"Good company": The Interpretative Communities of The Golden Bowl[1]

By Philip Horne

Abstract. This paper, arising from work towards the *Complete Fiction of Henry James* edition of *The Golden Bowl* for Cambridge University Press, starts from a consideration of the novel's reception history, then proceeding to reflect on the models of interpretation the novel might be taken to imply. It tries to draw out the implications of a stimulating remark by James in a 1904 letter to Alice Stopford Green, with reference to *The Ambassadors*: '[T]he creation, the projection and evocation by hook or by crook, of some human and personal *good company*, … is as kind a turn as one can render.'

In this short essay, I will attempt in a small way to refresh our sense of what it is to read The Golden Bowl by recreating the predicament of some new readers, some first responders, approaching it on its English publication by Methuen on 10 February 1905, and the interpretative crises that confronted those readers as they do its characters (and as they do us). To keep the focus for now on the freshness of these first responses, I will anonymize these readers, only revealing their identities (and giving full references) after their responses have been considered.

To begin with a sense of how James thought about what he was doing for (and to) his readers, here is a striking passage from a letter (about The Ambassadors) he wrote to the historian Alice Stopford Green, whom he knew through her connection with Lady Florence (Eveleen Olliffe) Bell and Elizabeth Robins. It's of 10 January 1904, by which time James was well launched on the writing of The Golden Bowl.

> I rejoice, without reserve, to have done in any degree for you that which is perhaps as good a thing as we poor mortals can do for each other--administered the anodyne of a tolerably intense alternative or vicarious experience, a beguiling interruption to the dire familiarities of self. To do that, to do it at all persuasively, convincingly, attachingly, or, as it were, charmingly--by the operation of some charm in the other, the suggested or imposed, vision, contact, company, or whatever one may call it--this I suppose is really the most decent "good" one can do, and there is much sustaining comfort in being helped to feel that one has somehow mastered the secret of it. This secret one then, naturally, swells with the hope of being able again to draw happy effects from. I think that the more one goes on the more one sees that the creation, the projection and evocation by hook or by crook, of some human and personal good company, for the mind and imagination of one's readers--beset as we all are, at the best, with

> much bad and indifferent--is as kind a turn as one can render, and really no more than a proper return for any generous intellectual confidence.
>
> (LL 396)

James here is rising from what might be seen as the mere sociable graciousness of acknowledging a personal compliment to a larger principle, offering something like a theory of creation and reception, of "good company"--entertainment, hospitality, reciprocity--a community of minds created "by the operation of some charm." This passage offers an inspiring sense of what a book can do for us, even or especially The Golden Bowl. James talks here really about a contractual relation, or a convivial one, where the reader's "generous intellectual confidence" is rewarded by the author's efforts of "projection and evocation by hook or by crook, of some human and personal good company." The "company" is perhaps primarily that of the narrator, the author's surrogate in the text, and of the work's main characters, those whose fortunes and, in Henry James's case, consciousnesses we follow. We might also be led to think of communities of readers--and of the virtual community we share with other readers of the novel, going back to its original creation.

An early reader of The Golden Bowl, off in a far-flung outpost of empire, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), read the book a few months after publication, and in July 1905 wrote about it to a friend back in England. His response is one of surprise--and

it may surprise and intrigue us too, since it was already something of a commonplace that no one ever spoke like James's characters. "I have just finished The Golden Bowl & am astounded. Did he invent us or we him? He uses all our words in their most technical sense and we can't have got them all from him. . . ." The letter-writer and his addressee, and perhaps their circle, seem to resemble the characters, he's saying--even to feel as if they're James's inventions (or he theirs). The comment seems moreover to be saying, tantalizingly, that there's an English social milieu that matches James's fictional one in "our words," in characteristic vocabulary--at least in the opinion of one of its members--and perhaps correspondingly in refinement and subtlety. This reader of the Master jokingly suggests he and his friend or friends are, at least verbally, like James's creations--unless like Voltaire's God he is their creation.[2] The friend to whom he writes, also an admirer of James, replies:

> As to Henry James, I entirely agree--it's too extraordinary about his use of our words. I suppose there must be some common cause--for it's certain that neither has taken from the other. I also wonder whether it's because he's so horribly like us that I, at any rate, can't read him.

