



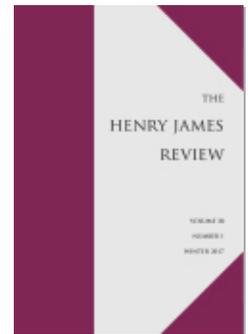
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The Europeans by Henry James, and: *The Ambassadors* by Henry James (review)

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Henry James. *The Europeans*. Ed. Susan M. Griffin. Vol. 4. *The Cambridge Edition of the Complete Fiction of Henry James*. 34 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015. Lviii + 211 pp. \$100. (Hardback).

Henry James. *The Ambassadors*. Ed. Nicola Bradbury. Vol. 18. *The Cambridge Edition of the Complete Fiction of Henry James*. 34 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015. Cv + 560 pp. \$150. (Hardback).

By John Carlos Rowe, *University of Southern California*

The publication of the first two volumes of the first collection of the “complete fiction” of Henry James is indeed an event for James scholars and the general public. When completed, this thirty-four volume edition will include all of James’s novels (vols. 1–22), his short fiction (vols. 23–32), his prefaces to the New York Edition (vol. 33), and his notebooks (vol. 34). At average current prices of around \$100 for *The Europeans* and \$150 for *The Ambassadors*, the complete edition at today’s prices will probably total more than \$4,250, but the cost will be well worth the investment for research libraries, the James scholar, even the devoted reader. Under the general editorship of Michael Anesko, Tamara Follini, Philip Horne, and Adrian Poole, this edition will be the first to include all of James’s fiction. The New York Edition of *The Novels and Tales of Henry James* (1907–1917) was selected by James himself, who excluded many of his works, revised all the works he did include, and added prefaces to each volume. Leon Edel edited *The Complete Tales of Henry James* (1961–1964) in twelve volumes for J. P. Lippincott, its contents of more than 100 short stories giving some indication of the labors involved in producing this edition of “complete fiction.”

The general editorial policy for this edition is to rely on “the text of the first published book edition of” (xv) a novel and “the first appearance” of a story in a magazine (xix), with all textual variants of subsequent publications of a work included following the explanatory notes at the end of the volume. The explanatory notes in both of these volumes are extensive and helpful for the scholarly reader. Each volume also includes a “Glossary of Foreign Words and Phrases,” and Nicola Bradbury’s edition of *The Ambassadors* includes as an appendix James’s “Project of a Novel,” the only surviving plan for a novel by James (with the exception of the one for the unfinished *Ivory Tower*). In addition to the volume editor’s substantial introduction, textual introduction, and bibliography, each volume includes two illustrations: the title page of the 1878 first edition of *The Europeans* and a holograph of the first page of the manuscript in Griffin’s volume; the title page of the 1903 first English edition of *The Ambassadors* and a map of Paris around 1900 in Bradbury’s

volume. Each volume includes Philip Horne's "General Chronology of James's Life and Writings" and the volume editor's "Chronology of Composition and Production" for the specific novel. These well-planned and executed scholarly additions to both novels are readable and accessible, in no way interfering with the pleasure of reading James's fiction. Uncluttered with textual variants or any scholarly material other than small note numbers for the end notes, the text of each novel is beautifully printed and easy to read.

Susan Griffin's introduction to *The Europeans* combines the existing biographical information about the young Henry James with scholarly interpretations of this short novel to broaden our appreciation of its cultural significance. Griffin shows how *The Europeans* anticipates many of the themes and general employment of the international theme in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), reminding us that both novels deal primarily with American characters, "even if many are expatriated" in both novels (1). Perhaps for this reason, the novel also testifies to James's growing reputation with English readers, who appreciated his gentle satire of the provincial and cosmopolitan American characters. Griffin draws on the recently published volumes in *The Complete Letters of Henry James*, edited by Pierre A. Walker and Greg W. Zacharias, another monumental project underway, in which James's struggle to break into London society between 1876 and 1878 is documented.

Griffin also relies on her knowledge of modern adaptations of James's works to discuss succinctly and effectively how what F. R. Leavis termed "the extraordinary dramatic quality of the book" led to its numerous adaptations, including the 1957 Broadway adaptation, *Eugenia*, with Tallulah Bankhead, the 1958 television adaptation on *Matinee Theatre* (starring Zsa Zsa Gabor), and the first Merchant-Ivory Henry James film in 1979, "with Lee Remick as the Baroness" (11). Griffin argues that American popular media shifted attention from the "young lovers" in the novel to the Baroness—aging, "not pretty" in James's characterization—by casting celebrated *femmes fatales* to play her role on stage and screen. In my judgment, the romantic relations of Felix, Gertrude, Mr. Brand, Charlotte, Clifford, and Lizzie are finally trivialized by James, who is fascinated far more by the Baroness Eugenia, with her uncanny ability to manipulate the desires of others, whatever their gender. Griffin notes accurately how Eugenia anticipates Madame Merle in *Portrait*, who for all her hypocritical European urbanity and downright immorality is recognized by Isabel as profoundly American.

