



Literary Adaptations of James in Roth's, Ozick's, and Franzen's Work

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Volume 16 Issue 2 (June 2014) Article 11**John Carlos Rowe,****"Literary Adaptations of James in Roth's, Ozick's, and Franzen's Work"**<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol16/iss2/11>>

Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 16.2 (2014)**
Thematic Issue ***History, Memory, and the Making of Character in Roth's Fiction***
Ed. Gustavo Sánchez-Canales and Victoria Aarons
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Abstract: In his article "Literary Adaptations of James in Roth's, Ozick's, and Franzen's Work" John Carlos Rowe posits that Henry James continues to exert a powerful influence on contemporary writers. Given the dramatic social, economic, and political changes from modern to postmodern eras, his continuing influence requires explanation. Rowe considers three US-American novelists—Philip Roth, Cynthia Ozick, and Jonathan Franzen—who are influenced by James and presents an interpretation of James's continuing impact. Despite James's reputation as a cosmopolitan modern who influenced global literature in significant ways, US-American writers attempt to "Americanize" him. Their effort expresses the problem of contemporary US-American literary practice and its professional interpretation: as national literatures lose their boundaries, authors, critics, and scholars alike face the problem of understanding their work in relationship to communities which exceed conventional geopolitical and cultural national forms. James's transnational experience and work anticipate a crisis of representation and interpretation we are just now beginning to address.

John Carlos ROWE

Literary Adaptations of James in Roth's, Ozick's, and Franzen's Work

What explains the extraordinary interest in the writings of Henry James in the past two decades? When in 1993 I attended the conference organized by Daniel Mark Fogel, then editor of *The Henry James Review*, to celebrate the sesquicentennial of Henry James's birth in 1843, I predicted at the conference's concluding roundtable discussion that students' interests in James would decline over the next few decades. My prediction has been confirmed, I think, by curricula in English and comparative literature at most major universities around the world. James's writings are still taught, of course, but they hardly occupy the same central positions as those of William Shakespeare or James Joyce. Yet if we consider popular culture, especially films based on his novels and James's influence on contemporary Anglo-American fiction, then James is flourishing in our postmodern condition. This renewed attention to James's writings, among the most difficult realist and modernist works of the *fin de siècle*, has surprised many James scholars, especially when his influence on film is considered. The numerous adaptations of his fiction to film in the 1990s led to a "shock of recognition," in which many James scholars turned with new interest to James's contributions to visual studies and culture. *Henry James Goes to the Movies* edited by Susan M. Griffin, *Henry James on Stage and Screen* edited by John R. Bradley, and *The Men Who Knew Too Much: Henry James and Alfred Hitchcock*, co-edited by Susan M. Griffin and Alan Nadel are just some examples of the new work done in the area of James's work and cinema.

My contribution to *Henry James on Stage and Screen* is "For Mature Audiences: Sex, Gender, and Recent Film Adaptations of Henry James's Fiction" and my contribution to *The Men Who Knew Too Much* is "Caged Heat: Feminist Rebellion in Henry James's *In the Cage* and Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*." In short, I have contributed my own work to the challenging question of why James has had such a profound influence on film in recent years. In my own thinking about what constitutes the persistence of James's work in our postmodern condition, I confess that I have not considered sufficiently literary adaptations. Colm Tóibín's *The Master* and his nonfiction, *All a Novelist Needs*, have been powerful and eloquent reminders that James continues to inform contemporary literature. That influence seems to me especially evident in contemporary Irish and English literature. Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* and Zadie Smith's *On Beauty* are good examples, but there are many more Irish and English literary works which show the influence of James's style, form, and ideas.

