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THE LIBRARY OF HENRY JAMES: BETWEEN THE CATALOG AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA

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Słowa kluczowe: Henry James, Lamb House, katalog, podróż, kosmopolityzm

S u m m a r y

This article looks back to the book *The Library of Henry James* published in 1987 by James's most renowned and possessive biographer Leon Edel and the biographer's friend, the independent scholar Adeline Tintner. While Edel outlines the history of James's book collection in his house in Great Britain, Tintner offers examples of James's use of the trope of library in his fiction. In between the two essays, the two authors included a catalog of James's collection in Rye, indicating the location of all the items as of 1987. This article relies on the information provided in Edel and Tintner's book, to which little has been added since, and offers a theoretical and historical approach to the topic of library in the context of Henry James's biography and literary heritage. The article gives theoretical ramifications to the findings of Edel and Tintner by distinguishing between the three meanings of "library:" a physical space, a cataloged collection, and a literary trope. It also juxtaposes Edel's biographical-historical essay and Tintner's literary analysis with the autobiography of Henry James, in which the library emerges as a place partaking of several traditions: patriarchy, the process of initiation and maturation along with social and national self-fashioning.

BIBLIOTEKA HENRY'EGO JAMESA: MIĘDZY KATALOGIEM A KOWADŁEM

Streszczenie

Punktem wyjścia artykułu jest analiza współautorskiej książki najślynniejszego i najbardziej zaborczego biografa pisarza, Leona Edela oraz przyjaciółki biografa i wiernej czytelniczki Jamesa, Adeline Tintner. Ich wspólna książka *The Library of Henry James*, która została wydana w 1987 r., składa się z dwóch esejów: Edel skupia się na historii księgozbioru Jamesa w jego domu w Wielkiej Brytanii, a Tintner podaje przykłady obrazowania księgozbioru i pojedynczych książek w twórczości pisarza. Pomiędzy tymi dwoma esejami umieszczony został katalog książek ze zbiorów w Rye z oznaczeniem ich obecnej (lata 80. XX wieku) lokalizacji – o ile jest ona znana. Celem niniejszego artykułu odnoszącego się do stanu badań sprzed trzydziestu lat,

do którego niewiele do tej pory dodano ze względu na trudny dostęp do informacji i materiałów, jest teoretyczne i historyczne ujęcie tematyki biblioteki w kontekście życia i twórczości Henry'ego Jamesa. Artykuł nadaje rozważaniom Edela i Tintner teoretyczny wymiar wprowadzając rozróżnienie trzech znaczeń biblioteki jako miejsca w przestrzeni, objętego katalogiem zbioru i literackiego tropu. Artykuł konfrontuje też biograficzno-historyczny szkic Edela i interpretacje Tintner z autobiografią Henry'ego Jamesa, w której biblioteka to miejsce wpisujące się w różne tradycje: patriarchy, inicjacji i wyboru własnej drogi życiowej, jak również określenia własnej tożsamości społecznej i narodowej.

Despite the changing politics of cultural studies, Henry James remains one of the giants of Anglophone literature. In various editions and languages, his works alone would form quite a substantial library. The commentary produced in different parts of the world over the hundred years since his death by dozens of authors, including scholars, biographers, and novelists, would increase that collection several times. This is the library of Henry James of which any beginning Jamesian needs to be aware and in which it is only too easy to get lost, as if in a labyrinth. More advanced students of the archives face even greater challenges: Henry James's "papers" (his autographs, letters, and other documents) are located in well over a dozen collections, including university libraries at Harvard, Princeton, University of Virginia, and University of California, Berkeley. Especially the Center for Henry James Studies at Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska, greatly contributed over the past decades under Greg W. Zacharias's strong and dynamic leadership to counteracting the natural processes of dispersal and entropy.¹

Apart from James's works and scholarship, there are other libraries to be considered, too: the comparable "library" produced by Henry James's famous older brother William James and the students of his works, the modest but also commented output of their father Henry James Sr. and their sister Alice James, the books to which Henry James had access at different stages of his life, the books he collected over the decades of his creative life, and finally the books (real and imaginary) which he mentions, discusses, uses, or rewrites in his own works (both fiction and non-fiction). All of these "James" libraries together resemble the Borgesian Library of Babel in its infiniteness dissimulated by the presence of mirrors:² allusions, analogies, and family resemblances. In this article, the idea of Henry James's library will emerge from the juxtaposition of his own accounts and the research conducted by some of his biographers and dedicated readers.

