
REVIEWS

Kimberly C. Reed and Peter G. Beidler, eds. *Approaches to Teaching Henry James's Daisy Miller and The Turn of the Screw*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2005. 221p.

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One of the most useful resources for both inexperienced teachers and senior professors of undergraduates is the series of eighty-five volumes titled *Approaches to Teaching World Literature*, sponsored by the MLA's Publication Committee, with Joseph Gibaldi as Series Editor. In my recent upper-division survey course American Literature: The Modern Period, I frequently consulted the collection of materials and approaches in the volume on William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* as I re-thought the way I would teach the novel, the capstone piece of fiction in the course. The result was a much more successful learning experience for my students.

And now, twenty-five years after the initial volume in the series was published on Chaucer, we have the first of what I hope will be a multi-volume series (as with Austen and Shakespeare) on Henry James, one of the world's preeminent novelists. In recent decades, some members of the university community have been resistant to the teaching of James' fiction because of who they say he is rather than what he has artistically created. So this first volume attempts to re-introduce this compelling storyteller, as Pierre A. Walker asserts, "with the much more relevant, interesting, and humane James of the best scholarship of the last two decades." The literary texts chosen for this re-introduction are two fairly accessible novellas that are, according to the editors, "frequently taught" and have "great appeal to both students and instructors" (1). It is my hope that a follow-on volume will soon address what Sheila Teahan identifies as "the formidable linguistic and epistemological barriers" (111) of the later James by featuring one of the following works: *The Ambassadors*, *The Wings of the Dove*, or *The Golden Bowl*.

Part I of this volume, "Materials," suggests background readings (such as Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction*), critical texts to use in the classroom (Bedford or Norton), and various teaching resources (the Henry James scholars' web site). In Part II, "Approaches," twenty-three essays establish contexts, discuss various classroom strategies in a wide range of literature and composition classes, apply theory and intertextuality, and address the issues of gender and sex. The volume concludes

with one of its most effective sections, “James and Film,” in which Mark A. Eaton explores Peter Bogdanovich’s film *Daisy Miller* (1974); Monika Brown analyzes many film adaptations of *The Turn of the Screw*; and Sue Sorensen describes images of seeing and perceiving in “the ghostly narrative” and how it is then depicted in various film versions.

The editors of the volume tell us that they have included essays written from a wide range of perspectives, even those with which they “may not entirely agree.” But their intent is to present approaches that are “both practical and provocative.” In achieving this goal, they are, for the most part, successful. Pericles Lewis describes multiple readings of *Daisy Miller* from various theoretical angles. And Diane Long Hoeveler shows how to read *The Turn of the Screw* with Joyce Carol Oates’ “Accursed Inhabitants of the House of Bly” (1992), a rewrite of the ghost story from the point of view of its dead. A few essays address both novellas (Collin Meissner’s compelling analysis of James’ center-of-consciousness narrative technique), but most focus on only one work (Sean Palmer’s new-historicist “girl of the period” controversy of the 1870s and its relation to *Daisy Miller*). The collection is uneven in quality and lacks a certain overall cohesiveness. I wish that more essayists had explored strategies to help undergraduates access James’ “sometimes dauntingly difficult style.” Greg W. Zacharias makes a good beginning by discussing a variety of “careful reading” strategies, but I would like to see even more emphasis on the issue of style, such as an in-depth analysis of the opening paragraph of “The Beast in the Jungle” as a way of showing students the patience, care, and persistence needed to engage both novellas, but particularly *The Turn of the Screw*.

This volume shows you how you can use one or both of the novellas in a wide range of courses: freshman composition, introduction to literature, Victorian literature, realism and naturalism in American literature, literature and film, and gothic literature (both American and English). Let’s use it, along with other related volumes in the series (Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* or *Gothic Fiction: The British and American Traditions*, for example) as we pay less attention to the fading sound and fury of those who discount or undervalue Henry James and, instead, think of effective ways to help our students learn to appreciate him, one of the true masters of the art of fiction. ✱