THE AMERICAN SCENE

When Henry James arrived in New York in the late summer of 1904 he was troubled both by what the country enabled him to confront of his own past, by its present condition and social values, and by what he could foresee as its twentieth-century future. He had left America in 1875 for the sake of his art and for the rich cultural heritage of Europe. His return, based on motives both romantic and practical, allowed him to revisit the now transformed cities of his youth as well as to explore the country's southern states. *The American Scene*, a major work from his final, most adventurous creative phase, offers a cultural and social critique of contemporary American society as well as a highly personal series of 'gathered impressions', a form of indirect yet sometimes intimate autobiography. Aside from detailed explanatory notes, this new edition includes a general Introduction, a chronology, an itinerary of James's journey, a record of textual variants and rare manuscript material, and appendices which include the journal he kept, the texts for the two lectures he gave, and the two additional essays written on his return to England.

PETER COLLISTER is the author of *Writing the Self: Henry James and America* (2007). He has also edited James's autobiographical writings, *A Small Boy and Others*, *Notes of a Son and Brother* and *The Middle Years* (2011) and, for Cambridge University Press, the award-winning two volumes of *The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama* (2016). His essays on a range of nineteenth-century English writers and on Anglo-French literary links have appeared in British, European and American journals.

THE AMERICAN SCENE

BY

HENRY JAMES

EDITED BY

PETER COLLISTER

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A NOTE ON THIS EDITION

The text for this new edition of *The American Scene* is based on the British edition published on 30 January 1907 by Chapman & Hall. The American edition, published by Harper & Brothers a week later, omitted (to HJ's annoyance) all the 225 thematic page headings which he provided, as well as the last five-page section of the final chapter, 'Florida'. Given the layout of my edition, it would have been impossible to reproduce the page headings as they appear in the first edition, and so they have been placed generally in the margins of pages at the point in the text which corresponds with the first edition. I have corrected any obvious misprints, with the change indicated in a footnote. Each chapter is subdivided into numbered sections though Chapter VII, 'Boston', has an opening paragraph followed by section i, and I have retained this inconsistency.

The substantial appendices aim to provide for the reader relevant supplementary material. HJ's two essays on 'The Speech of American Women' and 'The Manners of American Women' (1905) might well have figured in *The Sense of the West*, the working title for a second volume of American impressions which was never completed. Thematically linked to these essays is the second of the two lectures HJ delivered, 'The Question of Our Speech'. In addition, it seemed appropriate to include his first lecture, 'The Lesson of Balzac'. Some of the ideas which are developed in *The American Scene* first appear in the novelist's American Journal 1904–1905, so its inclusion should allow for easy cross-referencing. Finally, having to clarify for myself the details of HJ's trips to New York's Lower East Side, I decided that it would be useful to share my summary with the reader.

CHRONOLOGY: HENRY JAMES'S LIFE AND WRITINGS

15 April 1843, birth of HJ, second of five children at Washington Place, New York City, into the wealthy family of Henry James Sr (student of theological and social issues) and Mary Walsh James. The family spends extended periods in Europe and lives briefly in Albany, New York, and, later, New York City until 1855.

1855–8, the James family lives in Geneva, London, Paris, and Boulogne-sur-Mer (part of a 'sensuous education' planned by HJ Sr for his children).

Summer 1858, having returned to the US, family settles at Newport, Rhode Island. HJ forms important friendships with Thomas Sergeant Perry (scholar and writer) and John La Farge (artist), whom he would accompany on painting expeditions.

October 1859–July 1860, the Jameses return to Europe (Geneva and Bonn).

October 1860, family returns to Newport. Older brother William becomes a pupil of the artist, William Morris Hunt, and is joined briefly by HJ. Friendship with orphaned Temple cousins, notably Minny.

April 1861, HJ suffers an 'obscure hurt', possibly a back injury, when helping fight a fire in Newport. Neither HJ nor William enlist for the Civil War, though their younger brothers, Bob (Robertson) and Wilky (Garth Wilkinson), are encouraged to join the Union Army.

September 1862, HJ enters Harvard Law School, but abandons course in summer 1863.

February 1864, anonymous publication of HJ's first tale, 'A Tragedy of Error', in *Continental Monthly*.

May 1864, family leaves Newport for Beacon Hill, Boston. At this time HJ is encouraged in his writing by Charles Eliot Norton, and, in 1865, begins

reviewing for the recently established *Nation*, edited by E. L. Godkin. Vacations in White Mountains with Temple cousins and other young men.

Summer 1866, HJ becomes friendly with W. D. Howells, novelist, critic and assistant editor of *Atlantic Monthly*.

November 1866, James family moves to 20 Quincy Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts (their final family home). During these years HJ writes short stories and reviews for a range of magazines.

Summer 1868, takes a holiday at Jefferson, New Hampshire.

February 1869, HJ leaves for Europe, staying in London and Malvern, Worcestershire. He meets, among others, Leslie Stephen, William Morris, George Eliot, Ruskin, Rossetti and Burne-Jones.

Late summer 1869, HJ arrives for the first time in Italy and is enchanted.

March 1870, beloved cousin Minny Temple (a model for some of HJ's heroines) dies of tuberculosis, never having fulfilled her wish to visit Europe.

April 1870, HJ leaves Europe and returns home to Cambridge. Though nostalgic for Europe, he continues to write prolifically, including American travel sketches for the *Nation* magazine.

1871, publication of *Watch and Ward*.

May 1872, leaves for Europe, accompanying semi-invalid sister, Alice, and Aunt Kate. They tour England, Switzerland and northern Italy; sister and aunt travel back to America in October 1872; HJ returns to Rome via Paris and mixes in American expatriate society; he meets Fanny Kemble in December 1872, becomes friendly with sculptor William Wetmore Story, and meets Matthew Arnold in March 1873.

September 1874, after further travels in Europe, HJ leaves England and returns to Cambridge.

January 1875, *Roderick Hudson* begins twelve-month serialization in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

November 1875, HJ arrives once again in London to 'take possession of the old world', and, on 10 November, moves on to Paris for a year where he meets

Ivan Turgenev and a literary circle including Flaubert, Edmond de Goncourt, Zola, Maupassant, Daudet and Renan. Till August 1876 he writes Paris letters for the *New-York Tribune*, an uncomfortable journalistic experience.

December 1876, HJ returns permanently to London, though will make frequent trips to mainland Europe.

1877, publication of *The American*. Meets Browning and artist and illustrator George Du Maurier, among many others. Visits Paris and Italy in the autumn.

1878, essay collection, *French Poets and Novelists* published in England. 'Daisy Miller' proves to be a great popular success. Now a part of London society and well-known literary figure, HJ becomes acquainted with Tennyson, Meredith, Whistler and Gladstone. *The Europeans* published in September.

1879, much dining out in London; meets Edmund Gosse and Robert Louis Stevenson; publishes *Hawthorne*.

1880, meets Constance Fenimore Woolson, writer of fiction and grandniece of James Fenimore Cooper; *Washington Square* published.

1881, publication of *The Portrait of a Lady*.

November 1881, revisits America after six years.

January 1882, mother dies; in May, HJ returns to London; in December, father dies as HJ journeys to the US.

September 1883, HJ returns to London; in November, Macmillan publish 14-volume 'Collective' pocket edition of his fiction.

February 1884, visits Paris, meets John Singer Sargent and persuades him to move to London; in November, sister Alice arrives in England, chronically ill.

May 1885, extends friendship with Stevenson.

1886, publication of *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima*.

December 1886–July 1887, HJ in Italy, spending time with Woolson.

1890, publication of *The Tragic Muse*.

1891, HJ sees Elizabeth Robins performing in Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*. His dramatization of *The American* is successful on tour and in London; Robins takes the role of Madame de Cintré. HJ attempts unsuccessfully to offer stage comedies to theatrical managers.

March 1892, death, from breast cancer, of sister. She leaves a brilliant, trenchant diary.

January 1893, death of old friend, Fanny Kemble; HJ continually fails to get his plays produced commercially.

January 1894, probable suicide of Constance Fenimore Woolson in Venice; in December, death of Stevenson in Samoa.

January 1895, failure of play *Guy Domville*, produced by George Alexander, and HJ abandons the theatre.

