character; they are comical sketches with satire derived from social contrasts and incongruities of situation rather than from a direct ridicule of individual characters. A good example of this "situational" satire is found in the different descriptions — contained in different letters — of the *pension,* whose proprietress charges her guests not only for rooms and board but also for the supposed opportunities for French conversation. The culture-hungry teacher from Maine mentions this "opportunity for conversation" with real zeal, adding: "I was very glad to come to such a place, for I had begun to realize that I wasn't pressing onward quite as I had dreamed with the French",[19] while the young Frenchman who helps his cousin with the management of the *pension* writes of the same: "...she (i. e., the cousin) had the thrice-blest idea of opening a well-upholstered and otherwise attractive *asile* for the blundering barbarians who come to Paris in the hope of picking up a few stray pearls from the *écrain* of Voltaire — or of Zola".[20]

The contrasting of the points of view is clever and amusing when at its best, and somewhat forced in the later story, *The Point of View* (1882). Evidently, the device had but small possibilities and in the

[18] *The Notebooks*, pp. 11—12.

[19] *The Short Stories of Henry James*, p. 42.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 69.

next year James returned to the older method of joining the "international" theme with a situation that would offer some dramatic conflict and naturally hold the principal characters together. The *nouvelle* in which he resumed his approach was called *The Siege of London* (1883) and was essentially a reversal of his favourite situation, that of a simple American in a complex and confusing European society. The American woman here, tellingly called Mrs. Headway, is an adventuress who descended on England from the West having divorced four husbands and having inherited a lot of money after the death of the fifth. She is about to become the wife of a English lord and begs a fellow-American not to reveal her scandalous past, while her prospective mother-in-law tries to learn the truth from him. Thus the problem is one of conscience and concerns the other American who finally decides to tell the truth; the nationality of the participants is of minor importance for the story itself; it simply adds probability to the situation, because it is easier to believe that there was only one person knowing something about Mrs. Headway's past. Yet it is doubtful if James introduced the detail of nationality solely for this reason. Though he did not include in his preface to the story any information about his aims in it, his search for the typical during the time of its composition suggests that Mrs. Headway was to be one more figure in the gallery of the Americans in Europe.

A year after writing this *nouvelle* James turned to the "international" motive again and presented, with a difference, the situation which he had invested with romantic glamour in *The American,* i. e., the courting of an aristocratic lady by a rich American. In this later story, however, called *Lady Barbarina* (1884) the courtship leads to matrimony which turns out to be a very bad bargain for the American, Jackson Lemon. As the further part of the story presents the vicissitudes of this Anglo-American marriage, it acquires a social interest apart from its use of the "international" contrast, for the difference of nationality matters no more than the difference of the social class of the couple. Several things show that James wanted to give this class difference strong emphasis: the first name of the American is Jackson, an obvious reference to the democratic President Andrew Jackson and a hint of this democratic convictions; he is also a physician and his own family are proud of it while his aristocratic wife finds it particularly offensive. Again, these are not individual features of the two characters but the typical ones, the marks of their being the products of different social background as well as of different nationalities. In his outline of the story jotted

down in *The Notebooks* James wrote about the two principal characters: "He must be a young physician, the youth who marries the earl's daughter, for that will be very national and typical. It is only here that the son of a rich man... would have entered that profession, and that the profession itself is capable of being considered 'rather aristocratic'".[21] This careful shaping of the principal characters as national types had its disadvantages: the story soon began to need a "key" in order to be read with understanding. Classes change fast with the economic changes and a quarter of a century after the composition of the story, when James re-read it before including it in the New York Edition of his works, he himself was struck by its obsolescence, and remarked that after the lapse of twenty-five years "So many of the perceived conditions in which it (i. e., *Lady Barbarina)* took birth have changed that the account of them embodied in that tale and its associates will already pass for ancient history... Civilisation and education", he continued, "move fast... and too many things have happened; too many *sorts* of things, above all, seem more and more likely to happen. This multiplication of kinds of occurrences, I make no doubt, will promote the inspiration of observers and poets to come; but it may meanwhile well make for an effect of superannuation in any record of the leaner years."[22]

James formed such an opinion of the story when the passage of years already permitted him to view it with detachment, but even at the time of its composition he was already gleaning his last ideas on international contrasts. After *Lady Barbarina* he utilized the motive in only two stories: *Pandora,* written in the same year and *The Modern Warning* (1888). Neither of the two has any originality; the former was a deliberate attempt to portray an American girl who would be serious and as charming as Daisy Miller — and in this it failed; the latter presents an Anglo-American couple without anything new in the presentation and to make things worse uses an improbable and melodramatic plot.[23] Even *Pandora,* the earlier and better of these late attempts, shows that James had nothing new to say on the subject within the narrow limits of short fiction and was saying the old things without his former charm and freshness. Miss Day in the story has as dull parents as had Miss Miller and to make matters worse has no fortune, yet owing to her hard work and persistence she succeeds socially and

[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 49—50.