In the U.S., works like Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes* draws on the Edwardian cultural atmosphere, itself often termed the "Jamesian aura," to emphasize the contradictions between the overtly liberal values of that culture and its complicity with the imperialism that made it possible. Silko's ambivalence about James, especially his influence on her own work, was on clear display in the odd, sometimes contradictory lecture she delivered at the Henry James Society biennial conference held in Rome in 2011. I confess that I share with Silko a certain love-hate relationship with James's work and that must be considered one of the important characteristics of our continuing fascination with his writings. On the one hand, James was a profound critic of British imperialism's contribution to global suffering and yet himself an advocate of the cultural superiority of the West. Writing his major works when the U.S., he inherited the imperial "burden" from Great Britain and tried to warn US-Americans of future dangers and yet also continued to benefit from his privileged status as a transatlantic cosmopolitan.

For some of these reasons, then, we ought to be more attentive to James's continuing relevance for U.S. writers, especially in the past three decades, when the U.S. state has assumed its neo-imperial role with far less ambivalence than it did in the past. President William McKinley could speak defensively of US-Americans as "reluctant imperialists" in the Spanish-American (1898) and subsequent Philippine American (1899-1902) wars (see Rowe, *Literary* 124), but President George W. Bush considered US-American imperialism a civic virtue during the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in the response to al-Qae'da's attacks on 9/11 (see Rowe, *Cultural* 105). With some of these issues in mind, I look at recent adaptations, allusions, and influences of James's writings with specific attention to how James has helped shape a transnational imaginary in contemporary U.S. fiction. In what follows, I treat Jamesian influences on Cynthia Ozick's *Foreign Bodies* and Jonathan Franzen's *Freedom* and the

allusions to James in Philip Roth's *The Ghost Writer* and *Exit Ghost*. Three of these novels were written and published in the wake of 9/11, the Second Gulf War, and the U.S. invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, so they are unavoidably concerned with the global role of the U.S. state. In what follows, I want to stress that I am not interested in judging the aesthetic quality of these works and their uses of James. Instead, I consider James's influence on the broader issue of how cultural works imagine national and transnational affiliations.

In my chapter on Roth in *Afterlives of Modernism*, "Neoliberalism and the U.S. Literary Canon: The Example of Philip Roth," I argue that Roth consistently identifies liberal individualism with a US-American identity that can only assimilate cultural differences and is incapable of engaging other modes of social organization and personal existence: "Roth has tapped into the essential features of the American literary canon, whose focus has long been on the development of such a distinctively American individual out of his diverse, often contradictory backgrounds" (191). Although I do not discuss either *The Ghost Writer* or *Exit Ghost* in the chapter, both novels provide a clear defense of this deeply US-American ideology, especially in their respective allusions to James. *Newsweek's* 1979 review of *The Ghost Writer* notes how Roth introduces "James' themes" of "master and disciple, young America confronting old Europe, ambiguous ancestry, art as a dubious balm for the wounds of life" and "now Roth has made them his as well" (Prescott 172).

In Roth's *The Ghost Writer*, Nathan Zuckerman is a young, aspiring writer who has wangled an invitation from Lonoff to visit the reclusive author at his mountain home in the Berkshires. Zuckerman first encounters James in one of the typed quotations pinned to the bulletin board in Lonoff's study: "'We work in the dark—we do what we can—we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art'" (77). The yearning acolyte Zuckerman treats this passage from James's story, "The Middle Years," as a sacred text that might reveal Lonoff's genius to him, as well as create the master-epigone bond that could take the place of Zuckerman's troubled relations with his natural father. The chapter in which Nathan discovers James's short story is full of references to world literature, as we might expect from the young writer's encounter with Lonoff, who seems an imaginative hybrid of J.D. Salinger and Isaac Bashevis Singer. The chapter "Nathan Daedalus" includes rapid fire references to Shakespeare, Chopin, Byron, Kafka, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Anne Frank, as well as James as if to parody Joyce's focus in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* on the young artist, Stephen Dedalus's obsession with world literature.