¹ Greg W. Zacharias, "The Complete Letters of Henry James", *Litteraria Copernicana*, no. 1(21) (2017): 11–23.

² Jorge Luis Borges, "The Library of Babel", in *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin, 1998), 112.

The Literary Sandwich

The theme of library in Henry James's life and fiction was addressed some thirty years ago in a book published by the novelist's most famous biographer Leon Edel (1907–1997), in collaboration with the biographer's friend Adeline R. Tintner (1912–2003), an independent and amazingly productive scholar,³ remembered for her thematic approach to various aspects of James's works. The structure of *The Library of Henry James* (1987) reflects the bifurcation of their literary interests between the biographical and the hermeneutical. Edel contributed to the volume an essay on the library in Henry James's Lamb House in Rye – the only one he ever owned – in the United Kingdom, whereas Tintner offered an overview of books as a motif in James's fiction. The “filling” between these two “slices of bread” is a collated list of books found and cataloged in Lamb House at different points in time, by different people, and for a variety of purposes. The list is arranged alphabetically and contains information about the present location of the items. Admittedly, the list is incomplete. Even though Edel and Tintner do not theorize the concept of “library” in any way, the structure of their book itself points to the following three meanings of “library:” (1) a physical space, (2) a catalog, and (3) a literary trope. In other words, the progression is from the most material to the most abstract, from the real to the imaginary.

However, each of these understandings of “library” bristles with ontological and epistemological, let alone ethical, challenges. Firstly, the library as a physical space is filled with objects that define its function. What if the architectural structure is damaged past repair or the collection is dispersed? After all, both the space and the objects remain at the mercy of time and chance. Books may be lost, stolen, or sold, to name the least spectacular forms of their disappearance. The library as a collection of books – meaningful to its literary owner – may be chipped away or rearranged by the heirs. Secondly, the library as a catalog of titles usually listed in alphabetical order obliterates the arrangement of books in the space of the writer's library: their implicit hierarchy in rooms, in bookcases, and on shelves. The alphabetical list does not reflect the position of the book in relation to the writer's interests. In other words, the list does not answer the question of whether a specific book was literally (and metaphorically) closer to or further from the place where literary work occurred. Thirdly, the library as a trope in the reader-author's fiction opens up a wide field of conjectures about the role ascribed to books by narrators and characters. Does their attitude reflect the authorial position on the matter? Do the characters' and the author's

³ Daniel Mark Fogel, “In Memoriam: Adeline R. Tintner (1912–2003)”, *The Henry James Review*, vo. 25, no. 1 (2004): 1.

attitudes converge with their contemporary and our present-day trends? In the following sections, I will trace the interlocked vicissitudes of James's life and libraries in a more or less chronological order.

The Nomads' Libraries

In the first volume of his autobiography, *A Small Boy and Others* (1913), which has been the main source of information (with a grain of salt) about Henry James's childhood, the novelist refers to libraries on several occasions and these references form a clear pattern. Before anything else, James associates the library with his father. In his earliest recollections, the phrase "the father's library" stands for a space of meetings: real and imaginary. Later, Henry James gives his readers a glimpse of a library in London and, almost at the end of boyhood – and at the end of the first volume of his autobiography – he sings praises of a library in Boulogne-sur-Mer.

In the formative years of their progeny's lives, the Jameses were a family of nomads. Wealthy and educated, they were predictably Europe-oriented and repeatedly spent prolonged periods of time in Europe. Their motivation was not primarily nostalgic, though. With their roots in Scotland and Ireland, the Jameses used the American detour and financial success of the earlier generations as a way of expanding their own identity as Europeans. "A better sensuous education"⁴ was the father's major concern, but the instilled habit of travel resulted for Henry James in cosmopolitanism, which may have had more to do with his social aspiration than any negotiations of ethnic identity. Henry James was "almost literally, a born traveler."⁵ The family first crossed the Atlantic when he was six months old to stay in England and France until 1845. The four more crossings occurred in Henry James's teens, and those educational tours also included Switzerland and Germany. In the 1860s, the family remained in the United States, and when Henry James Jr. set out for Europe again in 1869, it was on his own.