October 1896, death of Du Maurier. *Spoils of Poynton* serialized.

1897, *What Maisie Knew* published. HJ begins dictating his work because of wrist pain. Friendship with Joseph Conrad; takes Lamb House in Rye, Sussex, and many American friends visit.

1898, 'The Turn of the Screw' highly successful.

1899, publication of *The Awkward Age*. Meets sculptor Hendrick C. Andersen in Rome and embarks on a passionate friendship, one of a number with younger men.

1900, HJ shaves off beard.

1901, *The Sacred Fount* published.

1902, *The Wings of the Dove* published.

1903, publication of *The Ambassadors* and *William Wetmore Story and his Friends*; develops friendship with novelist Edith Wharton, who much admires his work.

1904, *The Golden Bowl* published. Tours America extensively, returning to England in 1905.

1907, *The American Scene* published.

1907–9, 24 volumes of the New York edition of HJ's fiction (extensively revised) published with elaborate prefaces. The reception is disappointing, both critically and commercially.

1909, meets members of the Bloomsbury Group. *Italian Hours* essays published.

1910, HJ suffers depression; on 26 August, brother William, afflicted by chronic cardiac condition, dies. HJ, having accompanied him back to America, returns to England in August 1911.

1912, HJ takes London flat, and is ill for four months.

1913, autobiographical *A Small Boy and Others* published.

1914, autobiographical *Notes of a Son and Brother* published. Horrified at First World War, HJ visits wounded soldiers in London.

1915, HJ becomes British national; continues with charitable work.

1916, HJ is honoured with the British Order of Merit. He dies on 28 February, attended by William's wife, Alice. After cremation his ashes are buried with other family members in Cambridge Cemetery.

1917, unfinished novels, *The Ivory Tower* and *The Sense of the Past*, and incomplete autobiographical volume, *The Middle Years*, published posthumously, supervised by Percy Lubbock.

JAMES'S AMERICAN ITINERARY

This itinerary is based on information included in the following texts: *The American Scene*, ed. Leon Edel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968); Leon Edel, *Henry James: The Master, 1901–1916* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1972); 'Henry James and the *Bazar* Letters', *Howells and James: A Double Billing*, ed. Leon Edel and Lyall H. Powers (New York: New York Public Library, 1958); Robin P. Hoople, *Inexorable Yankeehood: Henry James Rediscovers America, 1904–1905*, ed. with additions by Isobel Waters (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2009); and Philip Horne, *Henry James: A Life in Letters* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), and '"Reinstated": James in Roosevelt's Washington', *Cambridge Quarterly* 37.1 (2008), 47–63. Any dates about which there is uncertainty are followed by a question mark.

1904

June: W. D. Howells negotiating with publishers Harper & Brothers of New York (George Harvey and Elizabeth Jordan, editor of *Harper's Bazar*) for arrangements about lectures which HJ might give in America.

24 August: HJ departs Southampton aboard high-speed Atlantic liner SS *Kaiser Wilhelm II* for New York. Travels with Mrs Clara Woolson Benedict (sister of Constance Fenimore Woolson) and her daughter Miss Clare Benedict.

30 August: HJ arrives at Hoboken, New Jersey; met by nephew Harry, son of William and Alice James; travels to stay with publisher George Harvey at Deal Beach, New Jersey.

31 August: returns to New York.

2/3–17 September: stays with William and his family at Chocorua, New Hampshire.

16 September: visits Katherine Prescott Wormeley ('interpreter, translator and worshipper' of Balzac) at Jackson, New Hampshire.

17/19 September–16 October: stays with brother at 95 Irving Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and regularly visits nearby Boston (including the Public Library and Isabella Stewart Gardner's Palazzo on the Fenway). Visits Concord, Massachusetts, to see brother Robertson (Bob).

20–22 September: visits Howard Sturgis at Cotuit, Cape Cod.
5–6 October: visits his Emmet cousins at Barack Matiff farm, Salisbury, Connecticut.
17–31 October: stays with Edith Wharton and her husband at The Mount, Lenox, Massachusetts. At this time he embarks on 'an interminable and abysmal siege of American dentistry'.
1 November–6/7 December: returns to Cambridge.
14–16 November: visits Newport, Rhode Island.
7–10 December: stays with Mary (Minnie) Cadwalader Jones at 21 East Eleventh Street, New York City.
8 December: testimonial dinner at Metropolitan Club, New York, organized by George Harvey; discusses possible lectures with Elizabeth Jordan.
11–21 December: in Cambridge and Boston.

1905

21 December–1/2 January: stays in New York, probably with Mrs Jones again.
3–9 January: stays with Mrs Wharton at her New York home, 884 Park Avenue.
9 January: lectures for the first time on 'The Lesson of Balzac' at Contemporary Club, Philadelphia, guest of Dr J. William White at Rittenhouse Club, 1811 Walnut Street.
10–18 January: stays with Henry Adams, 1603 H Street, Washington, DC.
10 January: dinner with John Hay (secretary of state) and meeting with artists John La Farge and Augustus Saint-Gaudens, and President Theodore Roosevelt
11 January: represents 'Literature' at American Institute of Architects dinner.
12 January: attends White House for lunch and later diplomatic reception.
16 January: visits Capitol, guest of Senator Cabot Lodge.
18 January: attends dinner given in his honour by old friend, French Ambassador to US, Jules Jusserand.
19 January: gives Balzac lecture at Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania.
20–23 January: stays with Dr William White and his wife at 1810 Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia.
24–27 January: stays with Mrs Sarah Wister, Butler Place, Germantown, Philadelphia.
28–30 January: stays again with Dr White at Rittenhouse Square.

30 January–2 February: departs for Richmond, Virginia, to stay at Jefferson Hotel. Informed that he has been elected member of newly established American Academy of Arts and Letters.

4–9 February: stays with the Vanderbilts at Biltmore House, mansion in North Carolina.

10–12 February: stays at Charleston Hotel, Charleston, South Carolina. Meets up with Owen Wister.

12–14 February: stays at Jacksonville, Florida, for one, possibly two nights in this period.

14/15–17 February: stays at The Breakers, Palm Beach, Florida.

18–21 February: stays at Hotel Ponce de Leon, St Augustine, Florida. Sees Robertson's wife and daughter. Abandons idea of visiting Cuba.

22 (?) February: stays with Dr White again in Philadelphia.

23 (?) February: may have stayed at Manhattan Hotel, New York (Hoople, *Inexorable Yankeehood*, p. 249), or possibly attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Arts 100th Anniversary Banquet (see below, p. 313, n. 39).

24 February–5 March: returns to 95 Irving Street, Cambridge.

6–8 March: stays at Washington Hotel, St Louis, Missouri.

7 March: lectures on Balzac to Contemporary Club.

8 March: lunches at Noonday Club and in evening reception at University Club.

10–11 March: arrives at University Club, Chicago, gives lecture to 20th Century Club;

11 March: gives lecture to Friday and Fortnightly Clubs.

12–13 March: stays with cousin, George Higginson, and his wife, Emily, at Winnetka, Illinois.

13–15 March: returns to University Club, Chicago.

14 March: lectures at Notre Dame and convent school in South Bend.

16–17 March: arrives in Indianapolis; has dinner at University Club.

17 March: gives lecture in Indianapolis.

18/19 March: returns to University Club, Chicago.

20–23 March: having visited brother Wilky's widow and children in Milwaukee, travels by train to Los Angeles.

24–28 March: stays at Hotel Van Nuys, Los Angeles.