Nicola Bradbury's introduction is both more extensive and complicated than Griffin's, which may be appropriate to the scholarly issues involved in *The Ambassadors* (1903), one of the three novels in Matthiessen's celebrated "Major Phase." Nevertheless, there are times when this fifty-six page introduction seems cumbersome, as when eight pages into it Bradbury provides an outline of what the introduction will do. There is a good deal of cross-referencing of this sort throughout the introduction, which is divided into seven subtitled sections. Although some of these sections are part of the overall plan for introductions in this edition—such as "Contemporary Reception of *The Ambassadors*," other sections fracture rather than organize the reader's understanding, as in these successive sections: "The Literary Context of *The Ambassadors* in James's Work," "American Literary and Artistic Contexts," and "French and English Literary Contexts." Appearing rhetorically a bit like an old-fashioned German doctoral dissertation, this introduction often loses the reader in

historical details and literary influences. To be sure, this effect is often the case with a scholarly introduction to a famous literary text, but the contrast between Bradbury's and Griffin's is marked, insofar as the latter moves us quickly to *The Europeans* with helpful suggestions and relatively little fuss.

Bradbury's historical sources and literary influences are often undeveloped and thus can appear somewhat tenuous. Bradbury suggests Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau, and Howells as various touchstones for the broadly conceived American response to Parisian culture in *The Ambassadors*, as well as familiar scholarly suggestions that Thoreau might in part inform the character of Waymarsh (lxv). Of course, William Dean Howells's famous advice to the young Jonathan Sturges "to live, live all you can, it's a mistake not to" has long been recognized as one of the "germs" for the novel. But Bradbury's invocation of these sources too often relies on merely biographical minutiae: "Hawthorne's great contemporary Ralph Waldo Emerson may also have some presence in *The Ambassadors*: on Tuesday 19 November 1873, James found Emerson at the Paris hotel of his friend the poet and critic James Russell Lowell . . . , and he went round the Louvre with Emerson" (lxv). Emerson's influence on Henry James is certainly present in the New England aura Strether brings along in his character, memory, and imagination of his earlier trip, but locating it as precisely as that November day in 1873 in Paris seems unnecessarily positivist.

More provocatively, Bradbury suggests that Little Bilham might have been modeled not solely on Jonathan Sturges, "a close friend of Whistler" on whom the sculptor Gloriani is modeled in the novel, but possibly "from another young American in Paris, whom James had met in Venice in 1893," John Briggs Potter (lxvii). Having made this intriguing connection, Bradbury tells us virtually nothing about Potter, who is presumably the American painter (1864–1949). Depicted in Andreas Andersen's *Interior with Hendrick C. Andersen and John Briggs Potter in Florence, 1894*, a painting notable for its richly homoerotic context—Potter's naked body reclines on a bed as Hendrick Andersen, also naked, sits on a stool next to the bed pulling on his shoe, as both gaze amorously at each other—Potter both as painter and biographical subject might lead us to the queer contexts for not just Little Bilham but Strether's relationship with Chad and indeed the general sexual aura in the novel. Unfortunately, Bradbury does not follow up this lead but instead digresses to discuss James's "Parisian American friend Henrietta Reubell (a friend also of Wilde and Whistler)," whom Edel identified as a model for Miss Barrace in the novel.

Bradbury claims to have made a new discovery about *The Ambassadors*, which involves a reconsideration of the chapter missing from "the novel's first appearance in the *North American Review* (January to December 1903)" (l). Bradbury points out that James had intended to withhold some of the material of the manuscript from the serialization of the novel to give the book publication more interest. The scholarly debate over the missing chapter goes back to its "discovery by Robert E. Young in 1950," with its placement in the English first edition by Methuen as chapter 28 and in the American first edition by Harper's as chapter 29, with the subsequent New York Edition following "Harper's positioning" as chapter 29. Using considerable textual, historical, and contextual evidence, Bradbury concludes that there is strong evidence that the Methuen edition properly placed this chapter as 28, rather than 29. It nearly makes sense to me, but then Bradbury concludes: "It would not be appropriate here to mount a full critical argument elaborating the purposes served by James's ordering

of the chapters” in the Methuen first edition, “but it is certainly far from obvious that it is an ‘error’” (liv–lv). This textual discussion takes more than four closely documented pages, so this conclusion tries even the scholarly reader’s patience. Even this dedicated Jamesian dreads the textual tempest that will swirl around this subject for the next few years—the last dispute took decades to decide—while John Briggs Potter waits in the wings.

Despite my criticism of Bradbury’s introduction, her enormous labor in completing this modern edition of *The Ambassadors* deserves our gratitude and praise. Together with Susan Griffin’s fine edition of *The Europeans*, these two handsome volumes in their Cambridge maroon cloth covers with gilt stamping on the binding and James’s familiar signature on the covers are crucial additions to the resources scholars will use for generations to study the greatest novelist of the modern period. James’s *oeuvre* is enormous, not only for the sheer numbers of novels, stories, prefaces, and notebook entries but for its scope in treating so many of the crucial issues of the modernization process on both sides of the Atlantic. However James may be misrepresented in popular culture, he is still very much present to us, not perhaps as the Master many desire, but as the thoughtful, troubled, imaginative author we still love.