

Tricksterism, Anti-Semitism, and White Supremacy in *The Education of Henry Adams*: A Centennial Reassessment¹

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“Men use thought only as authority for their injustice, and employ speech only to conceal their thoughts.”

—Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand

Henry Adams has been one of America’s most influential and challenging authors. In the language of his own day, he was one of his nation’s greatest men of letters. The novelist Henry James pronounced him the “philosophic father to us.”² *The Education of Henry Adams*, which saw its centennial in the fall of 2018, remains an essential American text with unequaled durability and popularity. According to the Modern Library publishing house, it occupies the top spot on the list of the one hundred most important American nonfiction works of the twentieth century. It is, as one scholar wrote, “a necessary textbook for any student of the nineteenth century.”³ Even the current US Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer declared that Adams’s work was one of the five most influential books he had ever read. “It’s a marvelous book,” he remarked. “Every American should read it and so should anyone who wants to understand America.”⁴ Breyer’s enthusiasm traced a pattern most critics have followed from the beginning. In 1919, for instance, one reviewer proclaimed that with *The Education*, “Men can see now with his help—what many of them with the best will in the world before could not—precisely where the age is going.”⁵

That same year, however, at least one reviewer, the New Jersey-born Columbia University professor William A. Dunning—whose influence distorted scholarship and denigrated Reconstruction for at least two generations—did not share the general enthusiasm. Ironically, he passed over Adams’s remarks on President Grant and his era—which would have only confirmed Dunning’s views—and, instead, focused on the author’s larger understanding of history and philosophy. This was, after all, he wrote, “an Adams, which means he is eccentric,” and therefore his book primarily offered an eccentric view of the future direction of civilization:

Thus, the catalogue of catastrophies in history culminates in 1900. Adams’s treatment of the series is entertaining and suggestive, but the prediction at the end need give no alarm. To the

preoccupied dreamer by the wayside the sudden cut-out of the muffler of a quietly approaching automobile gives a shock as of a great disaster, but his startled gaze rests on a car moving steadily and again quietly along, with perhaps the suggestion of a smile on the face of the chauffeur. It was much the same when the Spirit that rules over supersensual chaos passed the years that Henry Adams found catastrophic.⁶

Dunning may have coyly dismissed Adams's central concern, but the book quickly became essential to any understanding of the United States. In 1927, the influential American historian Henry Steele Commager declared that Adams's *Education* represented "the best mind of its generation" at work. Twenty years later, literary scholar Robert Spiller considered Adams to be among "the dozen or so major figures in the literary history of the United States." In the 1950s, critics explained that Adams provided his fellow Americans with "the richest and most challenging image of what they are, what they have been, and what they may become." The cultural historian T.J. Jackson Lears may have captured what modern readers wish to see in the book. To Lears, Adams's work is a devastating assault on the most complacent assumptions of the transatlantic Victorian culture:

That Anglo-American civilization represented the highest point mankind had ever reached, that the reign of rationality could be painlessly achieved through the expansion of industrial capitalism, that material improvement meant moral advance as well.⁷

Because of its place in American and world literature, *The Education of Henry Adams* has become enormously influential, but we have not fully understood the scope of its impact, its subversive contexts, much less Adams's role in sustaining and furthering white supremacy. Indeed, although the American Civil War and especially Reconstruction are central to his book, Adams never dwelled on the ultimate significance of the war and never employed the term Reconstruction in his book—although he regularly employed it when he wrote for the *North American Review*. More importantly, the intensity of his racism and anti-Semitism compelled him to dismiss this period of United States history dominated by strife over the nation's future and the African American role in it. Instead, he characterized it as one simply overwhelmed with sordid political corruption, which had its origins in alleged Jewish intrigue both in the United States and Europe. By examining the background and sub-texts to Adams's work, and his brilliant—if misguided—ingenuity, we can more fully understand what he sought to accomplish and how. Neither fully an autobiography nor a history, he employed both genres to fashion his most famous work. Adams crafted a brilliant "trickster" novel masquerading as a memoir to devalue freedom for African Americans and attack Jewish life as a warning about the threats

to republicanism and, ultimately, what he viewed as the inevitable decline of western society. His book, in so many ways ingenious and penetrating, also may have been the most dangerous book of the *fin de siècle*.

In 1907, Adams privately printed one hundred copies of his manuscript for those of his breed he trusted, intellectuals like William James and his brother Henry, the artist Augustus Saint-Gaudens, and the vivacious Boston art maven Isabella Stewart Gardner. Houghton Mifflin, however, first published the book for general circulation after Adams's death in 1918; it received a Pulitzer Prize the following year. Since then, at least 96 different editions and reprints have appeared in various formats with numerous editors and introductions. Adams's friend and former student, US Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge, lent his name to the book's first introduction to enhance its credibility. Adams, with careful foresight, actually controlled this voice by writing it for him. Other editions that followed include those by the



Fig. 1. *Henry Adams* by Marian Hooper Adams, 1883. 17.4 cm x 25.5 cm. Republished with permission of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Scottish historian Denis W. Brogan, the popular American historian James Truslow Adams, literary scholars Henry Seidel Canby and Harold Bloom, the Pulitzer Prize-winning Adams biographer Ernest Samuels, and, more recently, by the Theodore Roosevelt biographer Edmund Morris. In 2007, the Massachusetts Historical Society even brought out a newly collated "Centennial Version." There are also many other reprints of the book in French, German, Italian, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian, Turkish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, and even Aboriginal Australian languages.⁸

Few books have had greater influence on the study of the American character. Its very success, however, also caused generations of Americans to absorb its damaging assessment of the calamitous era of slavery, Civil War, and Reconstruction and Adams's assumptions of white supremacy. The key to comprehending *The Education* and Adams's fears of cataclysmic social and economic decline is the role he assigned to Jewish financiers as grasping, repulsive agents of capitalist domination. "We are in the hands of the Jews," he wrote in 1899. "They can do what they please with our values." As for one's wealth, he asserted, the only "sure profitable investment" is "gold, locked up in one's private safe. There you have no risk but the burglar. In any other form you have the burglar, the Jew, the Czar, the socialist, and above all, the total, irremediable, radical rottenness of our whole social, industrial, financial and political system." Without appreciating the centrality that anti-Semitism played in his thought, a thorough understanding of Adams's most famous work is impossible.⁹

I.