Late March: has informal 'interview' with Julian Hawthorne in Los Angeles; the subsequent article, syndicated in newspapers on west and east coasts, sensationalized his feelings about America.
29 March–5 April: stays at Hotel del Coronado, outside San Diego, for planned vacation.
6 April: leaves for Los Angeles to give lecture.
8–10 April: stays at Hotel del Monte, Monterey, California.
11–15 April: stays at St Dunstan's Hotel, San Francisco. Lectures at Bohemian Club.
17 April: stays at Portland Hotel, Portland, Oregon.
18–20 April: stays at University Club, Seattle, Washington. Gives lecture; visits Edward Holton James, Robertson's son.
23 April: arrives St Paul, Minnesota.
24 April: stays in Chicago; attends banquet.
25 April: leaves on night train for New York.
27 April: arrives New York; lecture scheduled at Mrs Minnie Jones's house.
28 April–2 May: stays with Henry Adams in Washington, DC.
29 April (?): lecture at 1600 I Street.
1 May: visits Mount Vernon.
3–5/6 May: stays at Brunswick Hotel, Boston.
3 May: dental appointment in Boston.
6 May: lectures at Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.
6–22 May: stays with Mrs Jones, New York.
10 May: lectures at Packer Collegiate Institute, Brooklyn (arranged by Elisabeth Luther Cary).
23 May: returns to Brunswick Hotel, Boston. Lectures at Sanders Theatre, Harvard University, Cambridge.
24–27 May: returns to Mrs Minnie Jones's house, New York.
30 May–6 June (?): stays at the home of the Godkin family (E. L. Godkin had died in 1902), 36 West Tenth Street, New York.
31 May: lectures at Berkeley Lyceum, New York.
7–8 June: stays with Martha Carey Thomas, president of Bryn Mawr College.
8 June: gives new lecture, 'The Question of Our Speech', at Bryn Mawr's commencement ceremony.
9 June: stays at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey.
10 June: gives same lecture at Bryn Mawr School, Baltimore, Maryland.

11–12 June: stays at Belvedere Hotel, Baltimore.
13 June: returns to stay with the Godkins in New York. Probably sees James Pinker, his agent.
14–15 June: stays with Sarah Wister in Philadelphia.
17–18 June: visits W. D. Howells at Kittery Point, Maine, and also Sarah Orne Jewett at South Berwick.
19 June: leaves for Newport.
20–23 June: stays with Ellen and Ida Mason in Newport; sculptor friend Hendrik Christian Andersen also present.
23 June: may have delivered 'The Question of Our Speech' at 95 Irving Street, Cambridge.
23/24–25 June: stays at 95 Irving Street.
26 June–1 July: visits Edith Wharton again in Lenox. Visits Bay Emmet at Stockbridge, Massachusetts, in this period.
29 June (?): meets for last time Charles Eliot Norton at Ashfield, Massachusetts.
1–4 July: at 95 Irving Street, Cambridge.
5 July: leaves Boston for Liverpool aboard SS *Ivernia*; also on board are Walter Berry (friend of Mrs Wharton) and actor Elizabeth Robins; arrives in Liverpool on 13 July.

ABBREVIATIONS

AJ	Henry James, American Journal 1904–1905 (Houghton Library, Harvard College)
AS	Henry James, *The American Scene*
CN	*The Complete Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. with introductions and notes by Leon Edel and Lyall H. Powers (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)
CT	*The Complete Tales of Henry James*, ed. Leon Edel, 12 volumes (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1962–4)
CWHJ: Art	*The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama, Volume 1: Art*, ed. Peter Collister (Cambridge University Press, 2016)
CWHJ: Drama	*The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama, Volume 2*: *Drama*, ed. Peter Collister (Cambridge University Press, 2016)
CWJ 3	*The Correspondence of William James: Volume 3: William and Henry 1897–1910*, ed. Ignas Skrupskelis and Elizabeth M. Berkeley (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994)
ENYC	*The Encyclopedia of New York City*, 2nd edn, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010)
FR	*Fortnightly Review*
HANYC	Eric Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City: A Visual Celebration of 400 Years of New York City's History* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005)
HJ	Henry James
HJL	*Henry James: Letters*, ed. Leon Edel, 4 volumes (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1974–84), vol. 1: 1843–75; vol. 2: 1875–83; vol. 3: 1883–95; vol. 4: 1895–1916

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HJR	*Henry James Review*
HM	*Harper's Monthly Magazine*
LC 1	*Henry James, Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, ed. Leon Edel and Mark Wilson (New York and Cambridge: Library of America, 1984)
LC 2	*Henry James, Literary Criticism: French Writers, other European Writers, the Prefaces to the New York Edition*, ed. Leon Edel and Mark Wilson (New York and Cambridge: Library of America, 1984)
LHJ	*The Letters of Henry James*, ed. Percy Lubbock, 2 volumes (London: Macmillan, 1920)
NAR	*North American Review*
NSB	Henry James, *Notes of a Son and Brother and The Middle Years: A Critical Edition* (1914, 1917), ed. Peter Collister (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011)
SBO	Henry James, *A Small Boy and Others: A Critical Edition* (1913), ed. Peter Collister (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011)
TMY	Henry James, *Notes of a Son and Brother and The Middle Years: A Critical Edition* (1914, 1917), ed. Peter Collister (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011).
WJ	William James (Henry's brother)

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

It was a fine late-summer afternoon of 1904 when Henry James arrived in New York City. He had last visited America in 1883, but even when the 'confusion of movement & mystery'[1] at the Hoboken dockside in New Jersey was left behind, the impact of this city of his birth was severe and, in a sense, foreshadowed his more sustained experience of the continent as a whole. New York was much changed and had already become a centre of commerce and industry. In the twenty-one-year period of his absence its physical appearance had been transformed – the once remarkable spire of Holy Trinity Church, prominent on the skyline when looking across Manhattan from the Hudson to the East River, was now dwarfed by skyscrapers – some reaching as high as twenty-one storeys. James confessed that he could scarcely apprehend the meaning of the place and its occupants. And when he walked its streets it seemed like a 'monstrous organism', a modern, relentless city, 'some steel-souled machine-room of brandished arms and hammering fists and opening and closing jaws'. He can find no words for such 'bigness and bravery and insolence' (p. 88).

James's arrival as a celebrated, expatriate novelist was a public event, and his progress would be recorded by the press, national and regional, though this public profile is not reflected in the wry, self-deprecatory discourse of *The American Scene*.[2] Highly respected for his work, though less highly rewarded financially, he had little time for celebrity, and almost entirely avoided interviews.[3] Aged 61, he had (as he seems to have felt it) become friends with older age, hinting archly in the text that he is 'the mere ancient contemplative person curious of character' (p. 19). As for his personal circumstances: he was a celibate bachelor in indifferent health, he enjoyed a

[1] Letter, 31 August 1904, *CWJ* 3: 278.

[2] At one point he said his motives were 'all economic … It is more & more important I should go, to look after my material (literary) interests in person, & quicken & improve them, after so endless an absence' (*ibid*., 231).

[3] For discussion of James and the celebrity interview, see Matthew Rubery, 'Unspoken Intimacy in Henry James's "The Papers"', *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 61.3 (December 2006), 343–67.

variety of friendships with both men and women, though his passions were engaged by younger men; his closest family was that of his brother William, resident in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Henry had settled permanently in England in 1876 and this 1904–5 visit of ten months would be his longest stay in America for many years, though it would not be his last. In 1910 he would accompany that same – now dying – brother, on what he called 'a bitter pilgrimage'[4] on the latter's return from Europe.

New York was the city of his birth, the place where (when not crossing Europe in pursuit, with the rest of his family, of what his father called a 'sensuous education') he spent many formative years of his childhood. In some ways he remained a New Yorker (however absent or detached), a designation he would confirm in naming the late, monumental edition of his fiction the New York Edition. The first nineteen chapters of his first volume of autobiography, published in 1913, *A Small Boy and Others*, revive the city, the family social scene, the entertainments and galleries which had been part of his privileged life in the 1840s and 1850s. The wish to relive and explore that distant cultural moment, initiated perhaps by a plan to publish some of William's letters, most likely arose from this return visit of 1904–5. Much of his New York childhood had been spent in the newly built family home on West Fourteenth Street when the Hudson River Railroad was in course of construction and, on the north-east corner of Eighteenth Street he could observe in the barnyard 'elegant' cows, fawns, peacocks and guineafowl.[5] This city of some 515,500 inhabitants in 1850 had grown, with the annexation of neighbouring boroughs, to be home by 1900 to 3.5 million, and the area from Fourteenth Street southwards had been given over to retail and commerce. To this place, so shockingly changed, James devotes almost a third of *The American Scene*.

James's motives for this long-planned return to his native land (he was disappointed that Thomas Hardy had earlier appropriated the more specific title, 'The Return of the Native')[6] combined the practical and the romantic. His greatest novels had now been written and *The Golden Bowl* would

[4] *HJL* 4: 561.

