

Cosmopolitan *Worlds*: Adeline Tintner, Intertextuality, and Historical Reading

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Daniel Mark Fogel's revealing history of the Henry James Society, published in the current *Henry James Review*, brought home to me the intense applicability of the famous Jamesian dictum: "Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily appear to do so." Fogel's article made me feel an inadvertent part of this circle. I had known Adeline Tintner (1912-2003) played a crucial role in the setting-up of the Henry James Society. But I was unaware that James W. Tuttleton, a professor at NYU when I was at graduate school there, had also played a role. Furthermore, my first student as a graduate teaching assistant at NYU—literally, the very first name I ever called on a roll—was also a student of Greg Zacharias's. This sense of meaningful happenstance, of an empirical link that, when closely scrutinized, is something which pervaded Adeline Tintner's lifelong commitment to the understanding of Henry James.

I first heard of Adeline Tintner when I began to read James criticism in the mid-1980s. I was intrigued. Just who was this scholar, apparently unaffiliated with a university, born a year after my grandmother, who not only had an encyclopedic knowledge of James and his sources but used words like 'intertextuality' that rarely

passed the lips of most of my undergraduate professors, all decades younger? Though I never met Tintner, I learned a lot about her life through my friendship with the critic Irving Malin, who kept close contact with her and has always maintained Tintner was not just an important figure in James studies but an important figure *per se*.

Tintner's works are such a treasure-trove of information that their theoretical and contemporary implications are easy to miss. Tintner did not undergo the same intellectual trajectory as has recent James criticism, with its theoretically informed emphasis on historicism, politics, and queer studies. Yet she similarly makes a significant departure from the formalist approach to James that reigned in the journals in the 1950s and in the classrooms for many decades after. Neither the intentional nor the affective fallacies existed for Tintner. Instead, she considered James's sources for texts as well as the influence of his own texts on later texts. The reader of Tintner's works received a different sense of James as a link in the relay-race of serial literary history. Tintner was also percipient in understanding James's crucial and sustaining links to both (to use Tintner's adjective) 'pop' culture as well as what academia came to term 'material culture'. If I had to compare Tintner to any other critic, it would be to Frank Kermode. Though Kermode for a time had a more ambitious theoretical agenda, and Tintner centered herself on a dedicated milieu, Kermode and Tintner share a practice of close reading that is both philological and cultural, that takes delight both in the sheer plurality of reference in literary texts and the critic's capacity

to yoke those references and imagine meaningful cognitive connection among them. Far from being a mere cataloger or encyclopedist, Tintner was a historian of ideas, a scholar of visual and material culture, and that rare scholar who valued both historical reconstruction and textual puzzles.

One very important aspect of Tintner's work is her attention to James's French sources. Tintner, as a cosmopolitan reader of James, prepared the way for later work in this comparative field such as that by Pierre Walker and David Gervais; she also paralleled the more theoretical work of Peter Brooks. Tintner spoke of intertextuality, yet her work often focuses on *Quellenforschung*, of identifying individual sources for characters or motifs and, on the other side, showing how motifs and citations of James appear in other people's works. Yet Tintner's work conveys a tacit theory of intertextuality. In this, Tintner's use of the word 'world' in her titles should not be overlooked. The late William Richter in *American Memory in Henry James*, saw Tintner's connections as "thoroughly tangential." But this is not only to underrate their salience but to miss a key dimension. The individual researches of Tintner, when taken as a composite, have a kind of pointillist effect. The meaningful connections they sketch allow us to image an entire tableau of James, his consciousness, his world, his archive. Tintner's archaeological identifications interpret each other.