The references to the father's library on 14th Street, New York, create the image of a sedentary, well-regulated, and strictly hierarchical family life. The "small boy" (aged around ten) hovering at the library door was on one occasion summoned to enter by "the great Mr. Thackeray," who "had come to America to lecture on The English Humourists."⁶ This reference to the father's library

⁴ Qtd. after Michael Anesko, "Introduction: A little tour with Henry James", in *Travels with Henry James* (New York: Nation Books, 2016), xvii.

⁵ Hendrik Hertzberg, "Foreword", in *Travels with Henry James* (New York: Nation Books, 2016), viii.

⁶ Henry James, *A Small Boy and Others: A Critical Edition*, ed. Peter Collister (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 74. Further quotations from this edition are cited parenthetically in the text as SBO, followed by page number.

triggers other recollections of earlier ventures into the room, not yet for the sake of books but for the sake of meeting people and listening to the stories they told or read out loud. It was in the father's library that Henry James – as a very young child – had come to know Charles Dickens's fiction. Although sent to bed, Henry took refuge under a table and listened to an installment of *David Copperfield* read out loud by a family member. His sobs (a sign of sympathy for the protagonist) gave him away and he was sent to bed again (SBO, 102). On another occasion in the same setting, the "small boy" listened to stories of the maternal uncle, John Walsh, about the "lands" in the Wild West, which he and his siblings – including Henry's mother Mary – had allegedly inherited (SBO, 110). To a boy under nine, those stories must have sounded fantastic, and the elderly autobiographer seems to enjoy recreating the child's amazement. The library emerges in James's reminiscence as the space of narrative, in which fact and fiction are equally at home. The space is populated with family, friends, and strangers. Meanings are produced collectively and individually. Fact may be read as fantastic invention and fantastic invention may be seen as fact.

There were also libraries in England and France, where the Jameses stayed during their educational peregrinations. Their home in London stood next to "the bookseller, the circulating-librarian and news-agent, who modestly flourished in our time under the same name." A little further along was "the great establishment of Mr. Gunter," a confectioner also famous for its ice cream (SBO, 231). The association of books with confectionery in James's reminiscence seems quite significant. The two establishments were not only physically nearby but, apparently, also afforded comparable pleasures to the eponymous small boy.

In France, the young reader becomes not only more avid but also more adventurous. The library in Boulogne-sur-Mer is located further away from home in the bustling port area, and it offers a different kind of pleasure than the establishment in London. The description of the way he took to visit the library ends in a rhapsody extolling Merridew's English Library as the "solace of my vacuous hours and temple, in its degree too, of deep initiations" (SBO, 320). However, instead of leading his readers inside the library, James describes in a long paragraph the busy life of the crowd in the streets, in whom he recognizes characters from Thackeray's novels. James's literary imagination transcends the space of the library and the whole port area becomes a library with characters who could be read like books. Quite significantly, it was in October 1857 that Henry James Sr. reported from Boulogne in a letter to his mother, Catharine Barber James, that Harry was "not so fond of study, properly so called, as of reading. He is a devourer of libraries, and an immense writer of novels and dramas."⁷

⁷ Cit. per Harry T. Moore, *Henry James* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1974), 20.