[5] *SBO*, p. 24.

[6] James thought that *The American Scene* title 'won't perhaps be catchpenny enough altogether to please the Harpers, but which, to my mind, will represent the book better than anything else' (letter to his agent, James Brand Pinker, quoted in Philip Horne, *Henry James: A Life in Letters* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), p. 430).

be released both in Britain and America during this visit, but, though highly regarded, his work never achieved the broader, popular success enjoyed by some of his contemporaries and friends. What became a lecture tour across the country, more modestly planned originally, offered easier rewards, enough to fund this trip, and leaving some over. This was a new venture which served to boost his confidence as, what he called, a '*conférencier*'. He delivered two lectures, 'The Lesson of Balzac' and, later, 'The Question of Our Speech': the offers quickly grew though his fee was high – which almost embarrassed him[7] – and he found the experience surprisingly enjoyable. He had also contracted to 'write a book of Notes' for the Harper & Brothers publishing house which would become *The American Scene*. His original motives had been, however, more profound, and they arose from a simple longing to return to his homeland. He wanted to 'see everything' and re-engage the 'faculty of wonder' with which he had initially regarded Europe. In a 1902 letter to his old friend Grace Norton he confessed to 'the idea of *seeing* American life again and tasting the American air, that is a vision, a possibility, an impossibility, positively romantic'.[8]

The return to America was, in a sense, a reversal of that decision taken almost thirty years earlier to move to, and 'possess' Europe for the sake of his art. Now mystery and possibility resided in America, as he pointed out to William:

> My native land, which time, absence and change have, in a funny sort of way, made almost as romantic to me as 'Europe', in dreams or in my earlier time here, used to be – the actual bristling (as fearfully bristling as you like) U.S.A. have the merit and the precious property that they meet and fit into my ('creative') preoccupations.[9]

Much of the experience was horribly 'bristling' for him – as William rightly predicted – though it seems, too, that the journey was necessary, an

[7] 'Having already earned over four thousand dollars from his lectures [in 1904], he had the prospect of earning more than nine thousand dollars in 1905, more than he had ever earned before and a sum the like of which he had not even approached except in the banner year of 1888' (Fred Kaplan, *Henry James: The Imagination of Genius: A Biography* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), p. 501).

[8] 22 January 1902, quoted in Leon Edel, *Henry James: The Master, 1901–1916* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1972), pp. 227–8.

[9] Letter, 24 May 1903, *CWJ* 3: 238.

adventure on a large scale, outstripping Europe with the physical breadth of its landscapes and horizons, and allowing him to confront himself in relation to such great abstractions as 'time, absence and change'. Some of James's latest fiction goes on to evaluate twentieth-century America on more specific grounds: the unfinished *Ivory Tower*, for instance, registers moments of disgust at the vulgarity of business and the shallow display of wealth, but takes pleasure, too, in the generous dimensions and appurtenances of such domestic assets as the American bathroom. Notable and also distinct from the earlier fiction are those scenes of mutual affection between males, across time and generations, which examine and test conventional social *mores*, reflective of a more liberated and easy state of self-acceptance in their author.

The American Scene is both deeply personal and revelatory, and yet unspecific and almost anonymous, and its genre is curiously elusive. Despite its title, the work is not a travelogue and James confessed himself 'incapable of information'; it is, however, a subjective history of impressions – 'I would take my stand on my gathered impressions', James asserted with assurance (p. 4). It is characterized by W. H. Auden as a 'prose poem of the first order',[10] and James thought at one point, not entirely facetiously, that he might use the title, 'The Return of the Novelist': 'It *describes* really my point of view – the current of observation, feeling, etc., that can float me further than any other'.[11] The text engages, however, with social and cultural issues of the day – for instance, mass immigration, ethnic difference, historical heritage, the roles and relationships of young men and women. Many chapters entail a revisiting of the past, as he returns to locations heavy with memories, such as New York, Boston, Cambridge and Newport. At other times he makes fresh acquaintance with streets that had witnessed the darker, national tragedy of the Civil War, southern cities entirely new.[12] From his extant Notebook

[10] *The American Scene, together with Three Essays from 'Portraits of Places'*, ed. with an introduction by W. H. Auden (New York: Scribner's, 1946), p. x.

[11] Letter to George Harvey, 21 October 1904, *HJL* 4: 328.

[12] A second volume, provisionally titled *The Sense of the West*, which might have covered St Louis, Chicago, California and some of the west coast cities, was never written (see Michael Anesko, 'James in America: In Quest of (the) Material', *Cambridge Quarterly* 37.1 (2008), 11), partly because he had less time for writing during the trip and, once back in England, it proved difficult to return to his American experience (see letter (8 August 1907) to W. Morton Fullerton, *HJL* 4: 454). James's nephew Harry also suggested that the San Francisco earthquake of April

it is clear that he was concerned to avoid certain perils – that he should not, for example, go 'to smash on the rock of autobiography'[13] – and the narrative shifts between a first-person perspective and a more ostensibly objective third person, characterized variously as the 'ancient contemplative person', 'the impressible story-seeker', 'the story-seeking mind', 'the brooding analyst', 'the starved story-seeker', 'mooning observer', 'lone visionary', 'visionary tourist', and, most frequently, the 'restless analyst'. The identity of the narrator is thus delegated and, realigned with each context, constitutes a rhetorical rather than sustained biographical presence. The few specific individuals who appear are reduced to initials – those old friends, for instance, James Russell Lowell and William Dean Howells – in some textual gesture which half preserves their privacy. Similarly Owen Wister, grandson of James's old friend Fanny Kemble and author of *The Virginian* (1902), becomes 'my distinguished and competent friend' (p. 419), an epithet recognizable only to the few.

Though this American visit had both practical and private motives, another outcome emerges, unexpectedly and spontaneously. James records in the privacy of his Notebook (rather than the published text) a poignant experience which occurred as he stood before the Cambridge graves of his parents and sister, Alice. After so many years he was restored to his place within the family in a fragile moment which allows for neither words nor gestures but which confirms the rightness of this return:

> Isn't the highest deepest note of the whole thing the never-to-be-lost memory of that evening hour at Mount Auburn – at the Cambridge Cemetery when I took my way alone – after much waiting for the favouring hour – to that unspeakable group of graves … But I can't go over this – I can only, oh, so gently, so tenderly, brush it and breathe upon it – breathe upon it and brush it. It was the moment; it was the hour, it was the blessed flood of emotion that broke

1906 'must throw what he had to say into the shade' (quoted in Sheldon Novick, *Henry James: The Mature Master* (New York: Random House, 2007), p. 423). James confessed to William that 'without it the 1st [volume] affects me as a mere rather melancholy lopsided fragment, infinitely awkward without its mate!' (letter, 17 October 1907, *Correspondence of William James*, ed. Ignas K. Skrupskelis and Elizabeth M. Berkeley, 12 volumes (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992–2004), 2: 348). For detail of his stay in California, see Philip Horne, 'Sense of the West: When Henry James visited California', *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 September 2018.

[13] AJ, Appendix B, p. 519, below.

> out at the touch of one's sudden *vision* and carried me away. I seemed then to know why I had *come* – and to feel how not to have come would have been miserably, horribly to miss it. It made everything right – it made everything priceless.[14]

In this illumination he is afforded 'the divine relief of tears', and, characteristically, the moment is aestheticized and assigned revered European credentials as he repeats the words William selected for their sister's Florentine funeral urn, taken from Dante's *Paradiso*, Canto X: 'ed essa da martiro / e da essilio venne a questa pace'.[15] This is a meeting with the past, its living emotions, in a kind of confirmation he had not foreseen. Such private reflections have no place in *The American Scene*; the episode in Cambridge Cemetery is there transformed and magnified, reducing the intimate and personal, but defining a quintessential American landscape both beautiful and bleak, elegiacally embodying in its silence some careless continuity and impersonality: 'It was late in the autumn and in the day – almost evening; with a wintry pink light in the west, the special shade, fading into a heartless prettiness of grey, that shows with a polar chill through the grim tracery of November' (p. 80).

