



Culture and Conduct in the Novels of Henry James

Alwyn Berland

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This book investigates Henry James' conception of civilisation as culture and the relationships of this conception to James' major works. As an American who lived most of his adult life in England, James brought to his fiction the strong moral commitment that characterised a Puritan New England past and an equally strong dedication to the aesthetic culture he found in England and in Europe. Professor Berland analyses the central importance of these commitments, with their complications and contradictions, to the development of James' work. He argues that they not only provided James with his major themes and characters, but also determined a number of his fictional techniques. Berland draws primarily on the novels, rather than on the author's biography, or on any preconceived intellectual or philosophical system in the author's mind. The novels themselves demonstrate both the positive values which James sought in his pursuit of culture, as well as its dangers of narrow aestheticism, for instance, and of acquisitiveness.

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