[22] *The Art of the Novel,* p. 206.

[23] The ending of the story is specially improbable: a beautiful American woman married to an English aristocrat takes poison when she discovers that, following a visit in America, her husband wrote a particularly critical book about her country.

wins influential friends who help her obtain a diplomatic post for her fiancé. There is nothing improbable in Pandora's social advancement, nor is she, as a social type, obsolete at present, for the importance of the wife in the career of an American politician has in no way diminished. But the account of her success is totally undramatic: she is not involved in any conflict and is not even contrasted with any other character in the story. To create at least the appearance of a contrast James made the fictitious narrator a foreigner. He is a German and an aristocrat who has received a diplomatic post in Washington, so his observations are those of an outsider. But unlike Winterbourne in *Daisy Miller,* he has no direct involvement in the plot remaining throughout an observer and this gives his account an intellectual detachment excluding drama altogether.

Apart from the thematic similarities discussed above the stories in the "international" group have certain structural qualities in common: most of them have only the minimum of action, some have none; the device of the fictitious narrator is consistently used only in two, in the others there is either the omniscient author or the characters present themselves by means of their own letters, so that the point of view is freely shifted; the stories generally lack dramatic conflict and offer contrast instead; they tend to treat several characters as equally important, because — as there is little or no narrative element — no character is made prominent by the plot itself; the people presented are, in most cases, recognizable types displaying broad social characteristics, and this favours comic or satiric presentation; finally, there is very little use of imagery in contrast to the group of the later stories about artists.

Starting with the plot we find one striking feature: with the restricted action that the stories generally have, there is no *Vorgeschichte* in the strict meaning of the word; when the characters are introduced it is unimportant what had happened to them before, for the events presented in the story will not depend on it. The important thing is from where they come; because their social and national or regional background is an important part of their characterization. This information is usually provided at the beginning when the characters meet and learn something of one another. So when Winterbourne becomes acquainted with Daisy and her little brother this necessary information about the family's background comes from the boy who says: "My father ain't in Europe; my father's in a better place than Europe." This at first leads to a comic misunderstanding: "Winterbourne imagined for a moment that this was the manner in which the child had been taught to intimate that Mr.

Miller had been removed to the sphere of celestial rewards. But Randolph immediately added: 'My father's in Schenectady. He's got a big business. My father's rich, you bet." [24] Of Winterbourne's long residence in Europe previous to the beginning of the story there is only a slight hint when Daisy "asked if he was 'a real American'; she shouldn't have taken him for one; he seemed more like a German..." [25] Another character, Mrs. Church, arrived in the Pension Beaurepas from another boarding house; her original residence in America is not mentioned then, because it had ceased to matter. Pandora Day comes from Utica and the closeness of this town to Schenectady suggests a similar background for her and Daisy. The differences between the two girls is that while Pandora is presented as staying in her own country, steadily advancing socially, Daisy is shown in Europe where, for all her resoluteness, she is getting lost among the sophisticated Americans who had become too conscious of manners to forgive her the want of them.

These two stories show how James was welding together the slight action of his fictions and their settings: he only exceptionally presented characters against their familiar background, as he did in *Pandora;* more often he transferred them to an entirely new *milieu,* obtaining comic effects or a dramatic conflict or both. There is lively comedy in *The Pension Beaurepas* provided by the Ruck family travelling supposedly for the father's health and making that health progressively worse as he worries about his business in America and anxiously watches his wife and daughter spend his money right and left. No less comic, though also slightly pathetic, is the dull Mrs. Miller dragging herself, her daughter and her spoilt little son across Europe in search of "culture" while the boy gets no education because "he said he wouldn't have lessons when he was in the cars:" "And we are in the cars," adds Daisy, "about half the time." [26] Understandably, when the main function of the plot in this group of stories is to convey the differences between people that stem from thein national and social background, there is no increase in the tension towards the end, no climax — with the exception of *Daisy Miller* — and the endings are arbitrary. The usual pattern is: a group of people come together accidentally, make certain discoveries about one another and depart in different directions. In the "international" novels the general pattern of the plot looks different, for at the end the lives of the participants are quite altered and simple

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[24] *Four Selected Novels of Henry James,* p. 458.

[25] *Ibid.,* p. 458.

[26] *Ibid.,* p.459.

departure is not possible. Only in *The Ambassadors* did James arrange the plot in a way similar to that in the stories.