Adams was not a trusted observer. As the literary critic Alfred Kazin wrote, "Adams was not interested in telling the 'truth' about himself—whatever that was. His aim was to present himself as History." Perhaps more than anything he appeared driven, through the counter-intuitive pose of personal failure, to present a unique version of American history that he trusted would restore his family's prestige—an expression of his desire to place himself in the centre of American culture. As Eric F. Goldman opined in the 1950s, Adams spent over 500 pages of his book wondering "how America could so completely ignore an Adams." In order to create a more convincing narrative, Adams buried his regret for the two Adams presidents, and offered praise for his father Charles Francis, Sr. In reality, he had come to symbolize all that Adams rejected in modern life. Well before beginning to write *The Education*, he remarked to his brother, Charles Francis, Jr., that their father's "only merit was that of making few mistakes." In a critical sense, particulars of fact mattered far less to Adams than form. As he advised his good friend, the Harvard philosopher William James, he wished the book to succeed not for the "sake of the object, but for the form, like a romance."¹⁰

As Garry Wills convincingly argued, despite what generations of scholars have assumed, Adams largely despised his presidential ancestors, although he affirmed some of their political principles when they appeared to support the republicanism that Adams viewed as endangered. He had given textual hints of his true sentiments in *The Education*, as when he wrote that he had "passed the best years of his life in pondering over the political philosophy of Jefferson, Gallatin, and Madison," not the two Adams presidents. "To do justice to Gallatin was a labor of love," he wrote in 1883 of the Swiss-born secretary of the treasury. "After long study of the prominent figures in our history, I am more than ever convinced that, for com-

bination of ability, integrity, knowledge, unselfishness, and social fitness, Mr. Gallatin has no equal....” As scholars Russell L. Hanson and W. Richard Merriman showed long ago, to Adams’s mind only the Jeffersonians, specifically Gallatin, displayed the kind of commitment to untrammeled republicanism that could prevent corruption, “temptations and vanity of power” that posed the greatest threat to the nation. It is, thus, no surprise that *The Education* made only passing references to John and John Quincy Adams, however, all of which appeared benign. In fact, he had denounced his great-grandfather John as a “demagogue” and found his grandfather intolerable. As Katherine L. Morrison observed, Henry’s battle with his brother Brooks over John Quincy Adams “shows us a clash of ideals as well as

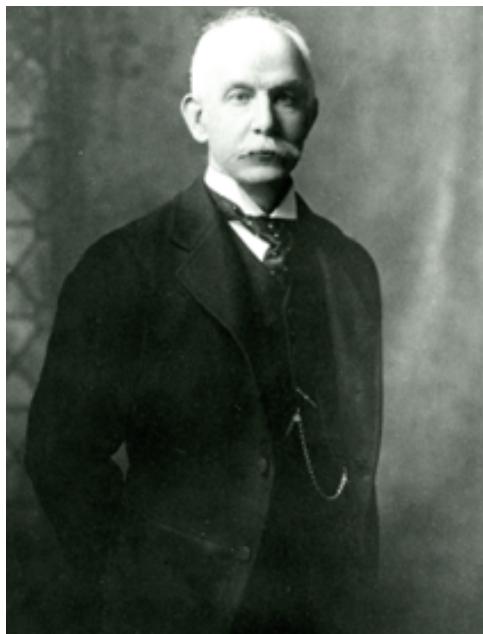


Fig. 2. *Brooks Adams* (1848-1927), cir. 1910, US National Park Service.

different perceptions of early American history. Henry took issue with Brooks over the sincerity of John Quincy’s patriotism, over his wisdom and over his morality. Henry implied that Brooks’s picture of the old man was not only repulsive but untrue.” In reviewing his brother’s manuscript biography of their grandfather, which Henry disdained and prevented him from publishing, he admonished Brooks that: “By no literary machinery known to me can J.Q.A. be made a literary or popular success.” Indeed, he said of his grandparents “whom I pity with the keenest sympathy, and wish had never been born.” The literary trail that Adams left behind clearly displayed his capacity to reshape and rewrite Adams family history in a way

that better served his strategy for *The Education*.¹¹

When a young Samuel Eliot Morison traveled to Paris in 1913, he looked up Adams on May 17 to discuss his forthcoming book on the old Boston Federalist Harrison Gray Otis. Morison “tried to get him to discuss New England Federalism. He then expressed a great disinterest in that subject, but a lively interest in French medieval music.” Had Morison been working on the Jeffersonian Albert Gallatin, he might have gotten his wish. But the politics of his ancestors did not interest Adams. In 1877, he had published a collection of documents related to the New England Federalist Party, mostly a long pamphlet of his grandfather’s. But the collection seemed calculated to create a dim view of the old party and “to throw light upon those acts and motives of the characters in this curious scene of our history”—not the kind of introductory remark designed to instill in the reader respect for the early career of his grandfather or his party. Yet, shrewdly, *The Education* still sought to have readers retain his ancestors’ good name—and class—by having them represent “the old Ciceronian idea of government by *the best* that produced the long line of New England statesmen.” These were men born to rule, and should be perceived as proper rulers, even if Adams’s concern ran more to type or class rather than specific genealogical line, even his own.¹²

Throughout his life, Henry Adams sought power through influence—not office—and his move to Washington, DC, and the home he built across from the White House, symbolized his intent. “The fact is,” he wrote in 1877, “I gravitate to a capital by a primary law of nature. This is the only place in America where society amuses me, or where life offers variety. Here, too, I can fancy that we are of use in the world, for we distinctly occupy niches which ought to be filled.”¹³ At the beginning of his long professional career, he had crafted important diplomatic cables and dispatches anonymously for his father who served as the American ambassador to Great Britain during the Civil War; and from 1897 to 1905, he unofficially assisted his close friend John Hay when he served as ambassador to Great Britain and as secretary of state. In between his diplomatic services, Adams had become a Harvard medieval history professor, editor of the influential *North American Review*, and published novels as well as masterpieces of history and cultural analysis, including his anonymous novel *Democracy* and his *History of the United States During the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison*. His *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*—which Adams insisted should be read alongside *The Education*—is a meditation on medieval architecture and religious “unity.” According to the great historian and literary critic Lewis Mumford, “from the moment it appeared,” *Mont-Saint-Michel* became the “kind of book that readers would mark as a milestone in their intellectual life.” This herculean literary output brought his influence to the most consequential sector of American society.¹⁴