There's a baffling continuity between James's "words" and those of this real-life circle--and this less enthusiastic

friend attributes the match to "some common cause." The friend then makes a perverse joke, that the resemblance is horrible and that he "can't read him"--maybe because James shows their sense of uniqueness and originality to be a delusion. And indeed perhaps this remark illustrates through its wit and ironic freedom how similar to the witty and ironically free James they are. For these readers, at any rate, James and his characters have been stimulating company, and an extension of their own company, through a specific process of identification.

For another early reader, a young jobbing reviewer writing for a high Anglican magazine aimed at a serious and not especially literary readership, whose reading diary has survived for us, the first encounter with The Golden Bowl is a commission with a tight turnaround. It represents a multiple challenge, a vast extent of difficult pages, a time-limit for reading, a squeezed deadline and a restrictive word-limit for the finished article. The pleasures of spending time in "good company" are correspondingly less present to this hard-pressed reader. The first entry, on Thursday 9 February 1905 (the day before the English edition came out from Methuen), sets forth the task: "read my Henry James book after tea--which needs reading, & is very closely packed with words--550 pages of small print. / Henry James print too, wh. I am to boil into 7 or 800 words!" The Methuen edition is indeed in such "small print" it may easily have affected for the worse the responses

of English reviewers. "Henry James print too!" James himself did not see it till his return from America, when he was aghast: "I was appalled, in returning to England, to behold the awful shape in which Methuen had put it forth--prohibitive as to any dealing with it & in which, unmistakeably, no one has been able to read it" (HW).[3] Next day the "job" is taking the reviewer's time:

> Friday 10 February 1905
>
> Read the whole blessed morning, & mornings are blessed--the long drawn-out Henry James. I shall have earned the shillings I make by this review at any rate. . . . my desire to finish today is not likely to be gratified I see . . . all this time given up to reviewing rather bothers me.

In other words the time taken up by reviewing (even The Golden Bowl) is "rather" begrudged. And yet as a result of the time spent in James's company, something is being absorbed. On Saturday the reviewer goes to the London Library, en route dispatching invitations to a party--and notices a collateral effect of such immersion in The Golden Bowl:

> After lunch I went to the L. L. to return a book, stamping on the way innumerable little envelopes which invite people to our great evening party, suddenly decided upon, for the 1st--That sentence strikes me as bearing the impress of Henry James--in which my mind is steeped!

It becomes a struggle. Sunday 12 February was "A steady kind of day, bright & polished, & ice cold. All the morning I wrestled with Henry James. . . ." The job is becoming positively agonistic: later in the entry, "Henry James I hope to finish tonight--the toughest job I have yet had." Probably the reading of The Golden Bowl was finished then; but little time was left. On Monday, nonetheless, the task is completed, though the reviewer is already anticipating dissatisfaction from the editor:

> Wrote my Henry James review all the morning--
> between, that is, incessant interruptions...
> However I did get my review done, rather a tough
> job, & I doubt whether she'll like it--but never
> was there such a book to review.

But as reviewers often find, their work only seems completed when they send it off. On Tuesday: "A note from Mrs L. to say the review is a 3rd too long: oh damn it all. So I must cut it down, spoil it, & waste I dont [sic] know how many hours work, all because the worthy Patronesses want to read about midwives." The day after is duly blighted by the prompt, inevitable follow-up:

> Then, going downstairs happily, I found a letter
> from Mrs L. enclosing that wretched review, &
> asking me to cut it down, & send it back as soon as
> possible. So I set to work with literal &
> metaphorical scissors & somehow patched it

> together, having cut out all the plot & a good deal else, so that it won't take more than 800 words & left it at Mrs L.'s house . . . I know I have spoiled the review, & wasted my work--but it can't be helped.

So the review is literally cut, chopped or scissored down for this magazine whose readers prefer straightforward midwifery to Jamesian complications. The whole episode is intriguingly summarized in a letter to a friend.