The family's return to the United States and their arrival in September 1860 in Newport, Rhode Island – where William intended to study art – was less of a challenge than it could have been thanks to the continued access to the journal *Revue des Deux Mondes*, which for Henry James became “the very headspring of culture, a mainstay in exile.”⁸ We may argue that the *Revue* was a library in itself, compiled by a master librarian who picked the best from what the contemporary culture had to offer. Paul Fisher explains that during their stay in Newport, which was then becoming a fashionable resort, the family “mixed more with bookish Bostonians than flashy New Yorkers.”⁹ The Jameses “had rented a house that was huddled close to Redwood Library,” in which “the elder James boys could indulge in their favorite pursuit of reading.”¹⁰ Founded in 1747, the Redwood Library still exists, and it is America's oldest lending library as well as “the oldest library that has been in continuous use in the nation.”¹¹

The nomads' library as a concept unites the paradox of paucity and abundance, circumscription and vastness. Books as physical objects at hand may be scant, but this circumstance is balanced by the awareness of the endless Library of Babel. To the teenager Henry James, the social world became a library in itself while travel facilitated astounding encounters: a famous English author traveled to the USA, his books traveled to northern France, and his characters became recognizable in people of other cultures and languages encountered by the traveling reader. In his autobiography, Henry James highlights the formative role of journals and magazines. It seems that in their exploration of space, Jameses the nomads were intensely aware of the necessity to be up-to-date.

The Library of One's Own

The young reader-writer's progress recollected in James's autobiography includes the discovery of the role played by small personal collections of books in defining the owner's character and, then, also of large specialized collections in both forming and pinpointing one's taste. By the end of *A Small Boy and Others*, Henry James recalls his disappointing tutor in Boulogne as “a form of

⁸ Henry James, *Notes of a Son and Brother and The Middle Years: A Critical Edition*, ed. Peter Collister (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 47. Further quotations from this edition are cited parenthetically in the text as NSB, followed by page number.

⁹ Paul Fisher, *House of Wits: An Intimate Portrait of the James Family* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2008), 157.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ Vide <http://www.newport-discovery-guide.com/redwood-library.html> (acc. 15.02.2018).

bland porpoise, violently blowing in an age not his own, as by having had to exchange deep water for thin air” (SBO, 328). Pierre Walker disambiguated the tutor as Napoléon Ansieaux, a rhetoric professor at the Collège Communal in Boulogne.¹² With charming irony James writes about “the aid of the collected extracts from the truly and academically great which formed his [the tutor’s] sole resource and which he had, in a small portable and pocketed library rather greasily preserved” (SBO, 329). Peter Collister brilliantly links “this partial portrait of the old tutor” with “the less-than-savory flavor of the ‘old days’” and also – more tangibly and ominously – with the typhus Henry James contracted in France, “caused by lice, symptomatic of a lack of European hygiene” (SBO, 328). The mental hygiene of traveling Americans required, as it seems, access to current knowledge, rubbed clean of the accumulated dirt of past ages.

In *Notes of a Son and Brother*, Henry James recalls slightly less ironically his father’s traveling library, which consisted mostly of Emanuel Swedenborg’s works and reflected the father’s dependence on the Swedish mystic’s precepts. While recalling “that majestic array of volumes which were to form afterward the purplest rim of his library’s horizon” (NSB, 139), Henry James admits his own lack of curiosity in his father’s intellectual pursuits. His father’s intellectual horizon, as defined by his book collection, is not acceptable to the young man and remains a picturesque setting rather than a source of the son’s knowledge.

Descriptions of libraries become significant especially when William and then Henry begin a college education. After giving up art (and Newport), William began to attend the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard in the autumn of 1861. In *Notes of a Son and Brother*, Henry quotes a lengthy letter in which William describes his “Drear and Chill Abode” (NSB, 98) rented in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in which the young student mentions “[o]n my right the Bookcase, imposing and respectable with its empty drawers and with my little array of printed wisdom covering nearly *one* of the shelves” (NSB, 99). The emptiness of the shelves seems to signal William’s openness to new knowledge. When Henry James entered Harvard, he was not exactly following in his brother’s footsteps; he chose the Law School. He began his studies in September 1862 but very soon realized that it was not his world or, in fact, his library. He abandoned course in summer 1863. Interestingly enough, Henry James tells the story of his withdrawal from the world of law and gravitation toward literature by referring to his habits as a user of libraries. He switches from “the Law-library sheepskin volumes” to the “reading-matter” from Gore Hall, including most notably Sainte-Beuve (NSB, 270).

¹² Cit. per footnote in Henry James, *A Small Boy and Others*, 328.