With *The Education*, however, Adams would become the nation’s witness to modernity’s birth, which he famously characterized with the juxtaposition of the “Dynamo and the Virgin.” With a truly astonishing glimmer of the coming atomic



Fig. 3. The home of Adams, which is to the left and attached to the mansion of his close friend John Hay in Washington, DC's Lafayette Park, across from the White House and designed by H.H. Richardson. The linkage of Adams's home to the larger Hay house bespeaks the depth of their friendship. Photo by Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1890, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Both homes were razed for the current hotel. According to the Washington *Evening Star* (July 23, 1884), Adams's home—about a quarter of the size of Hay's—cost \$35,000 to erect, about \$8 million in modern currency.

age, Adams foresaw that “man had translated himself into a new universe which had no scale of measurement with the old.”¹⁵ He reinforced this sense of profound and cataclysmic cultural change in his essay “The Rule of Phase Applied to History.” History and time, Adams wrote, had displayed a shocking acceleration since 1600, if not earlier, and the new age would be nothing like what had come before. Even the historian must acquire new tools to comprehend it. There was, in Adams’s mind, a sense of urgency, one that he developed in *The Education* and its companion *Mont-Saint-Michel*. As one of his characters revealingly remarked in his 1884 novel *Esther*, “You are throwing away your last chance to reconcile science and religion.” In their scholarship and writing, he and his brother Brooks both searched for underlying causes, the motives and forces that moved the earth and its people, and especially that illusive “unity” he desired. Thus, history must become a science, he thought, and we cannot “abandon the attempt.” The “future of Thought, and therefore of History,” he pronounced, “lies in the hands of the physicists, and that the future historian must seek his education in the world of mathematical physics. Nothing can be expected from study on the old lines.” The modern historian could not agree

more with that last line, although perhaps not quite as Adams had imagined.¹⁶

Generations of readers have been mesmerized by Adams's apparent foresight, by his rejection of the world he lived in, and by his quest for understanding, and for God, all rendered in the authorial third person. But *The Education* did not specifically say what all this meant for the burgeoning twentieth century. Although like William H. Dunning, one had to conclude that it would not be good. In private letters, Adams was more direct. In 1902, he advised his brother Brooks that "an ultimate, colossal, cosmic collapse" would come. "My belief is that science is to wreck us, and that we are like monkeys monkeying with a loaded shell; we don't in the least know or care where our practically infinite energies come from or will bring us to." Yet, the appeal of his struggle over unity and multiplicity, on decline and failure, and the enduring reception that his work found can be explained, in part, by placing *The Education* in the long tradition of the puritan jeremiad. Adams seemingly did not offer a path for restoration—as one would expect in a true jeremiad. Instead, he placed "all emphasis on an America rushing toward self-destruction in an entropic inversion of the work of redemption," as Sacvan Bercovitch memorably observed forty years ago.¹⁷

Famously, Adams's account detailed how the nation had arrived at this "tragic" turning point. In the early days of the republic, true leaders like Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and even the Adams family helped determine the course of human events. Subsequently, Adams then understood the United States as experiencing a descent, as if following a law of cultural gravity, in the late nineteenth century when the nation ignored Adams's leadership and jettisoned a more human-centred and unified civilization for an ugly, industrial, Jewish-dominated capitalist one. His book repudiated modernism, looked back longingly to an imagined and more humane eighteenth-century temperament—but more specifically to the Middle Ages. Although spurning Catholicism in his day and calling himself a "Conservative Christian Anarchist," Adams nonetheless became enthralled by the Medieval Church:

As far as a superficial student could follow, the thirteenth century supposed mind to be a mode of force directly derived from the intelligent prime motor, and the cause of all form and sequence in the universe—therefore the only proof of unity. Without thought in the unit, there could be no unity; without unity no orderly sequence or ordered society. Thought alone was Form. Mind and Unity flourished or perished together.¹⁸

In a critical, but especially foul turn, *The Education*'s religious-inspired repudiation of modernism entailed a rejection of the twentieth century as an economic suzerainty dominated, as he wrote, by the "Jew banker."¹⁹ Adams, and his equally disillusioned brother Brooks, shared a repudiation of capitalism's rise, which

they both largely blamed on the “society of Jews and brokers, a world made up of maniacs wild for gold” in which, Adams lamented, “I have no place.” Adams keenly followed the economic travails of the United States and Europe and found Jews lurking in the background. “After all,” he complained to John Hay in 1895, “the Jew question is really the most serious of our problems. It is Capitalistic Methods run to their logical result.” The passage of a year only intensified Adams’s dread and conspiratorial perspective that Jews had taken hold of the world’s finances and had penetrated European and American identity. In an astounding letter to his confidante Elizabeth Cameron, Adams howled over Jewish influence and control:

the world has now nothing that I think worth preserving, but I do get sick about the Jew. For the first time in history, the blood is vitiated. The Jew has got into the soul. I see him—or her—now everywhere, and wherever he—or she—goes there must remain a taint in the blood forever. Between the Czar and the Jew, our world will be oriented with a vengeance. But no one who lives here can deny that it is coming, and indeed already is. Eighty years has done it all. As far as I can judge, even we at home have broken our shins over the same rock. I only hope that we have broken the necks, as well, of some of the Jews, at least in politics.... All Wall Street and State Street, all the Jew importers and Jew money-lenders appear to wear on their faces that tired look...to judge from the stock-exchange and the desperate effort of all those Jew usurers (such a list of Hebrew names, since the Talmud, never) who put [J.P.] Morgan forward to hold up stocks by rigging the market for exchange.²⁰

Scholars have been aware of Adams’s anti-Semitism for many years, but they have not fully understood the role it played in *The Education*’s dark vision of the future. As Eric L. Goldstein emphasized, Europeans and Americans of Adams’s time associated Jewish people with modernity—something Adams famously rejected. The increasing commercialization of American life, which Adams clearly abhorred, became bonded to stereotypes of Jews, an example that civic leaders repeatedly warned should be avoided. In fact, throughout the transatlantic world of Adams’s day, “the Jew served as a convenient scapegoat on which all the ills of modern life could be blamed.” Adams scholar J.C. Levenson recognized the persistence of anti-Semitism in Adams, but largely blamed the destructive Panic of 1893—a transatlantic economic depression—for darkening his thinking on economic life and turning him into a dedicated anti-Semite. The Panic, Levenson asserted, had destabilized all the Adams brothers and certainly sparked Brooks Adams’s own account of the damaging power of finance capitalism and Jewry.²¹ The 1893 Panic alarmed and outraged Henry, and clearly destroyed any lingering