> I spend 5 days of precious time toiling through Henry James's subleties [sic] for Mrs Lyttelton,[4] and write a very hardworking review for her; then come orders to cut out quite half of it--at once--as it has to go into next week's Guardian, and the Parsonesses, I suppose prefer midwifery, to literature. So I gave up 10 minutes, all I had, to laying about me with a pair of scissors: literally I cut two sheets to pieces, wrote a scrawl to mend them together, and so sent the maimed thing off--with a curse.

And finally, in the same letter: "I never hope to see it again. It was quite good before the official eye fell upon it; now it is worthless, and doesn't in the least represent all the toil I put into it--and the book deserved a good and careful review. . . ." So the reviewer's repudiation of the review in its finished form, after "5 days of precious time

toiling" and "all the toil I put into it," is extreme. Only at the last gasp--as if it's an afterthought--is there an acknowledgement of the book's interests, as opposed to its reviewer's: "the book deserved a good and careful review."

We have the review, in its bescissored form, which begins by speaking of James as "great":

> Mr Henry James is one of the very few living writers who are sufficiently great to possess a point of view. We know by this time what that point of view is, and when we read a new book by him we do not expect to make discoveries, but to look once more at familiar sights through the old spectacles.

"Sufficiently great" sounds like praise, but we may need to interrogate the logic here. First, we may ask, is the possession of "a point of view" really a mark of "greatness"? It certainly does not seem here to be a sign of novelty, or of much capacity to surprise readers, who seem already to know what they're going to get. James's famous image of "the house of fiction," in the preface to The Portrait of a Lady published four years later, imagined each novel with a novelist at a different window overlooking a different part of "the human scene"; the differences being why we don't find a "greater sameness of report" (CF 33, 36). Here we are simply looking through "the old spectacles," and moreover "at familiar sights."

> And yet, though he has written so much and so well, this last book, with its all but 550 closely printed pages, gives proof that he finds the old problems as engrossing as ever, and is still toiling to say what he means, to say all he means, to leave nothing unsaid that can by any possibility complete the picture.

Unless this first claim is a bluff, The Golden Bowl is not the first writing by James this reviewer has read--as it wasn't either, presumably, for the two readers examined earlier--and it seems some of the bloom has rubbed off. James finds "the old problems" as engrossing as ever, then--but, this asks, do we? It seems there's some impatience in the parodic clauses here in which James "is still toiling to say what he means, to say all he means, to leave nothing unsaid that can by any possibility complete the picture." "Toiling" recalls the reviewer's "precious time toiling" and "all the toil I put into it," seemingly transferring the reviewer's labors to the work and its author as laboriousness. Part of the equation in a James novel, we might say, is that the reader is enlisted to do an unusual amount of work--must collaborate in interpreting the action as the characters do, as part of the company, the joint enterprise. The demand for such work is unusual, and can provoke the reaction that the writing is "laboured," excessive and transgressive in its refusal to simplify.

The second half of this first paragraph seems to make another attempt at praise: "no one can deny that he brings gifts to the task which fail very little of first-rate quality. . . . In the 550 pages of his last book there is not one, we may assert, that bears traces of haste or carelessness. . . ." As praise this is less than hearty; perhaps it's even faint. James's gifts are first-rate, then? No, they "fail very little of first-rate quality"--so they're almost first-rate--which means surely they're second-rate gifts. Not one page "bears traces of haste or carelessness"--hardly something the publisher will seize on for the covers of the paperback (or, in 1905, for the dust-wrapper of some imaginable "Cheap Edition").

The middle paragraph of the only three paragraphs in the review after its hacking-down says of the plot: "The plot, if one can call it so, is of the slightest; an episode--an incident to be disposed of by the average novelist in ten pages or less." This seems to class James as 55 times more verbose than "the average novelist" and thus implies a frustration in the reviewer--a frustration that we see, in the third and final paragraph, vent itself in a series of refusals, rejections and assaults. "It is, after all, a slight theme on which to spend so much ingenuity, and we suffer from a surfeit of words." The "words" that for our first reader had been in quality so like "our words" become an excessive quantity, an overdose, for our reviewer. But though there are

so many words, they are ineffectual; no “good company” is evoked.