Roth's passionate pilgrim, Nathan Zuckerman, is, of course, in love with art and sex, neither of which can be easily separated from the other, and he masturbates vigorously to his fantasy both of sleeping on the daybed in Lonoff's study and the murmurs he hears in the room above him emanating from Lonoff and his attractive student, Amy Bellette. To counter his post-masturbatory "sense of utter shabbiness," Zuckerman takes from the shelf a book containing James's "The Middle Years" and proceeds to summarize the story for the reader. But the conclusion of his paraphrase, interspersed with direct quotations, is met with the sound of a "woman ... crying" upstairs (77), and adding the book containing "The Middle Years" to a stack on Lonoff's desk, Zuckerman presses his ear to the ceiling to gather a fugitive account of their illicit affair in the very house where Lonoff's all-suffering wife, Hope, has just served them all dinner.

Amy Bellette is a young woman who believes she is the surviving Anne Frank who escaped the nazis and made her orphaned way to the U.S. where she witnesses her own life story on stage in the dramatization of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Lonoff's compulsive love for Amy in *The Ghost Writer* doubles Zuckerman's obsession with Lonoff, complicated by Zuckerman's blind desire for Amy Bellette herself. To be sure, James's "The Middle Years" deals with the sexual complications of life and art in ways which make Roth's appear tame, insofar as Dr. Hugh's passion for the artist, Dencombe, competes with that of the countess for Dencombe, stirring all the characters into a typically comic situation of crossed genders and sexual desires that James contends only art can sort out (see Rowe, *The Other* 101-19). Roth makes no overt connection between the homosocial and the homosexual themes in "The Middle Years" with the Lonoff-Zuckerman-Bellette triangle, stressing instead that the sort of unnatural family romance that motivates Zuckerman's literary career will ultimately emasculate Lonoff and prompt Zuckerman to pursue a series of inadequate feminine substitutes for the lost object of his desire, Amy Bellette. Indeed, the youthful, tragic, beautiful, and erotic Amy Bellette allows Roth to displace the customary sexual undercurrent of the literary anxiety of influence structuring Lonoff's and

Zuckerman's relationship. For Roth, a sexual relationship between the aging male writer and young acolyte is unthinkable, even if in James's "The Middle Years" a similar homoerotic relationship structures the story. Roth's triangle of Lonoff, Bellette, and Zuckerman tempers the authorial struggle with conventional heterosexual desire while transferring their respective insanities to the feminine other, victimized so often in Roth's fiction for the sins of the fathers and sons.

Of course, Zuckerman's relationship with Lonoff is not only Oedipal in Harold Bloom's sense of the anxiety of influence shaping literary genealogies, but it is also profoundly homosocial. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work on English literature stresses the homosexual panic structuring homosocial relations, so we cannot exclude homoerotic desire, much distorted and displaced, in Zuckerman's relationship with Lonoff. To be sure, the very name "Lonoff" suggests onanistic satisfaction, which is by no means exclusively homosexual but certainly homoerotic. Zuckerman's passionate desire for Amy Bellette is also homoerotic if we consider that "she" is in fact a fiction in Lonoff's literary life, if not explicitly his literary writings. Such a reading of homosexual sublimation through artistic experience is certainly intended by Roth, but for that very reason displaces any overt treatment of gay politics in *The Ghost Writer*. Indeed, post-Stonewall gay rights' activism is virtually absent from Roth's writings in this period, although heterosexual sodomy often seems the sine qua non of both sexual deviance and satisfaction in his fiction and plays a central role in *The Human Stain*, *Sabbath's Theater*, and *The Humbling*. Roth's sexual confusion seems quaintly nostalgic, a throwback to the bad old days of Norman Mailer's *An American Dream* with its anti-German sentiments represented in Rojack's sodomy of Jutta and Roth's own *Portnoy's Complaint*, a virtual primer on sexual "deviance."

