

Two Selves at War

"The American Henry James," by Quentin Anderson (Rutgers University Press, 369 pp. \$6.50), is a reinterpretation of the great writer's work in the light of "the bootstrap myth," the assumption that we can hoist ourselves to glory by divinely creative powers within us. Our reviewer is Professor G. Armour Craig of Amherst.

By G. Armour Craig

TO SEE ourselves as others see us, as Robert Burns said, may well be the first step to sanity. But for the elder Henry James, whose energetic religious musings were conducted in full sight of his gifted family, the final step to salvation is to see others as we see ourselves. That we can so see ourselves, that we can participate in a vision in which each individual is made universal without compromising the exaltation of any other individual—such is the pious expectation of "the bootstrap myth," the belief which Quentin Anderson's vigorous and important book "The American Henry James" says is central to an understanding of Henry James the novelist.

The bootstrap myth, moreover, holds that the one rises undiminished to the harmony of a united many without the intervention of any institution. Henry James senior and his son after him, Mr. Anderson asserts, were radical protestants: like Emerson and Thoreau they took upon themselves, the younger Henry without conscious critical choice, the burdens that had earlier been distributed between Church and State. "They tried to stuff into the self what society had ceased adequately to represent." They believed that regeneration, salvation, even the incursion of grace, are a human, "this-sided" drama.

The bootstrap myth, the unquestioned assumption that we can hoist ourselves, and all ourselves, to glory by the divinely creative powers in each of us, this myth, Mr. Anderson argues, surrounds the major works of Henry James just as Aquinas and Ptolemaic astronomy surround "The Divine Comedy." Mr. Anderson's main thesis, indeed, is that James's last three finished novels constitute a trilogy "in which the bootstrap myth found its Dante."

The argument is original and deeply considered. First, Mr. Anderson recounts "father's ideas," partly by direct exposition and partly through the reminiscences and adaptations of the son. These ideas owed much to Swedenborg, but not less to the elder James's criticism of the transcendentalist version of the bootstrap myth. For he differed from Emerson by insisting that the moral drama is not a conflict between a creative self and a recalcitrant society but one between two selves or two parts of one self. One is "selfish" in something like the usual sense—appropriative, greedy, self-righteous. The second is aware of an "other"; it seeks not to engross the world for itself but to represent the world of others. Indeed, for the elder James, to rise to full perfection of life is "to be made social out of moral": man must "create a new sanctuary, a new vessel of the spirit," and in doing so he will create a "community," the community of "the new Jerusalem" that supersedes church and state.

BUT second, and most important, Mr. Anderson examines a sequence of stories and novels to show us these "ideas" at work, in the works. His interpretation discriminates "The Portrait of a Lady" from "The Bostonians," for example; it makes "Washington Square" much less important than such a story as "The Jolly Corner." And the works it finds most relevant it clarifies for the most naive reader—for example, the reader who is puzzled by the conclusion of "The Portrait," or who cannot understand the whining presence of Lionel Croy in the final pages of "The Wings of the Dove." But the interpretation is mainly addressed to the "emblematic significance" of the great trilogy, "The Ambassadors," "The Wings of the Dove," and "The Golden Bowl." Here Mr. Anderson shows how the father's doctrine of opposition in the self appears and reappears in the dramatic relations of the main characters, and how this opposition develops into the son's complex version of the father's "new vessel of the spirit" and new community of "the new Jerusalem."

This is a large work and a bold one. It runs risks that most scholars prefer to avoid or are incapable of



—Painting by Emile Blanche.

Henry James—"believed in good faith."

taking. But Mr. Anderson himself clearly states the greatest problem raised by his argument. For he insists not only that James intended us to read his great novels allegorically but also that "he was clearly unaware that his sense of humanity was emotionally so private and historically so special that his scheme could not be apprehensible unless the reader used his father as a guide." Mr. Anderson is convinced that Henry James believed "the world can be saved by American good faith." But he recognizes that we must ask of this belief an urgent question: "How did James's ultimate humanism, so logical a development of the views of his father's generation, become unimaginable to us?" The problems addressed by this book are not academic, the insights it generates are not simply literary. It is the work of a mind large enough to confront the hardest questions raised by the fate of a very great American writer.

JAMES IN SHORT: Charles G. Hoffman in "The Short Novels of Henry James" (Bookman Associates, \$3.50) analyzes the achievement of perhaps our greatest master of the genre to discover James's short novels significant in their mirroring of his literary development and as a form in which he developed most rapidly as an artist, sometimes "using the short novel as a means of experimenting with techniques and themes that were later and more fully elaborated in the long novels." Mr. Hoffman is himself a skilled workman and provides expert documentation in matters of fictional techniques. —LEWIS LEARY.