The next feature that is important in James's fiction is the point of view. In the 'seventies and the 'eighties James had not yet developed the technique of the rigorously fixed point of view that he employed in most of the stories written in the last decade of the nineteenth century and in the last great novels. Besides, the use of the "international" motive could hardly help the development of this Jamesian technique; a hypothesis can rather be risked that it actually delayed the author's departure from the traditional way of writing fiction, because as long as he aimed at contrasting views to obtain satirical and comic effects he found it more convenient to appear as the omniscient author or else to use device of fictitious letters. In view of this it seems remarkable that the figure of a narrator presenting only the events that he could reasonably have observed himself appears already in two stories: in *The Pension Beaurepas* and in *Pandora.* Moreover, in *Daisy Miller* the author omniscient appears only in the initial description of Vevey in Switzerland where the first part of the story takes place. When Winterbourne is introduced there is a direct remark from the author: "I harldy know whether it was the analogies or the difference (between the American watering-places and Vevey) that were uppermost in the mind of a young American, who, two or three years ago, sat in the garden of the Trois Couronnes..." [27] After this intrusion of the author, retained from the convention of the nineteenth-century novel, the story is continued in the third person and without any remarks directly from the author. The point of view of Winterbourne is maintained throughout. He also takes part in all the dialogues of which there are many in the story and which contribute largely to the characterization of the main figures. In contrast to this consistent restriction of the range of vision in *Daisy Miller, An International Episode,* written in the same year, freely shifts the point of view and shows in the first part the observations and impressions of the Englishmen in America, and in the second — those of the American ladies in England, presumably for a fuller contrast of manners. This method of presentation, however, diminishes the interest of the narrative.

After the stories in the form of letters, which possessed little narrative interest and depended for their final effect precisely upon the differences of the point of view, James returned to the device of the fictitious narrator in *Lady Barbarina.* At the beginning of the story the events are presented not by a single narrator but by a married couple who

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 453.

are the friends of Jackson Lemon and who are thus sympathetic observers. Later on the same device was used successfully in *The Golden Bowl,* but this first trial that James gave it failed, because the couple disappear after the first part of the narrative and the remaining portion of it comes directly from the author.

Examining James's method of presentation used in the "international" fiction of the late 'seventies and the 'eighties one sees that he still relied more on the observation of manners and social peculiarities of people than on interpreting these to the reader through the consciousness of a single imaginary character, either directly involved in the action or merely observing it.

Possibly, this lack of "central consciousness" in the stories and *nouvelles* was the consequence of James's search for the typical and the resulting choice of the characters for the stories with the "international" motive. Almost every character in these stories can be labelled: Bessie Alden in the charming and intelligent American girl; her sister — the critical and independent, even slightly pushing, American matron, Miranda Hope — the culture-hungry American teacher; Winterbourne — the fastidious worshipper of manners who finds life in Europe more to his taste than life in the rougher and more natural America; Lord Lambeth — the conventional English aristocrat, kind-hearted but neither intellectual not deeply emotional. Some of these types reappear in *The Portrait of a Lady,* where Isabel has much in common with Bessie Alden, and Osmond may be an older and hardened version of Winterbourne, but they are also more than that, for the space of a long novel permits precise delineation of character where the short fiction leaves room only for a broad outline, especially when James also sought to present the characters as mutually contrasted and this was, as a rule, his aim in the stories showing Americans in Europe.

After 1888, when he wrote *The Modern Warning,* James gave up the motive of international. contrasts for over a decade. The subject was exhausted temporarily, and meanwhile he became interested in something else: the problem of an artist in society. The first story in which he made use of it was written in 1884 [28]; four years later he wrote two stories of artists, *The Liar* and *The Lesson of the Master* within a few months. In the following decade he wrote eleven of them. Then, after the disappointments of the 'nineties when James tried unsuccessfully to become a dramatist and meanwhile went on writing short stories, he turned back to the novel and produced in quick succession what are now regarded by most critics as his masterpieces:

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[28] *The Author of Beltraffio.*

The Wings of the Dove (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), *The Golden Bowl* (1904). All three are on the international theme and though there are many differences between them and the earlier stories on the same subject they also reveal a number of similarities. The most important analogy is the use of observable details, such as dress, behaviour, interior decoration, to suggest national traits or attitudes of the characters. Examples of this abound especially in *The Ambasadors*.

Another device that he was able to retain from the international stories was the reliance on contrast, not only the contrast between the Americans and the Europeans, but also that between two distinct groups of Americans: the newcomers to Europe and those who by a long stay have become in various degree Europeanized — for better or for worse.

There is also evidence that James did not give up the use of different points of view within one work; he employed this method in *The Wings of the Dove* where the three main characters become in turn the "reflectors" of the action, increasing the dramatic element of the novel.