Fig. 4. “The Commercial Vampire,” by Leon Barritt, in *Vim*, 1, no. 5 (20 July 1898): 10-11. The image depicts occupations supposedly dominated by Jews: department store, butcher, jeweler, clothier, hardware merchant, gentleman’s furnishings dealer, miller, piano dealer, bookseller, hatter, druggist, house furnishing seller, “segar dealer,” dry goods merchant, grocer, shoe dealer, and bicycle dealer. The image ends with the admonition that “This picture will not be found on the bargain counter.” Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.²²

trust he might have had in Western Society. “For my own part,” he fulminated to Elizabeth Cameron, “hating vindictively, as I do, our whole fabric and conception of society, against which my little life has squeaked protest from its birth, and will yell protest till its death, I shall be glad to see the whole thing utterly destroyed and whipped away.”²³

Unfortunately, Adams had been fulminating against Jewish people long before the 1893 Panic, and Adams scholars are simply wrong about when he began spouting anti-Semitism. When Adams edited the *North American Review* in the 1870s, he worried that the journal’s financial uncertainties would force it to “go to some Jew.” In 1888, he bitterly complained to John Hay about expenses he was incurring to keep up his home. “I must sign some portentous I.O.U.... and damn the Jews.” The Panic of 1893 clearly intensified Adams’s anti-Semitism, but it did not create it. Such sentiments were a family trait. In 1780, his grandfather John Quincy Adams

complained about the Jews of Amsterdam: “wretched creatures....I never saw in my life such a set of miserable looking people, and they would steal your eyes out of your head if they possibly could.” Henry Adams’s brother-in-law Edward Hooper would pray with his daughters every night that “everyone will sleep well, *except the Jews.*” Bostonians outside of the Adams clan, especially the elite like the Hoopers, displayed no immunity against such bigotry. For instance, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. denounced Jews as Christ-killers and as murderers who “caught and crucified” children.²⁴

Adams’s former student and friend, Henry Cabot Lodge, joined with other Harvard graduates in the 1890s to form the Immigration Restriction League to preserve “Anglo-Saxonism” and keep out “the scum of Europe.” For a generation, anti-Semitism had been incorporated into nineteenth-century general education and had become so pervasive that, in 1908, the Harvard-trained literary critic and author John Jay Chapman believed that only intermarriage between Jews and gentiles could maintain Anglo-Saxonism and result in the “infinite benefit to the American people.” Such widespread anti-Semitism and anti-immigration fervor only added toxic fuel to Adams’s vision of the future in *The Education*.²⁵

Given the persistence of anti-Semitism in American culture, especially in the years immediately following publication of *The Education*, readers may have accepted Adams’s ugly eruptions as commonplace and missed the critical role he assigned to Jews in what he saw as the coming apocalypse. Instead, they became amazed, if not clearly intimidated, by his erudite lament for society’s decline. Adams found posthumous success, thereby gaining much of the influence (and power) that he believed had been denied to him in life. As the cultural historian Robert Dawidoff intuitively observed, “The more educated Americans become, the more they read Henry Adams; the more educated they become, the more they see things as he told them they would. The more readers Henry Adams has, the more things become like they seemed to him.” By personalizing *The Education* with a pretense of his own experience and learning, and merging it with his themes of modernity and decline, unity and multiplicity—all within the context of the jeremiad—Adams had created an unprecedented experimental hybrid that captivated readers. Those readers, however, paid a price for gaining access to his impressive erudition and allure in what was more a historical romance than a memoir or a conventional history. *The Education* exerted a powerful deflecting force, guiding readers along a predetermined path. It compelled them to sympathize with and be anxious for the same elite white world that had so absorbed the author and to close their eyes to the same vast human drama that Adams had ignored.²⁶

Adams, we must remember, did not craft an autobiography—although many readers persist in that belief. The misconception is understandable since the book’s first publisher, Houghton Mifflin, in 1918 added the subtitle “An Autobiography” to the title page “without authorization,” as Ernest Samuels noted.²⁷ Rather, the book is a profound study of social, intellectual, and generational trans-

formation, with a semi-fictional character named Henry Adams as the primary guide and witness. It is part novel, part history and memoir, and pretends to be grounded *only* in Adams's own experiences. "An experiment like this volume," he wrote in 1908, "is hazardous, not as history, but as art." There are, as Adams scholar Edward Chalfant has observed, two distinct manifestations of Henry Adams: the living author and the book's voice, "as much as possible a fiction." Two men—one voice—but a voice that, while unique in its specific details and story, in fact represents a common and ancient literary device: the trickster.

The book's Henry Adams, like the archetypal trickster, is a guide and mediator. Such figures have appeared in all major cultures, preserved in literature, myth, and folklore as God, the devil, individuals, or anthropomorphic animals—figures of authority who cannot be trusted. They deceive and manipulate, test human endurance and faith, bargain, and tell tales to achieve their ends. Moreover, they travel to predestined arenas and simultaneously lead the unsuspecting traveler to places heretofore unknown and, perhaps, unwanted. The trickster is also a mediator between God and the people, and usually a highly ambiguous one, just as Adams became a decidedly ambiguous and contradictory interpreter of "the unity" for the reader. As the trickster figure came to play an important role in how minority groups negotiated discrimination and dominate culture, it also became a mechanism through which Adams could confront the social diversity and the multiplicity he so abhorred. Adams would have been familiar with many incarnations of the literary trickster archetype, from the biblical story of Job to classical Greek literature, and especially Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. He most certainly knew of Hermes, messenger of the Greek pantheon and divine trickster, who became the foundation for hermeneutics, the process of interpretation. If nothing else, *The Education* is a calculating and manipulative device for interpreting the meaning of the past to a succession of presents.²⁸

In his own preface, often overlooked and misunderstood by readers, Adams sketched out his intent and, while not as clearly self-mocking as one by Mark Twain, it nonetheless issued a warning of his approach to attentive readers: "The object of study is the garment, not the figure." This is key to understanding how "the manikin" (a play on Adams's small stature) presents his "romance"—his didactic novel—to instruct future generations on the errors of the past. *The Education* was designed as a companion volume to *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* where, Adams advised William James, "I could hide—in a stack of rubbish meant only to feed the foolish—a hundred more pages meant to complete the first hundred of 1904. No one would take the smallest interest in these. I knew they were safe. So was I." In the preface, the trickster outlined his aim:

As educator, Jean Jacques [Rousseau] was, in one respect, easily first; he erected a monument of warning against the Ego. Since his time, and largely thanks to him, the Ego has steadily tended

to efface itself, and, for purposes of model, to become a manikin on which the toilet of education is to be draped in order to show the fit or misfit of the clothes. The object of study is the garment, not the figure. The tailor adapts the manikin as well as the clothes to his patron's wants. The tailor's object, in this volume, is to fit young men, in universities or elsewhere, to be men of the world, equipped for any emergency; and the garment offered to them is meant to show the faults of the patchwork fitted on their fathers....The manikin, therefore, has the same value as any other geometrical figure of three or more dimensions, which is used for the study of relation. For that purpose it cannot be spared; it is the only measure of motion, of proportion, of human condition; it must have the air of reality; must be taken for real; must be treated as though it had life. Who knows? Possibly it had!²⁹

In the most fundamental of ways, *The Education* is about deception and silences. Adams did briefly discuss the painful death of his sister, Louisa Catherine, but never mentioned the tragic suicide of his wife. While much ink has been spilled over this assumed “missing portion” of Adams’s book, Marian “Clover” Hooper Adams’s death was clearly irrelevant to Adams’s intent. Such mistaken critiques overlook the most crucial “missing” element, a silent deception that goes to the heart of the book’s treacherous legacy. Adams just happened to live through and wrote about the most consequential period in American history—an era that saw the most costly and destructive combat in memory, all justified by the eventual liberation of four million humans. Adams, of course, understood this. But instead of exploring the profound consequences of emancipation for the republic, he focused on the story of a presumably fading social class (his own), and the rise of economic forces that would be in the hands of a people he resented, some of whom had mastered the tools of finance capitalism. Jewish people would, he feared, rise and replace those who had governed the nation from its inception and had emerged from the European civilization that he cherished. And, as the fictional Henry Adams made clear, it was that very doomed class that became complicit in its own demise and in facilitating the social and intellectual transformation that he so abhorred:

nothing in politics ever surprised Henry Adams more than the ease with which he and his silver friends slipped across the chasm, and alighted on the single gold standard and the capitalist system with its methods; the protective tariff; the corporations and trusts; the trades-unions and socialistic paternalism which necessarily made their complement; the whole mechanical consolidation of force, which ruthlessly stamped out the life of the

class into which Adams was born, but created monopolies capable of controlling the new energies that America adored.³⁰

Preoccupied with class decline—although ultimately his class only benefited financially from capitalist growth—Adams ignored the most important change of his times, or of any age. Despite the horrific human cost and the historic national transformation that resulted from the Civil War, African Americans and African American freedom remained invisible to Adams. In the 1890s, Adams crafted his impressive history of the Jefferson and Madison administrations, and wrote dispassionately and admiringly about Toussaint L’Ouverture. *The Education* ignored all Black leaders, authors, artists, and intellectuals, male or female—including Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, and even Booker T. Washington. Indeed, *The Education* contained only a few trivializing mentions of African Americans, such as a reference to a “negro cabin” in Washington, DC’s Rock Creek Park and to the District’s “Negro babies, and their mothers with bandanas.” Among the few white leaders he mentioned, who in life had gained renown for advancing the cause of racial justice, the great abolitionist, orator, and labour reformer Wendell Phillips was dismissed as “a model dangerous for youth.” Adams then jettisoned the country’s leading legal reformer, anti-imperialist, and NAACP head Moorfield Storey as “a dangerous model of frivolity.” Conspicuously, Adams’s book never once employed the word Reconstruction, although he wrote extensively of the immediate post-Civil War period and the administration of President Ulysses S. Grant. Adams’s *Education* ignored the racial domination of the white South, the rampant violence and lynching inflicted on African Americans that had begun as soon as the war ended, the battle for civil rights legislation, and the struggles for the 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution.³¹

The test of American democracy that could have engaged Adams might have been how the nation treated those who had suffered for so long under the lash. *The Education* clearly recognized a moral dilemma posed by slavery, but the problem seemed to be one for whites, not the victims of the exploitative institution. During a childhood trip to George Washington’s Mount Vernon, Adams wrote that he came to see slavery’s impact on him:

Bad roads meant bad morals. The moral of this Virginia road was clear, and the boy fully learned it. Slavery was wicked, and slavery was the cause of this road’s badness which amounted to social crime—and yet, at the end of the road and product of the crime stood Mount Vernon and George Washington.

But *The Education* never pursued that line of inquiry, refusing to travel a road that might have called the entire enterprise, both his country and his approach to crafting his book, into question. The social and political *rise* of African Americans might

have been a compelling counterpoint to a cultural decline and the uncertainties of the new science that concerned Adams so passionately. Black equality and full democratic justice never occurred to him. We always think of Adams as the archetypal Bostonian—living in the epicentre of the antislavery movement. He (and his father) had supported William H. Seward for president in 1860 and had been truly appalled by the secessionists. As for antebellum Southern leadership, *The Education* explained, “They were stupendously ignorant of the world....They showed a young student his first object-lesson of the way in which excess of power worked when held by inadequate hands.” But after the close of the Civil War, his view of the South changed. In fact, Adams hated Boston, loved the South, and considered himself “a kind of honorary southerner.” In *The Education*, after condemning the horrors of slavery and the South, he then said:

and yet the picture had another side. The May sunshine and shadow had something to do with it; the thickness of foliage and the heavy smells had more....The impression was not simple, but the boy liked it: distinctly it remained on his mind as an attraction, almost obscuring Quincy itself.