The unanticipated confrontation with loss and mortality is transformed into the stark beauty of the wintry nightfall, as if somehow James laments in this lonely landscape an earlier, more innocent America. At other points the scenes of rural New England call up a less private retrospection, marked by references which invoke a romantic, predominantly American literary tradition which includes Thoreau, Fenimore Cooper and W. C. Bryant – as well as Wordsworth (p. 25). But the text seems compelled, too, to acknowledge limitation in its observer's capacity to read and explain, to stand outside the conventional parameters which might suggest authority, and, in effect, to undermine the more conventional sequence of observation and explanation. Such a recurring failure belongs to James's rhetoric of representation, which through such negation paradoxically characterizes and complicates the voice of the 'analyst'. The process of observation and openness to

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 518.

[15] 'And she came from martyrdom and exile to this peace'; James misquotes in his Journal ('Dopo lungo exilio e martiro / Viene a questa pace –'), clearly writing from memory (see AJ, Appendix B, p. 518, n. 34, below).

impressions is a matter of reading, legibility, and comprehension, activities operating in a figurative medium, emphatically the 'return' of the 'novelist'. The initial, amusingly confusing apprehension of New York, for instance, strikes him as 'like the spelling-out of foreign sentences of which one knows but half the words' (p. 8), and the New York sky itself seems blankly ready for some inevitable utilitarian message coming from the darkening centre of industry and knowledge: 'the breezy brightness of the Bay puts on the semblance of the vast white page that awaits beyond any other perhaps the black overscoring of science' (p. 88).

Such messages – or spaces for messages as yet unwritten – proliferate, and James's discourse, acknowledging their possibility or presence and the need to make sense of them, itself becomes self-reflexive, examining the processes and means of transmission. The world of phenomena itself is represented as a text to be read, but it can be clouded by incoherence and obscurity, and James's occasional proto-modernist acknowledgment of defeat becomes a generic feature of *The American Scene*. It is, he concedes, the writer's duty to establish a formal, dialectical unity, 'it being the prime business and the high honour of the painter of life always to *make* a sense – and to make it most in proportion as the immediate aspects are loose or confused'. In the light of failure to establish sense by means of 'the chemistry of criticism' and the linguistic medium, and in preference simply to going 'to pieces', the final option is 'to recognize incoherence', to 'present and portray it, in all richness, *for* incoherence' (p. 290).

This is the only pragmatic remedy to what seems an identifiably American overload, a mystery to which language ominously offers no key. The spectator must simply raise his or her eyes and gaze upwards and above the immediate source of puzzlement: 'The *il*legible word … the great inscrutable answer to questions, hangs in the vast American sky, to his imagination, as something fantastic and *abracadabrant*, belonging to no known language' (p. 136). James resorts to a French term for 'absurd' or 'preposterous', though its English associations carry something of the magical, part of the traditional rubric of a conjuring trick. The mystery has, at this point, a sociological context; James had been wondering at the weight of immigrant numbers, as well as at the 'immensity' of the land and the multiplicity of its opportunities. The influence of this widespread population growth will be linguistic, too, for,

to James's attentive ear, these non-native speakers will change the standard conventions and practice of language (as he understood it) forever, to normalize a form of communication to which James's generation may have little means of access. He concedes that it may become 'beautiful', or (perhaps echoing Wordsworth) 'the very music of humanity'[16] – but 'whatever we shall know it for, certainly, we shall not know it for English' (p. 155).

By contrast, meaning and aesthetic form can be resolved, it is suggested, by the man-made, defining device of the frame – however temporary – which lends scale and symmetry, and requires no raising of the eyes for elucidation. The recent enclosure of Harvard Yard gives coherence to a composition, making it a scene to be viewed as a picture, and in painterly terms, 'immediately establishes values' (p. 74). The fencing is given further historical validation – at least in James's Journal – when he recollects those 'old high Cambridge & Oxford grilles & their admirable office of making things look interesting'.[17] A further device to suggest a way of seeing, composing what James might call a *mise en scène*, and which also integrates into the text the mechanics of his journey, is the viewing window of the luxury Pullman railway carriage in which he frequently travelled. He was perhaps acknowledging his friend Owen Wister, whom he joined in Charleston and whose novel *The Virginian* had recently appeared. The hero and the remote Wyoming landscape in this prototype western are first observed through such a window. For James, this potential for framing and fixing a landscape can be developed further so that the unrolling scene is transformed into a stage spectacle enacted under a proscenium arch: 'as if the chair in the Pullman had been my stall, my sense had been all day but of intervening heads and tuning fiddles, of queer refreshments, such as only the theatre and the Pullman know, offered, with vociferation, straight through the performance'. In James's narrative the railway carriage takes on the bustle and unpredictability of theatre, while the observed performance is the art object, Florida. It is acknowledged 'as a positive temple of the drama' and

[16] The poet hears in Nature 'the still, sad music of humanity' ('Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey', l. 91).

[17] p. 512, below.

James recalls no moment 'when the comedy and the tragedy of manners didn't, under its dome, hold me raptly attent' (pp. 442, 446).[18]

The scenes and observations establish a form of chronology and narrative sequence which approximate to elements in a traveller's tale, though they can also carry and reflect on the means of surveying such scenes, on occasion, confessing failure in reading the messages they undoubtedly, and mysteriously, contain. The 'comedy and the tragedy of manners' which James observed in the carriages and their human occupants entails – to move on from the sustained theatrical trope – real-life activity, early twentieth-century American society of which he had little experience. His reaction to a younger generation, the relations between men and women, their conduct and manner of speaking, such 'clear-voiced youth, without a doubt in the world and without a conviction' (p. 185), is marked, and he would go on to publish separate essays, prescriptive rather than descriptive, on how people – and especially women – spoke.[19] He implored them to attend to their manner of delivery, their 'dauntless confidence' which, to European ears, allows a discourse 'wofully apt to wander wild'.[20] The implicit cultural divide (generational and national) shares those same tensions explored so many years earlier in 'Daisy Miller'. His travel to the southern states, a region defined for him by 'sadness and sorrow' (p. 422) and largely unknown (he had visited only Washington, DC in 1881–2), exposed him directly to African American employees – principally hotel and train personnel – and his views on race, though standard for the time, remain undeniably undeveloped and unreconstructed, lacking a contextualizing framework or other associative links which so often characterize and enrich James's discursive practice.[21] This may relate to the fact

[18] By contrast, in a chapter titled 'Pullman's Progress: The Politics of the Picturesque in *The American Scene*', Kendall Johnson suggests that the Pullman car, 'a symbolic agent of "criminal continuity"', 'destroys the pilgrim's framework of aesthetic apprehension' (*Henry James and the Visual* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 155).

[19] His second lecture on this tour was 'The Question of Our Speech' and he later wrote essays on 'The Speech of American Women' and 'The Manners of American Women'; for these, see Appendices C and D, below.

[20] 'The Speech of American Woman' p. 573, below.

[21] It is worth recalling that all staff recruited for Pullman cars were black, and '[i]t became the unfortunate custom for many passengers to call every porter "George," after the company's founder, George M. Pullman' (Jim Loomis, *All Aboard: The Complete North American Train Travel Guide*, 4th edn (Chicago Review Press, 2015), p. 117).

that many of the locations in the book's southern chapters form the basis for contemplation of a relatively distant, but highly contentious past.

The American Civil War had ended forty years earlier and the subsequent period of southern Reconstruction was past and largely discredited, but James's thoughts return relentlessly to that event. It was a period he would revisit again in his second volume of autobiography, *Notes of a Son and Brother*, contemplating the lives and deaths of young men, both known and unknown. The streets and buildings of Richmond and Charleston continuously speak to James of the South's futile attempt at secession and its adherence to the idea of an impossible future, 'the immense, grotesque, defeated project – the project, extravagant, fantastic, and to-day pathetic in its folly, of a vast Slave State (as the old term ran)'. It was, he confirms, 'a cause that could never have been gained' (pp. 382, 405). Wondering at such sustained, formalized inhumanity, he seems reluctant to free himself from that national tragedy.[22] A brief, anonymous encounter in Charleston serves to transport him even further back, momentarily, into the ante-bellum, 'old' South. As he wanders, knocking on doors to meet up with his appointed companion, Owen Wister, he has a brief but powerful engagement with history as 'a small, scared, starved person of colour, of very light colour, an elderly mulattress in an improvised wrapper, just barely held open for me a door through which I felt I might have looked straight and far back into the past' (p. 414). This fleeting opportunity might encourage a romantic reading of history, but he is compelled to comment, too, that the place smells bad, and that the moment is shameful for this woman, or 'mulatress' (the usual spelling), a designation commonplace in the administrative procedures and records of slavery. Protected by class, culture and race, James wonders why she might want to close that door and not disclose the reality behind the frail pretensions of her current condition.