Consider Tintner's 1987 book *The Book World of Henry James*. The title is perfectly right. It is not 'the literary world' or 'the bookish world' or even 'the bibliographic world', but 'the book world.' To use an adjective rather than a noun would have prescribed a mood, a torque, which Tintner avoids through the

uninflected "Book." In *The Book World Of Henry James*, (reprinting an article first published in 1977) Tintner saw a source for James's novel *The Bostonians* in Balzac's novel *La Fille aux Yeux d'Or*. Tintner points out that James would have read this in an omnibus volume, *Les Treize*, packaged especially for boys interested in learning French. Like James's novel, Balzac's also features a heterosexual courtship (in which the object of desire, Paquita Valdes, is an American—a Cuban) and a lesbian rival, although there is an incestuous twist in Balzac's novel, not to mention physical violence, that would have appeared Gothic and lurid indeed in James's more subtle, less melodramatic world. But however more refined James's approach, James and Balzac were both dedicated social chroniclers with a particular interest in the aristocratic life into which they were not born. Tintner speaks of James even during his final phase as wanting "to be another Balzac" (*Twentieth-Century World of Henry James*, 202).

Tintner's other proffered source for *The Bostonians* is Alphonse Daudet's *L'Évangéliste*, in which the Olive-like female Pied Piper is a religious fanatic and thus, in conventional terms, on the 'right' of the political spectrum, not on the 'left' as was the feminist Olive. This splayed identification between Right and Left canvasses two variant but not incompatible agendas of James's novel:

1) That in a democratic society, liberalism can become as perverted into a personal cult by charismatic individuals with their own agendas, as can conservatism. As Tintner says, the abolitionist Mrs. Tarrant is only too consenting to the "enslavement" (245) of Verena by her father Selah Tarrant. 2) conservatism is still in play. It has not simply been sublimated away by nineteenth-century progress.

Tintner's positioning of Balzac as a source not only for James's text but for James himself, as well as her bringing Daudet and his vision of born-again zeal into the mix, brings to mind, in the context of Basil's politics, Balzac's own conservatism. Balzac knowingly used his political beliefs as a kind of ironic angle to explore a society largely *de facto* (if, importantly, not yet *de jure*) liberal. Is Basil Ransom, as explorer of this kind of society, intended by the less politically marked James as an image of Balzac's observational social technique? In other words, was Balzac himself, *as an individual*, a model for Ransom. Many have James as mocking New England liberalism and spiritualism.. Nevertheless James characterizes Basil's political views as "a more primitive conception than our modern temperament appears to require, and a programme of human felicity much less varied." A similar authorial asperity toward Basil's character, more pointed for being so rarely ventilated, leads James to label Verena's marriage to Basil "so far from brilliant." Olive, at the end of the book, is compared to the Alexandrian philosopher/scientist Hypatia, a figure of female liberty and free thought sacrificed to a nascent conformism that, like the masculinist Basil, believes it has the currents of history securely on its side. Basil, like Hypatia's

murderers, and the Prussian victors over France, tries to use authority to repress the varied manifestation of human felicity and impose a more narrow and calcified approach. This is heightened by our awareness of James's own later story "Collaboration," in which he speaks of "the crash of the Empire, the battlefields of 1870" and its traumatic effect on relationships between cultured people of different nationality.

In other words, Tintner's identification causes the reader of *The Bostonians* to lend French as well as American politician valence to the novel, and see the Franco-Prussian War (where, after all, the side James 'liked' lost, unlike the American Civil War) as a historical contributor to James's portrait of modernity gone wrong.

"Collaboration" takes place in 1871's long aftermath of unresolved resentment that blocks the path of Vandemer and Heidenmauer's idealistic 'open conspiracy', (to use H. G. Wells's phrase). The Franco-Prussian/Civil War connection is fortified by two other finds of Tintner's--that "Collaboration" may have been inspired by the collaboration between the British writer Rudyard Kipling and his American brother-in-law, Walcott Balestier, and that James made considerable markings in his copy of Zola's *Debâcle*, the famous novel about the Franco-Prussian conflict. I would add to this a tidbit Tintner would have savored, Glen McLeod's bibliography, published in *Resources for American Literary Study* 29, of the James family's borrowings from the Athenaeum Library in Boston during the 1860s and early 1870s. This shows that the family borrowed many books about the history of modern Europe. Most of these must have been the father's, but some of them may well have been grazed by the eyes

of the budding Master.