Naturally, the restriction of length in the earlier works made impossible a deeper analysis of differences between the Europeans and the Americans but James was able to put into them accurate and often brilliant psychological and sociological differences and present national peculiarities and class or group peculiarities, often with an admixture of satire and comedy as in *A Bundle of Letters* or *The Pension Beaurepas*. But it should be admitted that, as they rely on the observation of manners which change fast, these stories with the exception of *Daisy Miller* which depends less on the typical and more on the poetic conception of the main character, are not among James's best shorter fiction. However, they remain interesting and worthy of study because they are James's original contribution to the short story. They are also in a way companion pieces to the novels on the international theme to which they stand in a similar relation as a sketch or a study to a finished painting.

STRESZCZENIE

Opowiadania amerykańskiego pisarza, Henry Jamesa (1843—1916) nie były rozpatrywane tak gruntownie, jak jego utwory powieściowe; mogą zaś rzucić światło na rozwój talentu i techniki autora.

W pracy poddany został analizie motyw kontrastów międzynarodowych w grupie opowiadań z lat siedemdziesiątych i osiemdziesiątych XIX w. Podkreślono, że we wcześniejszych utworach przeważała tema-

tyka romantyczna, zaś po przeniesieniu się pisarza na stałe do Europy w r. 1875 nastąpił zwrot ku realistycznemu i satyrycznemu przedstawianiu typów narodowościowych i społecznych. W utworach takich jak *An International Episode, The Pension Beaurepas* czy *A Bundle of Letters,* ukazane są typy spotykane powszechnie w owych czasach w nawiedzanych przez turystów miejscowościach zachodnioeuropejskich: amerykański *businessman* z rodziną lub tylko jego rodzina pragnąca zaoceaniczną podróżą zwiększyć swój prestiż towarzyski, snobistyczny Amerykanin osiedlony w Europie i naśladujący „wyższe sfery", dobroduszny, ale niezbyt inteligentny arystokrata angielski, prowincjonalna intelektualistka amerykańska, sprytna Francuzka, prowadząca pensjonat dla cudzoziemców.

Zwrócono uwagę, iż z tematyką tą — nietypową dla małej formy — wiąże się szereg właściwości strukturalnych: brak *Vorgeschichte* w opowiadaniach, maksymalne uproszczenie narracji, zanik centralnej postaci, zamiast której jest grupa luźno związanych osób, brak konfliktu dramatycznego, który zastąpiony zostaje kontrastem, arbitralny początek i zakończenie utworu, wreszcie — skąpe obrazowanie.

Podkreślono, że wynarodowienie przedstawione jest przez Jamesa jako zło moralne. Jednakże ten punkt widzenia otrzymał artystycznie pełniejszy wyraz w powieściach użytkujących motyw „międzynarodowy", podczas gdy pokrewne utwory krótsze są głównie zręcznymi szkicami typów społecznych i utrzymane są na ogół w tonie satyry i komedii obyczajowej.

РЕЗЮМЕ

В отличие от повестей, рассказы американского писателя Генри Джемса (1843—1916) подробно не разбирались, хотя они могут пролить свет на развитие таланта и мастерство автора.

В работе анализируется мотив интернациональных контрастов той группы рассказов, которые относятся к семидесятым и восьмидесятым годам XIX века. В ранних произведениях Джемса господствовала романтическая тематика, а после переезда автора на постоянное жительство в Европу в 1875 г. в его творчестве произошел поворот к реалистическому и сатирическому представлению национальных и общественных типов. В таких рассказах как: An International Episode, The Pension Beaurepas или A. Bundle of Letters автор рисует типы, встречающиеся в те годы повсеместно в западно--европейских местностях, посещаемых туристами; американский

businessman с семьей или только его семья, которая хочет поднять свой общественный престиж благодаря заокеанскому путешествию, американец-сноб, проживающий в Европе и имитирующий „высший круг", добродушный, но не слишком интеллигентный английский аристократ, американская интеллигентка, ловкая француженка, содержащая пансион для иностранцев.

С этой тематикой, которая не является типичной для коротких произведений, связан ряд структурных особенностей: отсутствует Vorgeschichte в рассказах, изложение предельно лаконичное, отсутствует центральный персонаж, вместо которого находим группу свободно связанных лиц, нет драматического конфликта, а вместо него — контраст, произвольное начало и конец произведения, наконец, скудная образность.

Автор указывает на то, что Джемс в изображении своих персонажей подчеркивает потерю национальных черт как явление отрицательное в нравственном отношении. Однако эта точка зрения нашла более полное художественное выражение в повестях, использующих „интернациональный" мотив, тогда как короткие произведения с тем же мотивом являются главным образом грациозными эскизами общественных типов в тоне сатиры и бытовой комедии.

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