Roth's version of the Jamesian plot thickens in the last of the Zuckerman novels, *Exit Ghost*, when Zuckerman is embroiled in the efforts of the meretricious Kliman to extract from the aged and fatally ill Amy Bellette the last of Lonoff's manuscripts: an unfinished novel. The metaliterary plot of *Exit Ghost* turns crucially on Roth's adaptation of James's *The Aspern Papers* in which the "snooping" editor attempts to ingratiate himself with the two spinsters, Juliana and Tita Bourdureau, in hopes of acquiring the posthumous papers of the US-American romantic poet, Jeffrey Aspern, Juliana's lover and possibly Miss Tita's father, in James's own adaptation of Byron's amorous misadventures and literary celebrity. Yet whereas *The Ghost Writer* quotes and paraphrases James at length, *Exit Ghost* makes only one explicit reference to James, a dismissive one explaining how little Zuckerman knows of the aristocratic backgrounds of his friend, George Plimpton: "My familiarity with their world was limited to the fiction I'd read by Henry James and Edith Wharton ... at the University of Chicago, books I'd been taught to admire but had for me as little bearing on American life as *Pilgrim's Progress* or *Paradise Lost*" (243). Yet *Exit Ghost*, even if it did not turn centrally on Roth's adaptation of the plot from *The Aspern Papers*, continues the family romance of Lonoff-Bellette-Zuckerman that has such explicit Jamesian origins in *The Ghost Writer*. Why, then, does Zuckerman so readily dismiss James and Wharton as "European" in his one explicit reference to James in *The Ghost Writer*? The answer seems to be that Roth identifies the plots and characters of their novels of manners with the lingering pretensions of European aristocracy, whether or not their characters and settings are US-American or European. Dencombe and Dr. Hugh, as well as the countess and her companion, are decidedly British, but the focus of "The Middle Years" for Roth is art, not society. Art democratizes, Roth argues, and it does so by moving us all in the "American" direction that Lonoff initiates and Zuckerman completes in Roth's imaginative country.

The Ghost Writer is dedicated to Milan Kundera, Roth introduced to Anglo-American audiences and championed, along with other dissident Central and East European writers, during the late years of the Cold War. For Roth, their art represented not so much specific political issues as the strivings of the individual to resolve the existential contradictions of everyday life. Roth makes this point about the international significance of classic US-American literature in a sustained exchange in *The Professor of Desire* between the visiting US-American professor, David Alan Kepesh, and his Czech guide, Professor Soska, a literary scholar who has lost his university post under Soviet rule. Soska's explanation of why he continues to translate Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* into Czech, despite several other serviceable versions of the novel, is designed to remind us how U.S. culture defends the natural right to individualism. Soska's explanation of his inspiration for this project clarifies Roth's weird "American" commitment to global literature: "In the fifties I spent a year on an exchange program, living in New York City. Walking the streets, it looked to me as if the place was as warm with the crew of Ahab's ship.

And at the helm of everything, big or small, I saw yet another roaring Ahab. The appetite to set things right, to emerge at the top, to be declared a 'champ.' And by dint, not just of energy and will, but of enormous rage. And *that*, the rage, that is what I should like to translate into Czech ... if—smiling—'that can be translated into Czech'" (161; emphasis in the original). If the good professor can "translate" this spirit into Czech, then he imagines he might contribute to a revolution that will throw out the Soviet tyrants, replace Czech abjection with democratic fervor. To be sure, Roth and Soska recognize it as risky business, because the will-to-power of the US-American individual is always prone to the excesses of Ahab, but it is this power of the individual that might liberate Czechoslovakia—as it once had liberated the U.S. They are the sentiments that would have been fully approved by the U.S. State Department in the aftermath of our defeat in the Vietnam War: a new commitment to the "American Spirit" as exportable commodity. Of course, Roth is not offering such a self-conscious perspective; instead, he accepts the familiar jingoism of the US-American as global role model. It is just this struggle by the individual that is best achieved within U.S. democracy or a reasonable facsimile of it in other global sites. Nathan Zuckerman considers James and Wharton the authors of books he had to be "taught to like" in college, but Roth knows that their deep aesthetic senses are at root US-American, no matter how European both James and Wharton became in their own lives.