The Kipling-Balestier point adds to a sense of reflexivity between the Anglophone and Continental world in terms of the issues of reconciliation after a divisive conflict. The events of 1871 generated, in Germany, an Empire that at the time was hailed as progressive, Protestant, and industrializing, and, in France, the stable, secular Republic that had, from the liberal viewpoint, struggled to emerge from monarchical and imperial revivals for over sixty years. The idea of modernity and national unity running hand-in-hand was a key undertone in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*. Another post-1871 phenomenon was that of decadence; with liberalism in the progressive, national-unity sense fully achieved, what Tintner terms the "perverse" and "exotic" qualities of literature could emerge from mid-Victorian decorum, testifying to the unvoiced anxieties of the new order. Whereas old-fashioned scholarship interpreted Olive's sexuality as the source of decadence in the novel, Tintner illustrates how its decadence was polyphonic, with nearly all the characters in the novel, excepting Dr. Prance and Miss Birdseye, showing its effects.

The cumulative force of these French connections recalls how Olive Chancellor is, in James's words, like "some feminine firebrand of Paris revolutions, erect on a barricade" as well as "even the sacrificial figure of Hypatia, whirled through the furious mob of Alexandria." In other words, Olive is not only like Hypatia trampled by worked-up Christian mobs, but like Marianne crushed under the heel of the Prussian militarist. As the para-Freudian Tintner says (*Twentieth-Century World*, 26) "In James, nothing is accidental." The Olive-Hypatia-'Marianne' parallel has the

potential to lead us to a less equivocal reading of *The Bostonians* as politically committed rather than a reading that suggests an authorial neutrality with regard to Basil and Olive, or, as critics such as Lionel Trilling would have it, that James is in fact vaguely pro-Basil. Indeed, the tacit political statement of *The Bostonians* was that nineteenth-century liberalism was in danger of being swept away by reactionary currents that claimed that the angel of modernity was somehow behind them. Perhaps, as Eliot said, James had a mind so fine no idea could violate it; yet his fiction is capable of conducting or disseminating ideas even if it does not epitomize them. This is not to say that James wished a straightforward political valence to rise transparently from the text. The method of Jamesian fiction ensures that transparent revelation does not precipitously occur.

Yet James's assertion that the Tarrant-Ransom marriage is "so far from brilliant" speaks volumes, whether we take 'brilliant' as merely meaning Ransom's financial prospects or the larger reaches of his character and its political implications. James may not approve of the Olive-Verena relationship, but the marriage to Ransom, as with the defeats of Hypatia in the early fifth century and of 'Marianne' in 1871, is a cultural setback, a relapse from enlightenment. James lived in Boston, replete with his "obscure hurt," throughout the Civil War. The exuberant and tragic days of its ending were unforgettable ones for him. At the same time he certainly does not seem to be, nor would he describe himself as, a Bostonian. Yet this does not mean his viewpoint is like Ransom's. The tradition that sees James's point-of-view as pro-Ransom takes this ambiguous investment and tries to make it categorically anti-woman and anti-

libertarian. Ransom does not present a solution to Boston society's problems, but an image of reunification from the South that is the underside and counterpart to 1865. The assassination of Abraham Lincoln that occurred even as national unity was cemented after Appomattox is an index of the way national unity is not unmarked by violence, that it does not just arise from dialectical evolution, whether in the United States or Germany.

By manifesting a vision of James as a human being with likes and dislikes, Tintner gave us a James deeply imbedded in his own time, and somebody who was an active reader of other texts, as Tintner urges us to be active readers of Jamesian texts. Leon Edel gave us the embodied James by his acknowledgment of James's homoeroticism. But Adeline Tintner showed us that embodied James *as a reader*, and thus in a sense made us as a result more embodied readers of James. What Fogel described as Tintner's "fabulous accumulation of knowledge and insight" gives us a James who is in the middle of the action, not an object of aestheticized cultural consensus. For Tintner, intertextual sources are not just a sterile scholarly exercise, the academic equivalent of Gilbert Osmond's bibelots. They are something approximating, "The Real Right Thing."

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