

**Introduction: Henry James Special Issue**

Meltem Kiran-Raw

This special issue of the *Journal of American Studies of Turkey* is devoted to the publication of selected papers from the International Henry James Conference, held at Başkent University, Department of American Literature and Culture, Ankara, 9-10 May 2013. With the approaching centenary of James's death in mind, the conference organizers aimed to bring together scholars from around the world in order to contribute to discussions about how the current international reception of the Master is likely to shape James studies in the twenty-first century. Over thirty papers were presented, with contributions from Algeria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Egypt, Holland, Hungary, Poland, the Republic of Macedonia, South Korea, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States as well as Turkey.

The first of the articles in this issue, Ünal Aytür's "From Practice to Theory: Henry James's Prefaces," presents a comprehensive overview of the interconnections between James's novelistic practice and theory. Discussing the Master's article "The Art of Fiction" and several of his prefaces to the New York Edition, Aytür provides a conceptual framework essential to any study of Jamesian fiction. The article that follows Aytür's contribution, Susan M. Griffin's "*The Europeans* on Broadway," highlights another focal aspect of James studies, namely the critical work on what other artists make of James's fiction. Griffin discusses *Eugenia*, a nineteen-fifties theater production of *The Europeans* which has hitherto failed to draw scholarly attention—mainly because it flopped on Broadway. Bringing into light the correspondence about and the scripts of the production, Griffin reminds us that stage versions of James's fiction sometimes share the same fate as his original plays: as compared with his fiction they remain relatively neglected, by audiences and scholars alike.

Not so with screen adaptations. Despite several fine stage productions (some of which are listed by Griffin), films based on James's

novels have drawn more sustained popular and academic attention. The scholarly interest in Jamesian film adaptations is demonstrated in this volume by Dorota Babilas's article on director James Ivory's *The Bostonians* and director Jonathan Parker's *The Californians*. Babilas shows how the two films (released in 1984 and in 2005 respectively) adapt James's *The Bostonians* to their own times, especially in terms of sexual politics: the films throw light on the heterosexist conservatism of the nineteen-eighties and the seemingly more liberated attitude towards sexuality—towards lesbianism, in particular—at the turn of the century.

James has not only inspired theater and film directors, but also poets. In his article on the response to James in modernist poetry, Richard Parker finds that while “High Modernists” such as Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and William Carlos Williams betray an ironic approach to the Master that borders on parody, the slightly younger Objectivists Louis Zukofsky and George Oppen are capable of a more genuine involvement with him. Parker argues that the former group of poets seem to regard James's linguistic and representational equivocations somewhat *passé* for their purposes, whereas the latter feel drawn to the later James's “indeterminacy and disquisitions on writing.” And this despite, or maybe because of, the fact that Zukofsky and Oppen came from a quite different ethnic and political background than either James or the High Modernists.

The last three articles in this issue return to James's work, each presenting an analysis of *The Wings of the Dove* by drawing upon twentieth-century thinkers. Hakan Atay and Hivren Demir-Atay utilize Alain Badiou's mathematical thinking: they argue that Milly Theale, very much present in the minds of other characters even in her frequent physical absences and in her eventual death, functions like a “mathematical abstraction” in that she “resists” not only representation but also “moral reductionism.” Similarly averse to reductionist assessments which characterize Milly Theale as either “an innocent victim or a cunning manipulator,” Wibke Schniedermann recruits Pierre Bourdieu's approach to forms of capital: she portrays a different Milly Theale with as much a subconscious as a conscious investment in the “symbolic capital” of her illness, an illness which remains unspeakable through the novel. Together with other thinkers such as Marcel Mauss, Bourdieu once again proves to be particularly amenable to James studies in Agnes Pokol-Hayhurst's article. The article combines the adage *Do ut des* (I give so that you may give) with Mauss's notion of

## Introduction: Henry James Special Issue

“the impossibility of a free gift” as well as with Bourdieu’s explorations of forms of capital. Scrutinizing the complicated web of relationships within the world of the novel, Pokol-Hayhurst arrives at the conclusion that each character gets manipulated even as s/he aims to manipulate others. Like Schniedermann, she finds that Milly Theale, standing at the center of this web, “is neither a saint nor a victim.” Taken together, these three articles demonstrate through the example of *The Wings of the Dove* that when read in conjunction with contemporary thinkers, Jamesian fiction gains added interest.

In the interview that follows the articles, Gert Buelens suggests other equally intriguing directions in James studies. Buelens outlines the development of his career as a James scholar, and while doing so highlights certain issues raised in James’s writings that remain highly relevant today, issues such as “the ethnic dynamics of America, the relation of Americans to history [...], the absence of private spaces in America—the greater reliance on a notion of the public and publicity.” Buelens goes on to suggest, however, that the future of James studies is not simply to revolve around the American context: translation studies, for example, has a great potential to contribute to James scholarship, in that translators ask inspirational questions of James’s texts. James studies can also benefit from a “socio-political” outlook, Buelens argues, given that the characteristically Jamesian “dynamic between mastery (being in control of your own fate) and submission (surrendering control to someone or something else)” is today being played out on a global level, with the conflicts between “democratiz[ing]” and “authoritarian” tendencies becoming more and more intense.

Besides the articles and the interview, the Book Reviews section of this volume is also devoted entirely to James, and includes some of the latest publications on his life and work. In the Film Reviews section, the first contribution is on the recent film adaptation of *What Maisie Knew*. All in all, this volume testifies to what Annick Duperray and Jeremy Tambling refer to as “a rapidly broadening global context for James studies” (450).

This issue of the *Journal of American Studies of Turkey* has been funded by Başkent University. On behalf of the Organizing Committee of the International Henry James Conference, I should like to express our indebtedness to Prof. Ali Haberal, the Rector of the University, for

taking a special interest in the publication of papers from the conference. I am grateful to Prof. Meldan Tanrısal, President of the American Studies Association of Turkey, and Associate Prof. Özlem Uzundemir, the editor-in-chief of the journal, for their kind invitation to edit this issue. Special thanks are due to the peer reviewers, the contributors of the articles and reviews, and the editor Laurence Raw for attending so patiently and painstakingly to every little detail as the preparations went under way.

This special issue would not have been possible without those who put their hearts, minds, and energy into the International Henry James Conference. Prof. Mehmet Haberal, the founder of Başkent University, offered invaluable encouragement. Prof. Kenan Araz, the Rector of the University at the time of the conference, gracefully provided support. Assistant Rector Prof. Kadir Varoğlu; the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Prof. Korkut Ersoy; and the Dean of the Faculty of Science and Letters, Prof. Rahmi Yağbasan, were with us at every step of the way. The Chair of the Department of American Culture and Literature, Prof. Himmet Umunç, not only guided the organization, but generously chaired the final panel. The members of the organizing committee—Dr. Defne Ersin Tutan, Dr. Berkem Güreñci Sağlam, research assistant Seda Şen, and the departmental secretary Esin Ağaoğlu—worked tirelessly to ensure the success of the conference. The students of the Department of American Culture and Literature were our indispensable helpers. Last but not least, special thanks are due to all those colleagues who participated in the conference with their papers, volunteered to chair sessions, and contributed to academic discussions with insightful questions and comments, making the conference a highly intellectual and rewarding occasion for all of us.

### **Works Cited**

Duperray, Annick, and Jeremy Tambling. "Translation and International Reception." *Henry James in Context*. Ed. David McWhirter. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010. 445-58. Print.