> For all the skill and care that have been spent on them the actors remain but so many distinguished ghosts. We have been living with thoughts and emotions, not with live people. The effect of all this marvellous accumulation of detail--all of it doubtless true, all there to see if we look close enough--obscures the main outlines . . . Mr James tortures himself and wearies his readers in his strenuous effort to get everything said that there is to say.

James tortures himself and wearies us with his futile effort “to get everything said that there is to say,” his strenuous amassing on a grand scale of detail of “thoughts and emotions,” which is “doubtless true” but only if we are inclined to “look close enough,” which only damages his novel as a work of art. The “people” are not “live.” In case we hadn’t got the point, the end of the review denies James “genius”: “Genius would have dissolved [these details], and whole chapters of the same kind, into a single word. Genius, however, is precisely what we do not find. . . .” The reviewer, however, seems to feel this goes too far, and, right at the end, rows back the other way. “But when we have made this reservation our praise must be unstinted. There is no living novelist whose standard is higher, or whose achievement

is so consistently great." Finally, after a whole bundle of "reservations" and limiting judgments, come these last two tepid, rather "official" sentences, suitable for a blurb or advertisement. It seems a contradiction to deny "genius" but otherwise to insist on "unstinted" praise and claim unsurpassed consistent greatness. And after all that has been said, it feels too late. Overall, the review amounts in effect to a refusal of the highest value, or life, to The Golden Bowl, whose would-be "good company" are "so many distinguished ghosts." Some but not all of this dismissal of its claims may be the result of the hasty commission and the brutal cuts imposed by Lyttelton.

I should now identify these readers. The first correspondent, laboring as a junior civil servant of Empire in the East, was Leonard Woolf.[5] The second reader, his friend who replied wittily, was Lytton Strachey.[6] Strachey would continue to take a heavily ironized view of James; for instance, he wrote to Virginia Stephen in January 1909, on a visit to Rye (just before proposing to her), "So conscientious and worried and important--he was like an admirable tradesman trying his best to give satisfaction, infinitely solemn and polite"; and on the next day to his brother James: "He has a colossal physiognomy, and it's almost impossible to believe that such an appearance could have produced the Sacred Fount. I long to know him."[7] In fact, Virginia Stephen was our third reader, the young reviewer for whom The Golden Bowl became so wearying a

chore; she would marry our first reader in 1912 and thus become Virginia Woolf.[8] James was not part of the Bloomsbury Group, but his novel about "the Bloomsbury cup" (GB 2: 352) certainly registered with some of that "good company."

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In The Golden Bowl itself, James models for us our activity in reading and our participation in his "good company," most obviously through the Assinghams, Fanny and Bob, whose running commentary on the action makes them a "reading group," as it were, meeting regularly to discuss what has been going on. This "interpretive community" (Fish)[9] that James gives us within the novel guides and enriches our own (and amuses us) even when it seems wrongheaded or over-elaborate, as seems only natural in "a labyrinth with a dozen wrong turnings in which it is possible to lose oneself," which is how the perceptive American architect and cultural commentator Claude Bragdon described the work in his review in the Critic (Hayes 420). In other words, James has modeled the act of reading and interpretation for us, entertainingly and stimulatingly, within the novel. It is for us to pick up the threads and trust them to guide us through the labyrinth--or to weave our own patterns.

Let us join Fanny and Bob for part of an exemplary exchange late one evening, after the grand reception at the Foreign Office where for the first time Charlotte and the Prince have brazenly gone about together in public, without

their spouses. Something Fanny says, in her effort to minimize the possibility of an adulterous affair arising from her own reckless matchmaking, strikes the usually laconic Colonel.