The connection between a man and his library – which the young aficionado of literature would like to embrace as his own – becomes even stronger in James’s recollection of his contacts with the influential editor and scholar Charles Eliot Norton (1827–1908), the owner of Shady Hill estate in Cambridge, where James was invited “one beautiful morning” and drank “to the lees the offered cup of editorial sweetness” (NSB, 318). The half-hour spent in “the long library at Shady Hill” and among “serene book-shelves” is to the young author unique and magical. What contributes to the magic is his own new role in the library. He figures in it not as a reader – but as a contributor. The beginnings are modest: a review published in a journal, but the hopes and the stakes are high and James both gives and accepts the promise.

A library of one’s own is a selection of books which defines one’s interests and attitudes, one’s needs and aspirations. In his later years, the novelist could also look back to the library made up of his own works. His urge to rethink and rewrite them testified to the stability of his literary interests, on the one hand, and to the nomadic habit of moving on and around, on the other.

The Cosmopolitan Library

In the summer and autumn of 1872, James chaperoned his sister Alice and aunt Kate on their tour of England, France, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, and Germany;¹³ but the idea of settling down in Europe was already gestating. The family was not surprised when he moved to London in November 1876. James’s reading and travels since childhood had made him feel “a born Londoner,”¹⁴ long before he became an expatriate.

Nearly twenty years later, James discovered Lamb House in Rye (Sussex). He first took the house on a twenty-one-year lease, beginning in September 1897, but when his landlord died, he was offered “the freehold at the modest figure of £2,000” (Hyde 1966: 50). His intention was to spend in Rye especially the summer months, from May to October, but the autumns proved to be so mild in Rye that he could stay on until after Christmas or even longer. It was only in the last years of his life that “ill-health forced him... to spend more and more time in London.”¹⁵ For over a decade, Lamb House in Rye was James’s home, the place where he received guests and returned from travels, including the USA lecture tour in 1904–1905. It was not until 1912 that James took again an apartment in London.

¹³ Michael Anesko, “Introduction”, xviii.

¹⁴ Cit. per Paul Fisher, *House of Wits*, 357.

¹⁵ H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Story of Lamb House. The Home of Henry James* (Rye: Adams of Rye Limited, 1966), 50.

Lamb House also became a place that could be filled with books: a home library; at once a place of reading, writing, and a model for homes and libraries in James's fiction. Leon Edel describes James as "a regular buyer of books during his long working life – not a collector who looks for rarities and specialties but simply a highly informed reader, a 'professional' who somehow sniffed out certain interests in volumes as soon as he glanced at them."¹⁶ Perhaps he was not a regular collector, but in addition to books on interesting topics, James appreciated and acquired superbly bound books. In her account, Tintner singles out the books made by Francis Bedford (1799–1883).¹⁷ James liked "a handsome book and a good print;" the New York Edition (1907–1909) of his own works is a prime example of his good taste, with its elegant typography, high-quality paper, and occasional watermarks featuring the author's monogram (TLHJ, 2).

James bought books in England, France, and Italy, but he also inherited and received both American and European books from others. For example, he owned a copy of a Hawthorne novel with the author's signature on the title page. Edel makes much of the symbolic significance of James's own signature added underneath that of Hawthorne (TLHJ, 2). Some of the books Edel inspected in Rye contained inscriptions by their authors and by their owner. Some books found in Rye had belonged first to the novelist's father and namesake (TLHJ, 4). Part of James's library consisted of review copies and gifts. As a renowned author, Henry James received unsolicited books from both publishers and individual authors; Edel gives two examples in the latter category: H. G. Wells and "the eminent T. H. Huxley, who sent a complete set of his scientific writings, for he was charmed by James" (TLHJ, 1). Edel claims that James's library was not only *belles-lettres* but also "many volumes of history and philosophy" (TLHJ, 5). Books in James's home library were, as Edel puts it, "auxiliary to his writing." As a reviewer, James developed "an entire signal system" of lines, little crosses, page numbers, and single words. He penciled notes into the margins, from which he wrote his reviews, and sometimes also his own fiction (TLHJ, 2).