Ozick's rewriting of James's *The Ambassadors* in *Foreign Bodies* offers another interpretation of James's continuing significance in the postmodern era. Ozick began her career as a scholar of James, turning to her own fiction after publishing well-regarded, albeit primarily formalist work on James in the 1950s and 1960s. Those readers familiar with her career should not be surprised by this rewriting of James's novel from the perspective of a woman teacher in the New York City public school system. Ozick's own writings in recent years have been considered increasingly neo-conservative, especially in her vigorous defense of Israel in its controversial policies toward the Palestinians in the Middle East crisis. Perhaps for some of these reasons, *Foreign Bodies* treats James's *The Ambassadors* critically as a novel of transatlantic manners. Set in 1952 in New York, Los Angeles, and Paris, Ozick's novel stresses the great social changes of the first half of the twentieth century, suggesting the relative triviality of the social problems James addressed in his novel. Whereas James's Lambert Strether struggles with his diplomatic mission from Mrs. Newsome to bring home her son, Chad, who has strayed into a liaison with an older, widowed French woman, Madame de Vionnet, Ozick tells her story from the perspective of Bea, a middle-aged New York City school teacher whose estranged brother, Marvin, a Los Angeles businessman, enlists her to bring home his son, Julian. What Bea discovers in Paris is that Julian has married Lili, the Romanian Jewish survivor of a concentration camp where her family perished including her child and husband. Lili shows up in Paris at the end of the war as a "Displaced Person," working in a center dedicated to relocating other war refugees.

Ozick draws on both the Holocaust and feminism to transform James's comedy of manners in *The Ambassadors* into a melodrama about the impact of globalization on US-Americans. Unlike Madame de Vionnet, Lili is a tragic figure who draws on her own traumatic experiences to help others and unlike Chad Newsome, Julian falls in love less with Lili as a person than with the historical drama and hope she represents. When Julian's sister, Iris, joins Bea in Paris in the effort to bring Julian home to his domineering father, Iris is also transformed by her European experience. The characters who experience postwar Europe in Ozick's version of James's "transatlantic theme" are changed by their knowledge. Those characters who remain stubbornly insulated in the U.S., like the father, Marvin, and his wife, Margaret, are destroyed by their provincialism. Julian's and Iris's mother, Margaret, has been committed to a mental institution by Marvin and eventually will be killed crossing a freeway in her confused effort to escape and help her son. Defeated by his wife's insanity and death and his son's repudiation of his authority, Marvin ends a broken man taken care of by his daughter, Iris, who now recognizes the emptiness of his world of money and power.

Foreign Bodies is a didactic book, written almost formulaically in Ozick's adaptation of James's themes to more modern, global circumstances. Ozick's style does not compare favorably with the comic hilarity of Roth's fable of the sex and text obsessed Nathan Zuckerman. But intellectually Ozick's novel identifies the historical point at which James's cosmopolitanism failed to achieve a genuinely global vision that would have enabled James to address with his famous "imagination of disaster" the horrors of the twentieth century he had just begun to encounter in his experience of World War I. "Foreign bodies" are just those that Roth's characters assume must become "American," rather than

disturbing conventional US-American ideals with new knowledge, much as the medical term "foreign bodies" refers to alien pathogens that can infect our biological systems.