James nurses an undeniable nostalgia for the servilities encountered in those long-ago days spent in the North when 'the old southern tradition' had helped encourage 'the scramble of young darkies for the honour of

[22] Two of his brothers, Bob and Wilky, had volunteered and fought for the Northern cause – which may explain the evident need to invoke a distant past. More generally, the later years of the nineteenth century were marked by an increase in the erection of public monuments to Civil War heroes.

fetching and carrying'. He confesses his surprise at discovering 'the apparently deep-seated inaptitude of the negro race at large for any alertness of personal service' (p. 434), exemplified by a porter who deposits in the mud the travel bag that he must later place on his knee. A prevailing racial anxiety emerges in his observation of 'black teamsters' on the streets of Richmond, emphasizing for him 'with every degree of violence the already-apprehended note of the negro really at home' (p. 389).[23] In *A Small Boy and Others*, and in a different orientation of being 'at home', James recalls how, in his youth, some Kentucky neighbours on New York's Fourteenth Street had kept two slaves, Aunt Sylvia and her son Davy, a part of the James boys' lives till, suddenly, to the latters' dismay, they escaped one night from 'bondage'. They emerge from this past as 'precious', 'affectionate', 'exotic' and 'a joy, a joy to the curious mind, to consort with'. The incident seems to have placed them, at least for the James children, within a broader historical tradition, as fugitives, part of the cargo of the underground railroad: '[t]hey had never been for us so beautifully slaves as in this achievement of their freedom'.[24] James's phraseology seems to avoid any deep engagement with or insight into the experience of enslavement, and, as emerges in *The American Scene*'s southern chapters, black lives remain relegated to roles of servility and subservience, the object, at best, of curiosity. There is little evident attentiveness to ethnicity or the nature of heritage; on a more superficial level, whatever James observes of the exotic or fanciful as represented by black lives becomes, according to Kenneth W. Warren, 'indistinguishable from plantation romances or minstrel shows'.[25]

[23] For discussion of James's 'racial uncertainties', see Sara Blair, *Henry James and the Writing of Race and Nation* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 160–3). Beverly Haviland points out that HJ's host on arrival in America, the publisher George Harvey, had written 'The New Negro Crime', which appeared in *Harper's Weekly* in January 1904. He argued that 'lynchings would stop if Negroes would stop protecting the sexually uncontrollable rapists of white women' (*Henry James's Last Romance: Making Sense of the Past and the American Scene* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 114). Haviland's argument with regard to race (baldly summarized) is that James 'sees whites and blacks bound together painfully … in the traces of the past' and that commentators who have characterized him 'as an apologist for the Southern status quo or as a racist' (p. 125) have misread the text.

[24] *SBO*, p. 196.

[25] *Black and White Strangers: Race and American Literary Realism* (University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 120.

The Souls of Black Folk, the innovative and influential sociological examination of African American life by W. E. B. Du Bois, 'that most accomplished of members of the negro race', introduced, presumably as a literary reference point for black identity, receives passing attention as 'the only "Southern" book of any distinction' (p. 428). In using the term 'Southern' (its author was a New Englander and had been a graduate student of William James's at Harvard), James elides the region's cultural heritage, its dedication to the futility of the 'Slave State', and the 'monomania' which emerged through civil war and later reconstruction. In what seems an absence of curiosity, an untypical unwillingness to unravel stereotypes, James moves on to find a refuge of aesthetic consolation in the ostensibly more innocent ante-bellum values of southern life in the architectural elegance of 'the kindly Country-Club' which he visited in Charleston. In typically late-Jamesian style, however, initial observations are immediately subject to qualification as the 'semi-sinister' mansion must, for all its antique beauty, embody the truth of a shameful past. Such frequent moments of adjustment and revision suggest James's inconclusiveness, which Eric Haralson, speaking more generally, articulates in a blunter question: 'Does his acrobatic openness, his productive ambivalence, his hyperbolic marginality, finally amount to an elaborate evasion of moral/ethical responsibility about Jim Crow America?'[26]

James's discourse, characterized by its figurative shifts, inventive selection of rhetorical voices, and disarming confessions of inadequacy, has meant that cultural critics have, as in discussing issues of race, arrived at varying interpretations of his attitude toward Jews and other recently arrived immigrants. In the New York Bowery district he visits the theatres and cafés patronized by Jews. In Boston he overhears the talk of immigrants from southern Europe and their distortions of the English language; they are twice described as 'gross' aliens, and the 'types and faces bore them out' (p. 248). He is taken to the 'terrible little Ellis Island' in New York's Upper Bay where prospective new arrivals are inspected before entry – a 'drama poignant and unforgettable' (p. 98). It has been suggested that in regarding this social group as 'aliens' he places himself alongside them as an outsider, though this construction of the

[26] 'Henry James and the Limits of Historicism', *Henry James Review* 16.3 (Fall 1995), 275.

narrating analyst's position fails to allow for a harshness of language which presumes and exemplifies division and replicates the stereotypical racial anxieties of the time. At best, his responses may be regarded as ambivalent and at worst anti-Semitic.[27] Ross Posnock in his classic *Trial of Curiosity: Henry James, William James, and the Challenge of Modernity* points to James's contention that '"we, not they, must make the surrender and accept the orientation" of the alien's right to share the "American consciousness"',[28] that it is necessary 'to embrace the immigrant in oneself', and that James's attention to detail suggests that he has broken free from gentility and embraced modernity. This affirmation introduces the idea of James's developing dialectic as examining the question of national identity and heritage, and as raising his own uncertain status as an expatriate American. Yet elements of language (replicated in the letters of these months – admittedly a private medium) persist, and in their casual, even thoughtless application, reflect the racial division and prejudice of the time, objectifying and diminishing lives hardly known and little understood.[29]

As James walks through New York's Lower East Side its teeming streets are transformed into 'the bottom of some vast sallow aquarium in which innumerable fish, of over-developed proboscis, were to bump together, for ever, amid heaped spoils of the sea' (p. 146). And the versions of English he hears have a mutilating power he likens to a historic, unnerving scene of Elizabethan torture – the arrested Guy Fawkes, stretched on the rack. The attention-drawing page headings James provided serve to objectify, simplify, classify, dehumanize, in such a sequence as 'The Obsession of the Alien',

[27] For a concise discussion of this theme see the entry 'Anti-Semitism' in *Critical Companion to Henry James: A Literary Reference to his Life and Work*, ed. Eric Haralson and Kendall Johnson (New York: Facts on File, 2009).

[28] (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 148. See also Posnock's chapter 'Affirming the Alien: The Pragmatist Pluralism of *The American Scene*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James*, ed. Jonathan Freedman (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 224–46.

[29] It is worth noting that Ross Posnock distinguishes HJ from some of his 'largely nativist patrician friends': Henry Adams 'barricaded himself behind anti-Semitism' while the 'antimodernism' of E. L. Godkin and Charles Eliot Norton 'hastened their retreat from urban America's multiethnic democratic culture' ('1904, August 30: Henry James in America', *A New Literary History of America*, ed. Greil Marcus and Werner Sollors (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 490–1).

'The Ubiquity of the Alien', 'The Scale of the Infusion'.[30] In the face of such a collection of jostling but also threateningly spreading humanity, James deliberately undermines his own pronouncements by associating himself with a heroic if ridiculous (and English) St George, the embattled man of letters, a member of the 'old knighthood astride of its caparisoned charger', and intent on defending 'letters', a linguistic status quo beset by a twentieth-century dragon: 'this immensity of the alien presence climbing higher and higher, climbing itself into the very light of publicity' (p. 153).

