

Henry James in the palace of art: a survey and evaluation of James' aesthetic criteria as shown in his criticism of nineteenth century painting.

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Thomas, Audrey

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Title Henry James in the palace of art : a survey and evaluation of James' aesthetic criteria as shown in his criticism of nineteenth century painting.

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Description The purpose of this thesis is to provide a general introduction to the study of James' art criticism, to establish his aesthetic criteria and to indicate the relationship between his theory of art and the themes of his fiction. First, I have included an analysis of three stories concerning the artist and his craft: "The Madonna of the Future," "The Liar," and "The Real Thing." Drawing certain conclusions as to James' view of the nature of art and the nature and function of the artist, I have then proceeded to examine his most important statements on nineteenth century painting. Although this is only a small portion of his many comments on not only the art of painting but all the Fine Arts, I have limited my discussion to painting for the sake of brevity and clarity, and to the nineteenth century because James is a nineteenth century novelist. I have attempted to show his amazing perception of the various aesthetic movements of his time and his sympathetic attitude towards the many pitfalls into which the artists of the nineteenth century fell. I have also tried to indicate briefly where James differed from the major art critics of the time, such as Ruskin, Pater and Baudelaire. I feel that certain conclusions can be drawn from a study of James' art criticism: one, that it is important to any serious study of his novels; two, that it is closely linked to certain twentieth century attitudes towards the nature of art; and three, that the aesthetic theory out of which James is working has a direct relation to both the form and content of his novels. His characters are acting out his own struggle for a compromise between the Real and the Ideal, and his theory of art and theory of life being one and the same, he feels that

of art and theory of the being one and the same, he feels that one should, in a certain sense, make of one's life a work of art.

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