Franzen's *Freedom* was published in the same year as Ozick's *Foreign Bodies*, but appears to have nothing to do with James, except for Franzen's usual focus on the consequences of the collapse of the middle-class US-American family and its related values. After all, the rise and fall of the bourgeoisie are the central subjects of James's fiction, and Franzen often impresses me as a self-conscious heir of the Jamesian tradition. By the time he wrote *Freedom*, Franzen was well known for his critique of postmodern technology and social values, as well as his contempt for the neo-imperial US-American state he termed "nearly a rogue state" and his nostalgia for the novel and the values of print culture. Despite the extremity of his social satire and fictional techniques in his novels—*The Twenty-Seventh City* and *The Corrections* which preceded *Freedom*—Franzen lives up to what Michiko Kakutani writes in the *New York Times Book Review* of *Freedom*: "a kind of nineteenth-century realist concerned with the public and private lives of his characters" (C1). *Freedom* is a rambling postmodern satire of bourgeois liberalism in the U.S., in which the illusion of US-American freedom produces both personal suffering at home and unimaginable terror in the rest of the world. The reverse migration of Patty and Walter Berglund from their comfortable, environmentally conscious lives in urban St. Paul, Minnesota to the halls of power in Washington, D.C. and environmental destruction on a massive scale in West Virginia is matched by the collapse of their relationship and family. Their callow son, Joey, who moves in with the St. Paul neighbor's daughter, Connie while both are still in high school, tries his hand while a student at the University of Virginia selling defective spare parts for supply trucks shipped to contractors in Iraq in the Second Gulf War. Although he eventually gives away his profits in this venture to settle down with Connie to a sustainable coffee business, Joey flip-flops in life in ways that epitomize an American "freedom" gone crazy, heir to what Roth terms "the American berserk" in *American Pastoral* (1).

Joey's father, Walter, the environmentally sensitive lawyer, gets used by a megacorporation interested in the extreme type of strip mining that removes mountain tops, pushing them into valleys and destroying habitat and natural riparian paths. While serving as the public relations' man for this corporation, which promises to replace its natural devastation with a "bird sanctuary," Walter works with Lalitha, the South Asian American aide with whom he has a brief affair (219). Their personal relationship is cut short when Lalitha dies in a suspicious car accident on the West Virginia Mountain in question, shortly after she and Walter have decided to expose the coal mining corporation's anti-environmental purposes. There is more to the plot of *Freedom* I can summarize here, but the essence of Franzen's attack on the breakdown of stable middle-class values as a consequence of U.S. imperialism abroad and in its ongoing war with nature at home should be clear. The novel hardly sounds Jamesian except in its focus on how the rise of the bourgeoisie has led to the decline of the so-called US-American century. There is virtually no allusion to James in the novel except in a brief, but pertinent exchange between Walter and Lalitha as the two sit in their rental car and consider the consequences of their brief love affair: "'Well, there we are'" Walter says to Lalitha as they try to figure out how to cope with their unexpected relationship, one that is particularly poignant in bringing together Walter's Midwestern background and Lalitha's South Asian immigrant heritage (237). The words echo, of course, Lambert Strether's last words to Maria Gostrey (and the reader) at the end of *The Ambassadors*: "Then, there we are!" (531). It can be argued that the phrase "there we are" is hardly the literary property of James. As a mere phatic that fills that gap of meaning, "there we are" belongs simply to the English language, as much as "Hullo?" does to the telematics era.

But I am convinced that Franzen is indeed alluding to the critical ending of James's novel in ways which force James and the "realist" tradition with which he is so ambivalently associated into US-American postmodernity. Strether's "there we are" identifies the missed connection with which *The Ambassadors* concludes and no amount of wish fulfillment can overcome. Not quite as self-deluded as James's John Marcher in "The Beast in the Jungle," Strether nonetheless admits he will never "rise to the occasion" Maria Gostrey presents to him in that moment (and May Server offers Marcher so many times). What Strether and Marcher miss is erotic love and personal connection with other human beings who very much resemble them in terms of ethnicity, class, and social affiliations. Franzen's Walter misses the connection with the South Asian woman who represents the other worlds the U.S. continues to exploit at home and abroad. To be sure, Lalitha is ambitious, professional, and as ideologi-

cally deluded as Walter, but her role in the novel is to break the cycle of what is finally the tedious decline of white middle-class US-Americans like the Berglunds and their friends.