> "Then you've made up your mind it's all poor Charlotte?" he asked with an effect of abruptness.
>
> The effect, whether intended or not, reached her--brought her face short round. It was a touch at which she again lost her balance, at which, somehow, the bottom dropped out of her recovered comfort. "Then you've made up yours differently? It really struck you that there is something?"
>
> The movement itself, apparently, made him once more stand off. He had felt on his nearer approach the high temperature of the question. (GB 1: 287)

Bob too can be subtle, at least if his "effect" is "intended"--and he has learned the Jamesian power of the ambiguous referent: his "it's all poor Charlotte" (emphasis mine) produces an "it" for Fanny to worry at: "there is something?" His next suggestion, though, may also be his parody of Fanny's way of arguing, with its flights of speculation and paradox: "Perhaps that's just what she's doing: showing him how much she's letting him alone--pointing it out to him from day to day". In other words, Charlotte may be seeking the Prince out only to reassure him she is not still in love with him or pursuing him. But Bob's subtlety buys him no exemption from Fanny's criticism: she immediately points out a contradiction:

> "Did she point it out by waiting for him to-night on the stair-case in the manner you described to me?"
>
> "I really, my dear, described to you a manner?" the Colonel, clearly, from want of habit, scarce recognised himself in the imputation.

Bob has so mock-accepted Fanny's affectionate caricature of him as deficient in analytic and descriptive power that an interest in a "manner" and a capacity to evoke it are taken by him (wittily) as beyond his usual scope. On this occasion Fanny praises him faintly--that's their shared joke, that he is dim.

> "Yes--for once in a way; in those few words we had after you had watched them come up you told me something of what you had seen. You didn't tell me very much--<u>that</u> you couldn't for your life; but I saw for myself that, strange to say, you had received your impression, and I felt therefore that there must indeed have been something out of the way for you so to betray it." She was fully upon him now, and she confronted him with his proved sensibility to the occasion--confronted him because of her own uneasy need to profit by it.

If Bob of all people has had an impression, that's a sign that something <u>very</u> significant must have happened. "It came over her still more than at the time, it came over her that he had

been struck with something, even he, poor dear man; and that for this to have occurred there must have been much to be struck with. . . .” Fanny here, whose point of view, whose company, as it were, we now enter, is analyzing not her own impression but Bob’s, “poor dear man.” She goes on:

> “Come, my dear--you thought what you thought: in the presence of what you saw you couldn’t resist thinking. I don’t ask more of it than that. And your idea is worth, this time, quite as much as any of mine--so that you can’t pretend, as usual, that mine has run away with me. . . . You give me a point de repère outside myself--which is where I like it. Now I can work round you.” (287-88)

However perversely, Fanny collaborates here with Bob in her act of interpretation--she guides her thinking dialectically through a sense of his--even if a good deal of what he’s taken to think is imputed to him by her and treated by him with gruff dismissiveness. By extension, what others think about works one is engaging with, or has engaged with, becomes part of our own picture of the work, even when only in opposition, as a point de repère. This is part of one’s “good company.”

Fanny and Bob are model interpreters, teaching us how to read the book, not in the sense that we should accept their constantly shifting conclusions, which are driven by Fanny’s “uneasy need”; but by resembling an affectionately quarrelsome reading group, informal, personal, engaged in an interminable

analysis. We should perhaps be more disinterested than they are, but through following them we may find ourselves caring at least as much as they do for the fate of our main characters.

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Let us end then with one of those, with Maggie, the Princess, and a passage of intensive solitary interpretation, most closely akin to our own activity as we privately read (though the character is always shadowed by a narrator, more or less implicit, who is mediating her or him to the reader). At its most intense, this Jamesian activity is so internalized that it goes beyond the shareable; it takes place in silence and privacy, and entails disguise, deception, dissimulation. And interpretation shades into creation: to be a critic can amount to being an author with a high level of agency; to read people in a certain way can make one feel one is writing them--or inventing them (as Leonard Woolf feels he's inventing James or James is inventing him and his set). As she watches the others from the darkened terrace at Fawns in their lighted room,

> they might have been figures rehearsing some play of which she herself was the author; they might even, for the happy appearance they continued to present, have been such figures as would, by the strong note of character in each, fill any author

> with the certitude of success, especially of their own histrionic. (GB 2: 242)