The dramatization of his own presence acts to contextualize such observations of cultural and social complexity through a series of metaphorical configurations, and, in a less elaborate register, James records the impact of his visit to the Immigration Centre on Ellis Island, not as part of a historical moment, but as a personal shock, an initiation and loss of innocence, enacted on a morning of cold grey fog. Whatever Eden the 'sensitive citizen' had earlier inhabited (another temporary self-designation), he is irrevocably changed by the experience: 'he comes back from his visit not at all the same person that he went. He has eaten of the tree of knowledge, and the taste will be for ever in his mouth'. That shaken self is emphatically accounted as an aspect of his 'American fate', and he must learn to share with the 'inconceivable alien' his 'consciousness' and his 'patriotism' in an act which entails sanctity and intimacy (p. 99).

It is not surprising that Ellis Island, a location at the centre of a mass movement of people which changed the American demographic forever, and, in human terms, embodied both despair and hope, should so have affected James. If the Immigration Station can be regarded as the necessarily

[30] For a consideration of Jamesian identity and its seeming contradictions, see Gert Buelens, *Henry James and the 'Aliens': In Possession of the American Scene* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002). It is helpful, too, to consider James's language and attitudes within a historical context: 'Race today is basically a color word, but it was not that way in New York a hundred years ago [i.e. 1905]. Then, Jewish and Italian immigrants in New York were seen as racially different from – and inferior to – people with origins in northern and western Europe. They were believed to have distinct biological features, mental abilities, and innate character traits … full-blown theories about the racial inferiority of eastern Europeans and southern Italians were well within the mainstream of the scientific community at the turn of the twentieth century. Openly propounded by respected scholars, such views were also propagated and given the stamp of approval by public intellectuals and opinion leaders and the press' (Nancy Foner, *In a New Land: A Comparative View of Immigration* (New York University Press, 2005), pp. 13 and 15).

institutionalized practice of state surveillance and human processing (both bureaucratic and humane), other facets of American society – more privileged and embodying the kind of material success to which most immigrants aspired – were equally present to James. The houses he observes on the New Jersey shore, the weekend retreats of New Yorkers, are conspicuous both for their expression of great wealth and their lack of privacy. Ellis Island could make little allowance, by the sheer complexity and weight of the immigration process, for individuality or privacy, while ironically these luxury houses have sacrificed those same values, offering 'no achieved protection, no constituted mystery of retreat, no saving complexity'. Lives conducted in such a public arena, James suggests, are seriously impoverished in their reliance on the attention of any potential passing spectator, as if some element of civilization has been lost: 'in such conditions there couldn't *be* any manners to speak of … the basis of privacy was somehow wanting for them; … nothing, accordingly, no image, no presumption of constituted relations, possibilities, amenities, in the social, the domestic order, was inwardly projected'. And the houses themselves are doomed to obsolescence and eventual demolition: they are 'only instalments, symbols, stop-gaps' (pp. 17–18).

These ostentatious properties, with 'their candid look of having cost as much as they knew how' (p. 18), mark the beginning of James's discomfort with American social values, a reaction upon which he will elaborate through the entire volume. He responds similarly to the 'hotel-world' he finds in New York and Florida, and this 'world' (constructed on an appropriately grandiose scale) serves as an emblem for the nation's newly acquired aspirations: 'one is verily tempted to ask if the hotel-spirit may not just *be* the American spirit most seeking and most finding itself'. It represents 'a social, indeed positively an æsthetic ideal, and making it so, at this supreme pitch, a synonym for civilization, for the capture of conceived manners themselves' (p. 117). The hotels of which he speaks are, of course, products of the Gilded Age, luxurious gathering places for the rich and fashionable. Designed to meet all the conceivable needs of their visitors, they were complex vehicles for the display and daily enactment of wealth.[31]

[31] He wrote to his friend Howard Sturgis of the Florida hotels in which he stayed of his admiration of their 'wondrous liberality of appointment, finish of system & pervasion of spotless neatness' (20 February 1905, *Dearly Beloved Friends: Henry James's Letters to Younger*

In this 'supremely gregarious state', it is possible to live satisfactorily in the public gaze. The thematic link with surveillance is close and James hints that some unspoken presence (a powerful assimilation of social norms and proprieties) exercises control and reaches judgment upon any deemed transgression.[32] When necessary, punishment may be severe: 'The rigour with which any appearance of pursued or desired adventure is kept down – adventure in the florid sense of the word, the sense in which it remains an euphemism – is not the least interesting note of the whole immense promiscuity' (p. 118). Despite James's favoured use of abstractions, the language surrounding such an 'adventure', itself a flexible term, invokes a range of moral and sexual misdemeanour, however euphemistically observed. It is a world which offers the possibility for lives played out in public to contrive secret indiscretion and indulgence fulfilled.

In this troubling but seductive assembly of possibilities, the city, offering a careless, public anonymity which is both forbidding and alluring, serves as a stage for the recognition, if not enactment, of desire. In his later autobiography James would characterize himself as a *flâneur*, a role associated with the bohemian artist, a wanderer in the city streets who has no destination. Its literary exponent was Baudelaire, who sought to become at one with the crowd and to share its energy.[33] James's liberty to explore the streets of Manhattan was granted in a precocious boyhood, and in *The American Scene* he continues with these 'adventures' and chance encounters. Invoking anonymous crowds contained within tall buildings, he locates 'the *character* of New York': 'huge constructed and compressed communities, throbbing, through its myriad arteries and pores, with a single passion, even as a complicated watch throbs with the one purpose of telling you the hour and

Men, ed. Susan E. Gunter and Steven H. Jobe (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), p. 140). Mark Seltzer suggests that 'the hotel is perhaps the ultimate realization of the panoptic ideal. A prison that resembles a paradise, the gilded enclosure makes and imposes its law' (*Henry James and the Art of Power* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 112).

[32] Edith Wharton's novellas in the collection *Old New York* (1924) dramatize this rigorously observing and judgmental social group in the mid nineteenth century in a more domestic, though no less forbidding context.

[33] See Baudelaire's *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (1863) and also Alexander Sturgis, Rupert Christiansen, Lois Oliver and Michael Wilson, *Rebels and Martyrs: The Image of the Artist in the Nineteenth Century* (London and New Haven, CT: National Gallery and Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 119–37.

the minute'. It is a moment of mechanized excess and loss of control: 'the impression in question, fed by however brief an experience, kept overflowing the cup and spreading in a wide waste of speculation'. In the 'muddy medium' of the wintry New York street, James confesses to a state of abjection, he loses 'relief, detachment, dignity, meaning', and is forced into a condition of surrender, 'all one with the look, the tramp, the whole quality and *allure*, the consummate monotonous commonness, of the pushing male crowd, moving in its dense mass' (pp. 95, 97). Italics signify that 'allure' is to be read as the French term for 'gait', though its primary English meaning lingers, sustaining the erotic possibilities of that overwhelming, climactic encounter.

Bound on a ferry crossing the Hudson River for the Jersey shore, James is surrounded by 'a rare collection of young men of business … in the pride of their youth'. 'Business' as an occupation was dismissed as unthinkable in the young James's household,[34] yet here in its twentieth-century embodiment, on 'a shining steamer', it becomes glamorized, transformed to become part of 'the objective reality of impressions'. The young men in their unconscious physical presence, the object of James's gaze, become players in an Arcadian scene of bounty in which those impressions 'could deliciously be left to ripen, like golden apples, on the tree – it was all this that gave a charm to one's sitting in the orchard, gave a strange and inordinate charm both to the prospect of the Jersey shore and to every inch of the entertainment'. James becomes a vicarious, temporary part of this commuting body, unified by their commitment to business, yet representing a romantic version of mundane occupation by means of those two favoured Jamesian virtues, Youth and Beauty. Freed from the constraints of the city, the homoerotic moment of reiterated 'charm' is sublimated into something greater for which he can typically find no words – 'what else shall I call it but a New Jersey condition?' – and he feels his curiosity to be both 'exciting' and 'beguilingly safe' (pp. 12–13).

