

The Henry James Society

Call for Papers

"If I were to go to Japan": Theory and practice of travel in Henry James and beyond

ALA Conference, May 25-28, 2017, Boston

She looked up from her book. "What you despise most in the world is bad, is stupid art."

"Possibly. But yours seem to me very clear and very good."

"If I were to go to Japan next winter you would laugh at me," she went on.

Osmond gave a smile—a keen one, but not a laugh, for the tone of their conversation was not jocose.

In Chapter XXIX of *The Portrait of a Lady* Isabel Archer and Gilbert Osmond converse about travel, its purposes, its place at the intersection of life and art, and about the means necessary to travel. Taking this conversation as a point of departure, this panel proposes ways to think about traveling, including theorizing as well as representations of travel in James's fiction and non-fiction.

What reasons or excuses do James's characters have for traveling? How does James construct the scenes of departure, arrival, and return? What does travel mean to those characters who can only dream about it? James's life was like the lives of his characters marked by the urge to travel. Although his own destinations were limited to Western Europe and North America, James endows some of his protagonists with the experience of travel to Asia and Africa, or in some cases the experience of living in the British colonies. How does that experience shape their lives and choices? We welcome contributions that address the large variety of examples of James's travelers, tourists, colonizers, and migrants, and attempt to view individual cases in a larger (e.g. socio-political, historical, or psychological) perspective.

Henry James is also the author of numerous travel essays collected in *A Little Tour in France* (1884), *English Hours* (1905), and *Italian Hours* (1909). In what ways do those texts published in magazines and then as collections of essays in book form exemplify or exceed the tradition of a guidebook? How popular were they in James's lifetime? How did they compare with other publications of this kind on the market back then? How useful would they be as guidebooks today? *The American Scene* (1907) is a special kind of travel book and part of an unfinished larger project. What does it say about the United States at the beginning of the 20th century? What does it say about James?

In addition to the issues signaled above, the panel also welcomes contributions that take a comparative look at James's and other American authors' travels, and the role of travel in and for their writing (fiction and non-fiction). Some of the obvious comparative choices might include, but are not limited to, Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mark Twain, Henry Adams, or Edith Wharton.

Please submit your 300 word abstract (a/v requests) and a short bio note by January 15, 2017 to mira_buchholtz@yahoo.de

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Call for Proposals

A Roundtable discussion on adaptation and evolution in/of Henry James's life and fiction

The word “adaptation” denotes an act or a process of adjustment, or a state of being adjusted. Apart from its meanings in cultural contexts, it is a crucial concept in biology, especially evolutionary biology. Transplanting the biological concept(s) of adaptation and/in evolution, this roundtable would welcome presentations that address the adjustment of James's fiction and biography to the needs of a variety of audiences, and conversely the processes and acts of adjustment in response to the environment in Henry James's life and fiction, as evidenced in his works and letters.

The most obvious connotation of “adaptation” in the literary and cultural contexts is that of film adaptation. James's fiction has often been turned into films by artists from a variety of backgrounds. Such adaptations have been discussed in seminal studies published by Susan M. Griffin. Adaptations for the theater and the opera have also been, increasingly, the subject of studies worldwide (Michael Halliwell, John Bradley). Translation of James's texts into other languages – a major challenge, as all serious translators testify – may also be viewed as acts of adaptation, involving cultural shifts, and resulting in both gains and losses.

Henry James's life has been adapted in numerous biographical novels and recently in an opera by Alberto Caruso, based on Colm Tóibín's novel *The Master*. Participants would be welcome to present their views on a whole range of readings of James's life in biographies and biographical fiction (both angry – by Emma Tennant or Joyce Carol Oates – and sympathetic – by David Lodge or Colm Tóibín).

Two recent massive editorial projects: *The Complete Letters of Henry James*, edited by Greg Zacharias and Michael Anesko (earlier volumes were co-edited by Pierre A. Walker) and of *The Cambridge Edition of the Complete Fiction of Henry James* (General Editors: Adrian Poole, Philip Horne, Tamara L. Follini, and Michael Anesko) have opened up new vistas on the processes of adjustment in James's life and work. Since both of these series are works-in-progress, the results of research and editorial work available so far are particularly well suited to an informal in-depth discussion following short presentations.

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