Maggie looking in at the others sees them as if they were "figures rehearsing some play of which she herself was the author"--as if they were that theatrical kind of "good company"--an ensemble collaborating to produce a unified effect. Like Fanny and Bob, she is next to be involved in an act of joint interpretation. Only here it becomes more a contest than a collaboration. Charlotte comes out to find Maggie on the terrace, to show her the others as a picture for interpretation, but with quite a different meaning from the one we have just seen Maggie herself read into it:

> They presently went back the way she had come, but she stopped Maggie again within range of the smoking-room window and made her stand where the party at cards would be before her. Side by side, for three minutes, they fixed this picture of quiet harmonies, the positive charm of it and, as might have been said, the full significance--which, as was now brought home to Maggie, could be no more, after all, than a matter of interpretation, differing always for a different interpreter. As she herself had hovered in sight of it a quarter-of-an-hour before, it would have been a thing for her to show Charlotte--to show in righteous irony, in reproach too stern for anything but silence. But

> now it was she who was being shown it, and shown it by Charlotte, and she saw quickly enough that, as Charlotte showed it, so she must at present submissively seem to take it. (250)

This passage embodies one of the deep insights of The Golden Bowl. When one person or group imposes assent to an interpretation on another person, that imposition may of course be an exercise of power, and acceptance of the interpretation an acknowledgment of that power. But the other's acceptance may be no more than superficial: James shows us the difference between an inward acceptance of that interpretation (like Maggie's in the first half of the novel) and (as in the second half) a secret disbelief of and resistance to it. The latter can work beneath a surface of feigned credulity, and can indeed use that surface to manipulate the imposer. Charlotte imposes her interpretation on Maggie here; but in the process she loses the game, because she doesn't know that Maggie knows, that Maggie is pretending--in a way that will culminate in the novel's famous Judas-kiss. Maggie looks at her father, whom Charlotte is ostentatiously reclaiming:

> The others were absorbed and unconscious, either silent over their game or dropping remarks unheard on the terrace; and it was to her father's quiet face, discernibly expressive of nothing that was in his daughter's mind, that our young woman's attention was most directly given. His wife and his

> daughter were both closely watching him, and to which of them, could he have been notified of this, would his raised eyes first, all impulsively, have responded; in which of them would he have felt it most important to destroy--for his clutch at the equilibrium--any germ of uneasiness? Not yet, since his marriage, had Maggie so sharply and so formidably known her old possession of him as a thing divided and contested. She was looking at him by Charlotte's leave and under Charlotte's direction; quite in fact as if the particular way she should look at him were prescribed to her; quite, even, as if she had been defied to look at him in any other. (250-51)

Charlotte's forcing of Maggie's vision, her imposition of a "particular way" to look, seems to win the day; Maggie complies with it by play-acting overt rivalry and abject capitulation, leading to the kiss of apparent reconciliation. But Charlotte's victory is hollow, blinds her to Maggie's intelligence and fuller understanding of the situation.

This leads me to some final thoughts. In a sense when Maggie wins over the Prince it is a triumph of interpretation, because Maggie's intelligence and her courage and instincts are not only what enable her to win through, but what on his recognition of them make her become attractive, make her "good company," to the Prince. For him Charlotte, poor Charlotte, is

stranded and, in his brutal words, "She's stupid" (356). Charlotte is unimaginative: there is something essentially ungenerous in her (though we know the putative generosity of Maggie has often been read as a weapon more than a rescue package).

With my title in mind, we could ask, at the end of the novel, with Fanny and Bob on the sidelines and Adam and Charlotte heading off to American City, whether the couple formed by the Prince and Maggie is the final interpretive community in The Golden Bowl, the true "good company" formed by a shared intelligence, a shared analysis, a shared understanding? Or could it be something hollower than that? Could it be at least equally that we are seeing the enforcement, through "a rare power of purchase" (369), enabled by the Verver millions and America's dominance, of an official line, a compulsory reading of the situation with which the Prince complies, in which he acquiesces, partly because for the sake of his family's future he has no alternative but also because he does not feel the passion for Charlotte that Charlotte feels for him? And might Maggie herself be perhaps even finally disappointed by the Prince's too-easy, possibly somewhat less than full-hearted, compliance? These are questions that James, characteristically, opens for us, and does not fully or finally close; questions which await us each time we begin reading The Golden Bowl.