Adams valued Jeffersonian democracy, not the New England Federalism that he is usually associated with, and, at times, he identified himself as a “Jeffersonian,” and saw in Jefferson—whom he alternately admired and disparaged—his own image: that of the besieged intellectual who preferred “Homer and Horace” to politics.³²

Radical Reconstruction horrified Adams. When he edited and wrote for the *North American Review*, he expressed his wish that all Americans could witness what was taking place in Washington, DC. “As the years pass on,” he stated in 1869,

the noise and confusion, the vehemence of this scramble for power or for plunder, the shouting of reckless adventurers, of wearied partisans, and of red-hot zealots in new issues,—the boiling and bubbling of this witches’ caldron, into which we have thrown eye of newt and toe of frog and all the venomous ingredients of corruption, and from which is expected to issue the future and more perfect republic,—in short, the conflict and riot of interests, grow more and more overwhelming...[the] capacity of our Government to reconcile these jarring interests, to control refractory dissentients, and to preserve an appearance of governing, is already tested to its utmost....³³

Adams decried all the new civil rights legislation and Constitutional Amendments, and believed that even with the Fifteenth Amendment the “dogma that suffrage is a natural right, and not a trust, is by implication denied. The ‘Right’

to hold office, as well as to vote, is not asserted.” He viewed all such legislation as violations of the rights of white Southerners, a people with whom he felt a family kinship. Thus, when he anonymously published his novel *Democracy* in 1880, he turned the ex-Confederate John Carrington into a symbol of “tragic” Southern “suffering” as a result of the war: “how his mother and two sisters were struggling for a bare subsistence on a wretched Virginia farm, and how all his exertions barely kept them from beggary.” He never considered the horrors inflicted on the former slaves, nor their plight at the end of the war, nearly all of whom emerged from slavery with nothing, some even without clothes. At the very sound of the word “Reconstruction,” Adams wrote, “My blood boils.” Henry, his oft-overlooked brother John, and the rest of the Adams clan abandoned the Republican Party during Reconstruction. They all turned on Charles Sumner—whom Henry once admired. In 1869, he counseled the British radical John Bright not to credit Sumner “with too much brain. He passes everywhere either for worse or better than he is, merely because people over-rate his mind.” In *The Education*, Adams ridiculed Sumner as representative of the great Senate leaders during the Grant administration, ones that “could not be burlesqued; they were more grotesque than ridicule could make them.” Having repudiated Sumner and the other Radicals, the Adams brothers found encouragement in the politics of the former leaders of the Confederacy. John’s campaign against Radical Reconstruction had made him, according to Henry, “the most universally popular Northern man at the South.” By sending John to the State House as a Democrat, Henry asserted that Massachusetts had redeemed the Adams name. He was, according to Henry, “a political genius” who followed “the family bent.” As one of the leaders of the state Democratic Party, his influence extended north to New Hampshire and far south, receiving an invitation from the long-serving governor of South Carolina, Wade Hampton, to address a political gathering in his state.³⁴

As far as Henry Adams was concerned, Blacks were servants and nothing more—hardly worth a moment’s consideration—another enduring family trait. His wife Clover held precisely the same view, referring to her Black servants as “Our African adjutants” or “faithful Sambo,” and once remarked that after showing her “ebony cook” her new kitchen quarters “her lips parted like a black walnut piano.”³⁵ For her husband, African Americans did not represent any significant part of the nation’s history or of the society in which he lived. As Adams wrote at the close of Reconstruction in 1877, “the Turk of Europe is the counterpart of the American nigger; the Lord only knows how he came there or how he is to be got away.” African Americans, to Adams, were just one more annoying part of the landscape. When he traveled to South Carolina in January 1894, he complained that he would have to spend a fortnight there, “among the niggers and the mosquitoes.” No gap separated him from his more opinionated but equally racist brother Charles Francis, Jr. Brother Charles viewed Robert E. Lee as “distinctly... a man of character on the page of the historian.” He had the audacity and arrogance to advise the African

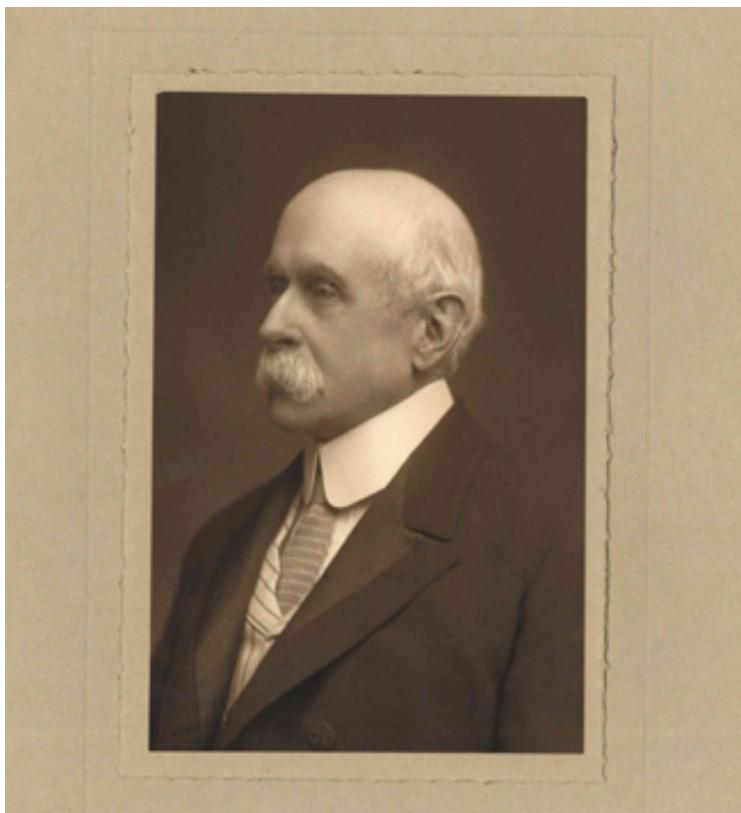


Fig. 5. Charles Francis Adams, Jr. (1835-1915). Republished with permission of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

American Howard University professor, sociologist, and lawyer Kelly Miller that because of their inferiority African Americans could never achieve equality with white people. American civilization, he advised Miller, depended upon its ability to “absorb” immigrants, but it cannot do so with “Indians,” African Americans, or any “Asiatic” race. The absorption of African Americans was to Adams “scientifically” undesirable and would result in a “bastard and mongrel race.” African Americans, he lectured Miller, cannot stay and cannot leave. Yet they are here to stay and they “declin[e] even to attempt to stand on [their] own legs.” So, “what reasonable prospect is here of a happy solution of the race problem?” he asked. Adams could imagine none and the country’s African American population would probably “be pushed out of one position after another, and ultimately driven to the wall,—whatever that may mean!” In his autobiography, Charles Francis even belittled the

African American troops he had commanded during the Civil War as untrained and untrainable. Both brothers insisted that, at the very least, high educational requirements should govern who could vote, thus crippling any potential political power for the nation's vast majority of African Americans, Irish, and Chinese. As early as July 1865, Henry Adams had concluded that "white is better breeding stock" anyway. "Never did he betray the slightest awareness, let alone concern," the historian Brooks Simpson has written, "about the plight of American blacks."³⁶