Lalitha's death is sacrificial both in the plot's suggestion of a corporate conspiracy to eliminate its critics and in Franzen's inability to carry out his cosmopolitan, transnational vision. Patty and Walter get back together at the end of the novel, just as Joey and Connie end up married and working in an environmentally friendly business. Franzen displays his contempt for all of these characters who are tossed about by the rapidly changing fashions of postmodern, first-world nations, but who actually have very little "freedom" as a consequence. Their determined lives recall those of James's most tortured souls who awaken from one delusion only to be swallowed quickly by another. Strether pretends to go back to "a great difference" when he has in fact nothing to which to return in the U.S.. Strether doesn't come close to the immorality of Kate Croy and Merton Densher in *The Wings of the Dove*, who must work hard to hide from themselves how they have betrayed their best friend, Milly Theale. At the furthest extreme, James's Governess in *The Turn of the Screw* must believe passionately in the reality of the ghosts of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel, unless she wishes to accept her role in frightening young Miles to death. A minor sinner, Strether still shares with these characters a typically Jamesian self-delusion.

Franzen's irony in all three of his novels is also profoundly Jamesian. Although his training at Swarthmore was in German literature and his references to predecessors focus more on near contemporaries, like Roth, he is nonetheless working out the fateful logic of the middle-class novel of manners that James borrowed from Victorian literature. Franzen recognizes, as James must have, that the global contexts for personal responsibility and social relations cannot be ignored, and Franzen clearly organizes *Freedom* in terms of the intersection of domestic and foreign relations. But in the end Franzen follows Roth by collapsing these problems into "American" issues and themes, so that Lalitha can be sacrificed and Joey can renounce the \$ 900,000 he earns as an arms' dealer and thus be saved, both morally and physically. Both fictional actions continue to resonate in the fates of Franzen's characters, but they are unresolved, leaving his readers with a similar sense of disconnection, of being as Strether opined simply "there" in some fantastic place where "we" cannot really exist any longer.

Roth, Ozick, and Franzen struggle to find some way to reconcile US-American values with an increasingly diverse global world. In his recent *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies*, Paul Jay addresses directly how transnational issues have transformed traditional US-American literary studies, requiring us not only to consider new concepts and theories, but a wide range of literature published in the U.S. that deals with peoples and cultures outside its border. Acknowledging the material conditions of one-way globalization, Jay advocates a "culturalist" perspective he shares with many creative writers that enables him to "write back" and thus challenge the dominance of first-world, especially U.S., goods and values in the new global order (53-73). In so doing, Jay argues that the culturalist approach transforms "America," requiring us to recognize our ties with South Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America: "It seems to me that transnational literary and cultural studies, whether they present themselves as postcolonial or global, have to begin with the recognition that cultures have always traveled and changed, that the effects of globalization, dramatic as they are, only represent in an accelerated form something that has always taken place: the inexorable change that occurs through intercultural contact, as uneven as the forms it takes may be" (50). Interestingly, it is just what Jay views as the inevitability of "intercultural contact" that Roth and Franzen judge to be signs of US-American decadence, aligning them unfortunately with neoliberal perspectives they both might wish to repudiate. What Jay terms his post-post-colonial studies' approach remains Anglophone, but the works he interprets by Vikram Chandra, Kiran Desai, Junot Díaz, Zakes Mda, Arundhati Roy, and Zadie Smith take us far from the old, familiar U.S. and British centers of the imperial "English world."

In conclusion, I doubt James would have understood these new realities, but I am convinced he would have been interested in them and curious about how to represent them in his fiction. As a transnational, cosmopolitan modernist who surrendered his U.S. citizenship in 1915 to become a British subject in support of the war effort, James lived precariously on the borders of the post-national world we are today just beginning to understand. The persistence of his influence in contemporary US-American literature testifies to his importance as a figure that still has much to tell us about our post-modern condition.

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