NOTES

[1]This essay was first given as a paper at the Kyoto conference on "Community and Communicability" of the international Henry James Society, 5-7 July 2023. I am grateful to Hitomi Nakamura and Sarah Wadsworth, the organizers of the conference, and to three very helpful readers: Oliver Herford, Clare Pettitt, and Neil Rennie.

[2]Cf. "Si les cieux, dépouillés de son empreinte auguste, / Pouvaient cesser jamais de le manifester, / Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer." (Voltaire, "Épître à l'auteur du nouveau livre : Des trois imposteurs" [1768], 2) [Literal translation by Jack Iverson: "If the heavens, stripped of his noble imprint, / Could ever cease to attest to his being, / If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him."].

[3]The Methuen edition certainly compares poorly to the spaciousness and elegance of the two volumes in which Scribner's had put the novel out in New York on 10 November 1904.

[4]Because the passage uses her name, I won't anonymize Mrs. Kathleen Lyttelton (1856-1907), editor of the women's section of The Guardian, not the famous newspaper but a magazine for Anglican readers (she was a feminist, wife to a suffragan bishop).

[5]"I have just finished The Golden Bowl . . .": Leonard Woolf, letter to Lytton Strachey, 23 July 1905 from Jaffna, Ceylon (Letters 97). Woolf wrote of the significance of James

in his Cambridge days in his memoir Sowing: An Autobiography of the Years 1880-1904: "We read The Sacred Fount, The Wings of the Dove, and The Golden Bowl as they came out. Lytton Strachey, Saxon [Saxon Arnoll Sydney-Turner (1880-1962)] and I were fascinated by them--entranced and almost hypnotized. I don't know whether we thought that they were really great masterpieces. My enjoyment and admiration of them have always been and still are great, but always with a reservation. . . . but the strange, Jamesian, convoluted beauty and subtlety of them act upon those who yield to them like drink or drugs; for a time we became addicts, habitual drunkards--never, perhaps, quite serious, but playing at seeing the world of Trinity and Cambridge as a Jamesian phantasmagoria, writing and talking as if we had just walked out of The Sacred Fount into Trinity Great Court. The curious thing was that, whereas Lytton and I were always consciously playing a game in talking or writing like Mrs. Brissenden and Mrs. Server, Saxon quite naturally talked, looked, acted, was a character in an unwritten novel by Henry James" (106-07). (This account suggests how James offered them a mode for social intercourse, a lubricating medium, like "drink or drugs," and how they consciously played at participating in the "good company" of his novels. It thus casts doubt on Strachey's claim that "it's certain that neither has taken from the other.")

[6]"As to Henry James, I entirely agree. . .": Lytton Strachey, letter to Leonard Woolf [1905] (Woolf, Letters 97n).

[7]January 3, 4 1909 (Strachey 167).

[8]Virginia Stephen's journals are found in Woolf (Passionate Apprentice): "Thursday 9 February 1905" (234-35); "Friday 10 February 1905" & "Saturday 11 February" (235); [Sunday]: "A steady kind of day" & "Henry James I hope to finish tonight" (236); [Monday]: "Wrote my Henry James review all the morning" (236); [Tuesday] "A note from Mrs. L." (237); "Wednesday 15 February" (237-38). "I spend 5 days of precious time" (letter to Violet Dickinson [qtd.in Woolf, Essays 381]). All quotations from "Mr. Henry James's Latest Novel" are from the same volume (22-24). Lee makes the review sound blander than in my view it is, calling it "three respectful and muted paragraphs" (217).

[9]The term famously appears in Fish. I use it here without any special reference to the debate conducted there.

WORKS BY HENRY JAMES

CF--Complete Fiction of Henry James. Edited by Oliver Herford, Cambridge UP, vol. 33, 2024.

GB--The Golden Bowl. 2 vols., Scribner's, 1904.

LL--Henry James: A Life in Letters. Edited by Philip Horne, Penguin, 1999.

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