Unconcerned with the violent and oppressive state of the South and African Americans, Adams turned his gaze to an imagined Jewish-inspired capitalism and an unsavory portrait of President Grant who perhaps understood military tactics, but, according to *The Education*, possessed only an infant's understanding of political life. In his personal correspondence, Adams even questioned Grant's basic intelligence. He fumed to Gen. James H. Wilson, who had served on Grant's staff during the Civil War, "how the deuce he ever rose to be a corporal beats my knowledge of human nature. In civil affairs he has absolutely *no* mind; there is nothing in him; he is weak, obtuse, narrow, and lazy." In ordinary life, Adams grumbled, "I should say that a mind so easily deluded never could have marched a sergeant's guard out of a potato patch." Indeed, *The Education* presented Grant's presumed ineptitude as all the evidence one needed to disprove Darwin's theory of human evolution.³⁷

II.

In 1890, Henry Adams and his close friend, John La Farge, toured the South Seas, which included visits to Samoa, Tahiti, and Fiji. Cavorting with nearly naked nubiles left him with a somewhat sweetened appreciation of the people he encountered. He became close friends with Tahiti's Teva clan and even crafted a history of Tahiti based on the oral histories he gathered. We should not, however, be fooled by Adams's seemingly sympathetic formal writing on the South Seas. In fact, Adams considered most of the inhabitants to be largely innocent primitives, "indolent, smiling, flower-crowned islanders" and took to measuring their body parts as if he had discovered some new lifeform. He clearly delighted in the countless women available for his choosing: "if I wanted any of the handsome girls I see about me, I must negotiate with the chiefs about gifts, and take her to my house, which is in their custom a marriage. Afterwards I could send her home whenever I liked." However satisfying his experience might have been, such disposability reflected his enduring views of white supremacy. Writing four years after his South Seas adventure with La Farge, and with his usual cynical humor, Adams advised his English friend, the lawyer and politician Charles Milnes Gaskell, that he had become even more fearful that

the dark races are gaining on us, so that we may depend on their steadily shutting down on us, as they have already done in Haiti,

and are doing throughout the West Indies and our southern States. In another fifty years, at the same rate of movement, the white races will have to reconquer the tropics by war and nomadic invasion, or be shut up north of the fortieth parallel. I know that with our fatuous self-esteem, our newspapers admire themselves too much to admit their own possible inferiority to niggers without newspapers; but as I rather prefer niggers to whites, and much prefer oriental art to European, I incline to make the most of the tropics while the white is still tolerated there.³⁸

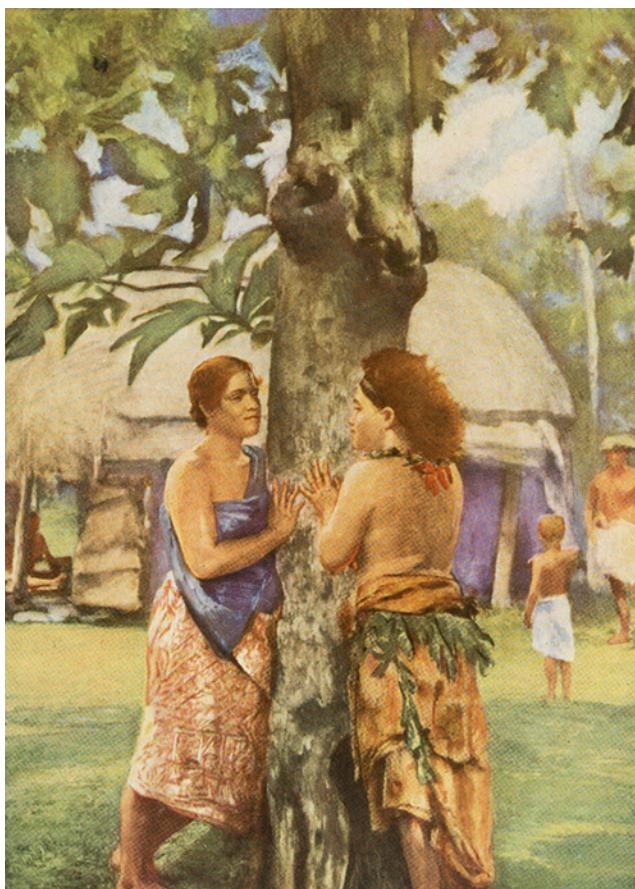


Fig. 6. "Samoan Courtship" or "Portrait of Faase, the Taupo of the Fagaloa Bay, Samoa," by John La Farge, watercolour, January, 1891, reproduced in John La Farge, *Reminiscences of the South Seas* (London: Grant Richards, 1914), 120.

Much in the same way that Adams had approached his South Seas sojourn, he also suspended his judgment regarding his close friend Clarence King, the geologist, mountaineer, and first head of the US Geological Survey. King, as Adams observed, freely and often proved that “if he had a choice among women, it was in favor of Indians and negroes.” In 1894, when the two ventured to the Bahamas, which Adams found dreary, he remarked that King “manages to amuse himself with the habits and manners of the Bahama niggers, who are a peculiar type.” Not until after King’s death did Adams begin to realize the full complexity of his friend’s life (although John Hay knew). King had been married under an assumed name to an African American woman, raised a bi-racial family in New York, and had passed as *African American*. One can only imagine his response if Adams had discovered the true depths of King’s double life.³⁹

In 1912, feeling old and tired, in poor health, threatened by the change he disdained, and seeing friends like King and Hay pass away, Adams could see only decay. “The whole fabric of the nineteenth century is foundering, and all our friends with it,” he moaned. But it would be a serious error to conclude that *The Education*’s famed descent into pessimism and anti-modernism was a function of Adams’s age or declining health. It was not; rather, it expressed his long-held view of the threats to his conception of American republicanism and how far the United States had distanced itself from it. In hindsight, we can see that his 1880 novel *Democracy* would become, as the Adams biographer Ernest Samuels noted, a “modest forerunner of *The Education*.” Clearly, long before he ever started writing *The Education*, and thirteen years before the financial panic that unhinged him, Adams already possessed a dim view of the nation’s future and placed his assessment into the mouth of one of the novel’s ancillary characters. In response to Sen. Silas P. Ratcliffe’s remark that “no representative government can long be much better or much worse than the society it represents,” Baron Jacobi, a “Bulgarian minister,” explained in words that would find a later echo:

You Americans believe yourselves to be excepted from the operation of general laws. You care not for experience. I have lived seventy-five years, and all that time in the midst of corruption. I am corrupt myself, only I do have courage to proclaim it, and you others have it not.... Well, I declare to you that in all my experience I have found no society which has had elements of corruption like the United States. The children in the streets are corrupt, and know how to cheat me. The cities are all corrupt, and also the towns and the counties and the States’ legislatures and the judges. Everywhere men betray trusts both public and private, steal money, run away with public funds.