Placed within some similarly reassuring context are other chance meetings with young men. Though they move beyond the observational, whatever their erotic charge, they remain contained within restraining barriers

[34] See *SBO*, p. 49.

either physical or social. On the New England coast James finds 'a clear, straightforward young man to converse with', 'in a spacious but otherwise unpeopled nook'. He stands, however, 'across the water, waist-high in the quiet tide and prodding the sea-bottom for oysters' (p. 47). During a walk in the New Hampshire hills, an encounter with a young man with 'a dark-eyed "Latin" look' is hampered once more when words fail. James tries to address him in English, French and Italian without success: '"What *are* you then?"' he asks (p. 135). The nature of the interview betrays the writer's unconsciously proprietorial and European expectations – the deference expected of impoverished southern Mediterranean locals toward rich visitors. In the New World this convention has ceased to apply and James is disappointed at the Armenian's (as he turns out to be) reluctance to engage in any recognition of 'brotherhood' between them. The desire for such a fraternal bond suggests the extent of James's investment in this encounter, though we might wonder why he should expect a reciprocal interest. More importantly, the term acts to diminish anything illicit or improper in the dynamics of this chance meeting. Finally, in the Confederate Museum in Richmond, James accosts a young man while both are absorbed in the contents of a 'sad glass case', to ask him if he is a southerner. He affirms 'eagerly' that he is and James likens him to the romantic hero of Owen Wister's *The Virginian*, 'a gallant and nameless, as well as a very handsome, young Virginian'. His southern heritage divides him from James: that glass case contains for him valuable relics and he affectionately recalls his father's wartime anecdotes involving the 'lucky smashing of the skull of a Union soldier'. He represents ('linguistically') 'a lively interest of type', but is further and culturally distanced by his race attitude. Old hostilities may now be at an end, but 'there were things (ah, we had touched on some of these!) that, all fair, engaging, smiling, as he stood there, he would have done to a Southern negro' (pp. 398–400): James recognizes that 'the machinery of racial violence drives the historical imagination of the new son, who is also, tellingly, a "fine contemporary young American"'.[35] With some irony, that smile and charm spell out the motives and convictions that define his separation from James.

[35] Blair, *Henry James and the Writing of Race and Nation*, p. 161.

Despite the clearly defined boundaries of prohibition, such incidents dramatize some of the sociocultural insights of *The American Scene*, though as well as their concrete, anecdotal value, they also declare James's susceptibility to the 'charm' of the young male encountered anonymously and briefly. This is the 'other' Henry James, susceptible to homoerotic desire, characterized by John Carlos Rowe in his monograph, *The Other Henry James*, as one whose 'psychic alterity … can take erotic pleasure and intellectual satisfaction from subject positions no longer tied to strict gender and sexual binaries'.[36] In these specifically American reminiscences James emerges as more vulnerable and open to experience, as unknown and unrecognized as the young men who catch his eye, and temporarily freed from the ghosts and the 'shimmer of association' (p. 170) contained in the sites which belong to his past. The streets of genteel Newport, Rhode Island, in which he hears the echo of 'that ingenuous old-time distinction', possess nothing so alluring in their resemblance to 'little very old ladies' (pp. 232, 230). The 'restless analyst' invokes a variety of identities, some named within the text, others to be inferred from recorded circumstances.

Though freely characterizing and satirizing himself within the text of *The American Scene* (a narrative device quickly established), James otherwise controls the level of self-disclosure. In practice during this visit, he carefully protected his personal life, revealing a continuing hostility toward the press and generally refusing press interviews.[37] Nevertheless, in New York he met up several times with a young journalist, Witter Bynner, and though this was a professional arrangement, James had for once been won over; it might be regarded as another congenial male–male encounter. The

[36] (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 29.

[37] He took especial pity on one young woman who tracked him down at Chocorua, William James's country house in New Hampshire. He wrote to Howard Sturgis on 11 September 1904, 'A newspaper-woman from New York *has* (in defiance of all my machinations and escapes from the whole crew since my arrival) pushed her way on here today & there is nothing for it (I am told) short of stony cruelty, but for me to see her an hour hence' (quoted in Robin B. Hoople, *Inexorable Yankeehood: Henry James Rediscovers America, 1904–1905*, ed. with additions by Isobel Waters (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2009), p. 49). Florence Brooks published 'Henry James in the Serene Sixties' in the *New York Herald* on 2 October 1904 (the article is reprinted in *Henry James on Culture: Collected Essays on Politics and the American Social Scene*, ed. Pierre A. Walker (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), pp. 35–41).

two later corresponded, and Bynner published in February 1905 'A Word or Two with Henry James'. From what James says in his final words during the interview (and included by Bynner),[38] it is clear that he considers the experience painful, but also, more profoundly and less personally (perhaps reflecting his brother William's ideas on personality),[39] he advocates the mystery, integrity and vulnerability of human individuality in terms recorded by Bynner:

> May I add, since you spoke of having been asked to write something about me, that I have a constituted and systematic indisposition to having anything to do myself personally with anything in the nature of an interview, report, reverberation, that is, to adopting, endorsing, or in any other wise taking to myself anything that any one may have presumed to contrive to gouge, as it were, out of me? It has, for me, nothing to do with *me* – *my* me, at all; but only with the other person's equivalent for that mystery, whatever it may be. Thereby if you find anything to say about our apparently blameless time together, – it is your little affair exclusively …[40]

As he accedes to Bynner, James simultaneously removes himself from the transaction, invoking the inviolability of the individual and dismantling the medium by means of which he has been presented. He can assume no responsibility for Bynner's Henry James. Before leaving England he had foreseen that 'the thing will have been the most private and personal act

[38] Of this final disclaimer of James's, the young interviewer neatly comments that 'He relieved me with the dexterity of a pickpocket, while we shook hands, of my scruples as a highwayman' ('A Word or Two with Henry James', *The Critic* 46 (February 1905), 148). Bynner had renewed an approach from S. S. McClure for James to provide 'Impressions, Notes, Experiences, or Whatever' for his group of papers and magazines in January 1904 (see Anesko, 'James in America', 5). When H. G. Wells left for America in 1906 (later to write *The Future of America*), James 'gave him a note of introduction to the New York poet Witter Bynner' (Horne, *Life in Letters*, p. 431).

[39] 'In the series of lectures offered in *Pragmatism* (1907; collected from talks delivered in 1906–7), James criticizes the epistemological notion that neutrality and objectivity are possible in any absolute sense and argues that meaningfulness is itself always contextual. According to him, pragmatism as a method does not pronounce judgments of truth and falsity; rather, it is a matter of praxis – of doing and ordering' (Heidi White, 'William James's Pragmatism: Ethics and the Individualism of Others', *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* 2.1 (2009), 2).

[40] Quoted in 'A Word or Two with Henry James', 148. The inclusion of 'reverberation' in HJ's list of sources of personal information might remind us of the 1888 novel *The Reverberator*, and its attack on sensationalist journalism.

of my very private and personal life'.[41] However repulsed he was by journalistic practice, his experience of the American scene proved even more shocking as he encountered a society wedded to commerce and the pursuit and celebration of wealth. He judged it as largely uninterested in its own past and heritage; it pursued the provisional, cared little for the private life, and continued to develop a language derived from haphazard racial and ethnic contributions – in effect, a disintegrating form of the English he recognized. His initial and essentially impossible hopes (as he was aware) were bound to failure, for he had been searching nostalgically for a restorative, quasi-Wordsworthian past that might defeat time and progress: 'I think with a great appetite in advance, of the chance, once more, *to lie on the ground*, on an American hillside, on the edge of the woods, in the manner of my youth'.[42] It seems as if he needed to return to that distant fictional moment when Rowland Mallet had rested with Roderick Hudson in sight of the Connecticut River with Mount Holyoke in the distance, the time before the young, unproven artist had left for Europe, never to return. '"This is an American day, an American landscape, an American atmosphere"', Rowland comments; as he listens to the river and smells the pine trees '[s]omething seemed to tell him that later, in a foreign land, he should remember it lovingly and penitently'.[43]

[41] Quoted in Edel, *The Master*, p. 234.

[42] Letter to Mrs Francis Child, quoted *ibid*.

[43] *Roderick Hudson* (Boston: Osgood, 1876), p. 29. By 1883 and the two-volume edition published by Macmillan, the sharp emotion of this final phrase had been reduced to 'with longing and regret'. The setting has, of course, important artistic associations, notably Thomas Cole's 1836 painting, *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm – The Oxbow*.