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James W. Gargano, ed. *Critical Reviews on Henry James: The Early Novels. Critical Reviews on Henry James: The Late Novels.*

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REVIEWS

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are ridden by the same Apollonian demigod speaking through the poet who commanded that these words be cut upon his tomb:

*Cast a cold eye
On life, on death.
Horseman, pass by!*

Ultimately, the successes and the faults of Jerome Loving's *The Poet on the Second Story* are those of the critical genre in which he is writing. It is no accident that part of the book was conceived in Paris, for his study has about it the air of that quintessential French form, the feuilleton—the article which is expert yet casual; personal yet casual; personal yet critical; entertaining yet provocative. The very derivation of the term from the word for “leaf” is signaled in the Keatsian title of Loving's last chapter, “The Leaf-Fringed Legend of Emily Dickinson,” where he outsentimentalizes the sentimentalists by observing that “Like the beggars on the Left Bank and elsewhere, her poetry is finally a mute protest against the way of the world—against the fact that death is man's lot and so the subject of his life” (p. 105). If so, then we are all beggars and gamins. I like to think that in spite of her blatant, necessary, and most often creative use of sentimentality, which links her so indissolubly to her own time and culture, Dickinson was more American and less Frenchified than this, that there is a Yankee toughness, even a subtle cruelty about her which is far more thorny than it is leafy. It is this toughness that I find missing in Loving's feuilleton, but distance does lend enchantment, and his book more than makes up in charm and piquance what it may lose in bone and muscle.

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James W. Gargano, ed. *Critical Reviews on Henry James: The Early Novels*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987. 207 pp. \$35.00

James W. Gargano, ed. *Critical Reviews on Henry James: The Late Novels*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987. 212 pp. \$35.00

The sheet of instructions from a journal (a “historical review,” to be sure) begins by stipulating a “clear and concise summary of the contents of the book.” James W. Gargano makes it easy to oblige. His introductions march chronologically through the novels to be covered, pointing up the other major criticism as well as that which he chose to present. Though he lets “early” James include *The Tragic*

Muse, he segregates the much smaller section of Reviews and Contemporary Commentary from the Twentieth-Century Essays, which reprint Poirier, James W. Tuttleton, J. A. Ward, William H. Gass, Edel, Howe, and Cargill—almost a Hall of Fame—before ending with a new essay by Adeline R. Tintner.

The “late” novels run from *The Other House* to *The Golden Bowl* though the Introduction goes on to evaluate the final years of James’s career. Gargano liked his “early” pattern so well as to carry it through with minor changes. The first section now ends with general essays by Howells and Conrad; the main section now offers a lesser known lineup of our colleagues; a “Note on Selections” is added to explain that Gargano “intended to balance where possible favorable and unfavorable opinion” and to prefer “relatively recent work to work that has been reprinted”; now two first-time essays are used (one of “The Jolly Corner,” granted entrance because of its “close thematic relevance to the later novels”). Both volumes round off with a proper-noun index. Ironically, the decision to show balance will furnish some handy invective—especially about *What Maisie Knew*, *The Awkward Age*, and *The Wings of the Dove*—if a new wave of anti-Jamesians gathers.

That sheet of instructions forbids using “the review as a springboard from which to write an essay on some pet idea.” Therefore, the metacritic should not expound some crux of the literary process which Gargano has failed to appreciate and whose existence all previous generations did not even suspect. Bruised by experience, that sheet also forbids “an accounting” of “points of minutiae.” Though Gargano needs no charity on the score of precision, “minutiae” would apply in spirit to anybody who quibbles about which essays were chosen from the thousands available.

Of course it would be fair enough to review the contributors instead of their curator. But there are too many for a personalized rating while grouping them into patterns would grow too impersonal, too un-Jamesian. The reader may as well wander around as if in a large museum, enjoying the galleries in no schematic order. I am satisfied to think that Gargano, while alert to the purpose of the encompassing series, aimed for a set of volumes essentially sound to him. Such an approach justifies including two of his own essays.

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