At Home Abroad

"Passport to Friendship," by William Peters (Lippincott, 286 pp. \$3.75), tells the story of the Experiment in International Living, an organization which sends college students abroad to live with families during summer vacations. Ruth Dunbar, education writer for the Chicago Sun-Times, is our reviewer.

By Ruth Dunbar

EVEN when barriers of distrust and hostility separate nations, individuals living on different sides of the barriers can remain friends. And such international friendships, based on first-hand knowledge of how others live and think, can become the building blocks of world peace. That is the faith that underlies the Experiment in International Living.

In "Passport to Friendship," William Peters tells the story of this twenty-five-year-old project that has pioneered in developing a practical, person-to-person approach to international understanding. It is a story that should interest educators, parents, and young people who might not be aware of the unusual opportunities afforded by this venture, which if it hasn't changed the world, has changed the lives of many individual participants.

The basic plan of the Experiment is to send groups of about ten persons mostly between the ages of sixteen and thirty into a foreign country with a leader. Once there, they separate to live with foreign families for a month, meeting occasionally to compare notes, discuss problems, or plan joint entertainment.

Following the home visit, the Experimenters return the hospitality they have enjoyed by taking young members of the families with whom they have lived on a holiday—usually an inexpensive, outdoor group excursion made by bicycle, boat, or on foot.

During the last quarter century, Peters writes in the dedication, persons from more than forty countries have been involved in the Experiment. Their experiences have had little in common with those of a tourist, for the person taking part in the Experiment goes not to see places, but to know people; he is not an observer of the

foreign scene, but a participant in the everyday life of another country.

If his adventure has the expected results—and it's a personal experiment that can succeed or fail with each participant—he returns inoculated for life against blind national prejudices and stereotyped concepts of other peoples.

Peters has organized his book into sections which narrate the adventure and reactions of individual participants and sections which tell the story of the organization itself. Those parts that relate individual experiences vividly reflect the youthful excitement with which Experimenters set forth on the great adventure, the early misgivings they commonly feel when they first find themselves alone in a foreign home, and their surprise at the things that are so different from expectations. They also bear out the thesis of Donald B. Watt, founder of the Experiment, who was convinced that trifling differences in custom are what create most misunderstandings between peoples of different lands.

In a biographical chapter, Peters relates how the idea for the project grew in the mind of its Pennsylvania founder, a former YMCA secretary and college personnel director. He de-

scribes its recurring struggles with critics who disapprove of sending Americans into unfriendly nations.

Peters supports Watt's determined resistance to all attempts to limit the scope of the Experiment and his belief that his project is most needed where international misunderstandings are the greatest. Relating the experiences of R. Sargent Shriver, Jr., a three-time Experimenter and now president of the Chicago Board of Education, Peters shows that at least some of the young Americans who went to Nazi Germany as Experimenters returned with a deeper understanding of the trends of Nazism than Watt had himself.

Since this book is meant to be a full-scale account of the Experiment in International Living, one wonders why Peters does not quote from the organization's constitution, which he praises as a milestone in its development and which he says, spells out in ten concise statements the educational assumptions on which the Experiment is based. It would also be helpful to potential Experimenters if he had given more specific details of the financial arrangements. It is only near the end of the book that he refers casually to the fact that no money changes hands between host and participant.

The author has demonstrated convincingly that it is possible for young people to adapt successfully to any culture and that the rewards of the experience far outweigh the difficulties. Moreover, he persuades you that it's fun as well as educational to be an Experimenter.

Wild West

By Robert Boylan

NOW let us speak of cowboys who on swift
White horses over blue-black deserts sped,
Their pistols blazing and their proud blood shed
In paint-flecked shanties on the haunted cliffs
Or in the bars of ghost-towns. Let us tell
The legends of fierce heroes motherless,
Not Indians, not Easterners, whose quests
And daring deeds inscribed their names in hell.
Bravely they shot it out, did Wyatt Earp,
Billy the Kid, Bill Hickok, Jesse James.
Now what remains but moving-picture dreams
Of all that fury and fast villainy?
Lone cactuses where bullets spit and ripped
The courage of the eyelid from the eye?
A rusting stirrup and a rowel thrust
Up from the calcifying sun-baked dust
Where some unknown avenger fell to sleep?
A wind-blown piece of buckskin that looked grand
When it was stretched upon the living hip
Of him who lies now six feet under ground?
Cowboys were not immortal. All they did,
Guzzling and gunning, ended when they died.