The inventory collated out of several sources includes mostly books in English, French and Italian. In fact, the languages of the books speak volumes about the circulation of culture and ideas in James's time. For example, the novelist owned Russian classics in French, including Fyodor Dostoevsky, Nicolai Gogol,

¹⁶ Leon Edel, "The Two Libraries of Henry James", in *The Library of Henry James*, eds. Leon Edel and Adeline R. Tintner (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987), 1. Further quotations from this edition are cited parenthetically in the text as TLHJ, followed by page number.

¹⁷ Adeline R. Tintner, "The Books in the Books: What Henry James's Characters Read and Why", in *The Library of Henry James*, 93.

Alexander Pushkin, and Leo Tolstoy. Ivan Turgenev's fiction, which he admired greatly, was present in his library in both French and English. German was not so important to Henry James; he owned only one book by Heinrich Heine in French, two books by Goethe in English and one in German, as well as one book by Friedrich von Schiller in German. He also owned four books in French on Russian history by the Polish historian Kazimierz Waliszewski (1849–1935), which is in itself a fascinating example of intercultural interest and transmission of knowledge.

After Henry James's death in 1916, the executor of his will, his nephew Henry, considered what to do with the library in Lamb House. Books were everywhere, including the servants' quarters on the top floor (TLHJ, 2). Henry James III eventually "removed to his home in New York some of the choice first editions," books by American writers and of American interest, as well as autograph copies and "James's Stevensons and Kiplings" (TLHJ, 2). The nephew-executor left in Lamb House some four thousand volumes, "many quite as important as those he removed" (TLHJ, 3). Henry James III rented the inherited house to E. F. Benson (1867–1940), a son of the former Archbishop of Canterbury and author of humorous novels about life in Rye. Edel recalls that Benson still lived there in 1937 when the future biographer wrote to him and asked for an opportunity to "spend an afternoon in the house and inspect the books" (TLHJ, 3).

"Mysterious are the wanderings of a famous man's books" (TLHJ, 5), remarks Edel sententiously, but his account is – in fact – a denouncement of the inheritors' (first Henry James III's and then his widow's) obvious incompetence and indifference. Edel attributes it to the inherited disdain William James had for his younger brother (TLHJ, 7). After the Second World War and Henry James III's death, Edel visited his widow and heir, Dorothea Draper, "a plump plain matron" who is not likely to have "read a line of Henry James." She was interested in selling "Uncle Henry's" books, whereas Edel "hoped for the library's preservation" (TLHJ, 6). Following the Second World War, Dorothea Draper presented Lamb House to the British nation, much to the chagrin of the other Jameses (TLHJ, 7), and it has been owned by the National Trust ever since. Edel and Tintner's joint effort to compile and explain available information was intended to counteract the irreversible process of dispersal. Edel's essay in particular is an elegy on the fall of James's library. The Garden House, which had first charmed Henry James as a sketch, was destroyed during the Second World War, his books were sold and only part of James's library still exists in Rye and in places far away from his cherished home. Lamb House is still only partly – and part-time – the museum of Henry James. The cosmopolitan library spread out in the wide world, with stray books surfacing at auctions and many possibly gathering dust in unexpected places.

Leftovers and Conclusions

The catalog in the middle of Edel and Tintner's book begins with the following explanation: "The description of each book includes identifying sigla combining an A (signed by James) or 0 (not signed by James) with one of the locations keyed below."¹⁸ There are fourteen locations, including one non-location "FH," which indicates "books whose whereabouts are unknown" even though their titles were included in previous lists. Quite predictably, "FH" appears next to many titles in the catalog. Each lost book is "unique and irreplaceable," but what Borges promisingly adds with reference to the Library of Babel is also true about Henry James's lost libraries: "there are always several hundred thousand imperfect facsimiles."¹⁹ The books written and owned by Henry James have taken over the habits of their former owner by becoming cosmopolitan nomads, whose role is to define the interests of their current users. Books may be lost, but ideas endure.

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¹⁸ *The Library of Henry James*, 17.

¹⁹ Jorge Luis Borges, "The Library of Babel", 116.

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