These sentences, which Adams placed in the Baron’s mouth, unavoidably, are a ref-

erence to Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819). This influential German philosopher and Anglophile of the counter-Enlightenment had popularized the term nihilism and rejected the Enlightenment, in part, because he saw nihilism as the era's prime feature, an Adams-like position if there ever was one.⁴⁰

As Ernest Samuels's assessment implied, Adams's *Democracy* possessed elements that would help give *The Education* its unique tone and form. *Democracy* is a novel about political corruption, ambition, and elite social manners revolving around a triangular contest for love and marriage. Adams employed a conventional love triangle to exploit popular notions of the Cavalier and Yankee to repudiate American political life in general and the era of Reconstruction in particular. The novel's female protagonist Madeleine Lightfoot Lee, a widowed New Yorker with both New England and Southern roots, eventually becomes the object of a courtship by the Illinois senator Silas P. Ratcliffe, a powerful politician combining elements of Abraham Lincoln, Stephen A. Douglas, and Maine's senator James G. Blaine, known by the sobriquet as the "Prairie Giant of Peonia" and whose ancestors originated in New England. More subtly, but with more purpose, she is also pursued by the former Confederate officer and Virginian John Carrington, who after the Civil War became a Washington, DC lawyer. Carrington warned Lee of the transplanted Yankee's character: "see how he dodges all the sharp issues. What a thing it is to be a Yankee!" He has "Cold eyes," Carrington remarked, "steel gray, rather small, not unpleasant in good humor, diabolic in a passion, but worse when in a little suspicion; then they watch you as though you were a young rattlesnake, to be killed when convenient." Ratcliffe represented the archetypal Yankee, acquisitive, ambitious, amoral, hypocritical, and mercenary, while Carrington is decorous, dignified, disinterested, courteous, generous, and, as William R. Taylor wrote of the true Cavalier, "motivated by purity of heart and chivalric honor." Lee, a name that links Massachusetts to Virginia, is herself ambitious and power seeking, representative of the American soul that both sides of the American character—each "manikin"—seeks to possess. She is immediately attracted to Ratcliffe, who has designs on the presidency, which Lee finds inescapably appealing. But at the novel's close, she is dissuaded from marriage when an episode involving legislative bribery by the senator is exposed by the honorably intentioned Carrington. In a final confrontation, she rejects his marriage proposal. Angry but determined, Ratcliffe refuses to accept her decision and declares that "I cannot accept such an answer. I will not say that I have a right to explanation—I have no rights which you are bound to respect—but...[are] you willing to tell me your reasons for this abrupt and harsh decision?" In crafting Ratcliffe's reply, Adams not only borrowed from the Supreme Court's infamous Dred Scott case, which any reader of the 1880s would have instantly recognized, he also placed those words in the mouth of the Northerner, not someone, like its real author, with Southern and slave roots. After the confrontation ends, Ratcliffe encounters Baron Jacobi who promptly gives him a beating with a cane, reminiscent of the infamous 1856 assault on US Sen. Charles Sumner. At the book's conclusion, the reader re-

ceives an unmistakable hint that there is a future for Lee with Carrington, uniting the American soul with its Southern suitor. Adams not only sought to expose American democracy as corrupt, but also placed responsibility for that condition on a Northern dominated political system. Moreover, he absolved the South of responsibility for African American disenfranchisement and denial of human rights and shifted it northward, a fitting preliminary effort for his life's major work.⁴¹

The Education, as John Carlos Rowe stated in 1996, "remains a crucial text in American literature and culture" and has captivated generations of Americans.⁴² But in purpose and composition, it diverted attention away from the Black freedom struggle—or even any acknowledgement of its existence—and from the country's failure to live up to its highest democratic ideals—surely a catastrophe that achieved Adams-like dimensions. Instead, the reader follows the trickster's path and comes away with ominous and anti-Semitic portents for the future *and* a far more prosaic political story of graft and corruption, albeit—until today—the worst in the nation's history. For Adams this symbolized the inevitable fate awaiting American democracy. Thus, through *The Education of Henry Adams*, generations of American readers would have reinforced the idea that only elite white lives mattered. Moreover, they would learn that Jewish greed fueled the nation's descent into economic gluttony and disaster, and that racial justice played no part in the "pure" but fictive democratic society of the eighteenth century that Adams had imagined as so vital to the republic, and then so powerfully lamented.

NOTES

¹ I am very grateful to Alex Gagné and his colleagues at *Left History* for their assistance in publishing this essay. Their professionalism is exceptional. I am especially indebted to the anonymous readers for their challenging reviews. It has been a long process, but their recommendations and Alex's collegiality and persistence made the process rewarding and successful. I am forever indebted to James Brewer Stewart and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., for their support. I also greatly appreciate the willingness of Michael Birkner, Dennis Downey, Natalie Dykstra, and Dean Grodzins to review the manuscript and tolerate my unorthodox interpretation of an icon in American history. At the Massachusetts Historical Society, I wish to express my gratitude to Peter Drummond for his help with the Adams papers, to Alexandra Bush for providing Isabella Stewart Gardner material and help with Society images, and especially to Mary E. Yacovone for her keen eye, storehouse of knowledge, and support.

² Robert Dawidoff, *The Genteel Tradition and the Sacred Rage: High Culture vs. Democracy in Adams, James, and Santayana* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 34; Henry James to Mary Cadwalader Jones, 13 January 1905, Leon Edel, ed., *Henry James Letters Volume 4: 1895-1916* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 337.

³ Vern Wagner, *The Suspension of Henry Adams: A Study in Manner and Matter* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969), 22.

⁴ Justice Breyer's remarks can be found at: <https://fivebooks.com/best-books/stephen-breyer-intellectual-influences>.

⁵ Robert Shafer, "Henry Adams," *International Journal of Ethics* 30 (October 1919): 48.

⁶ William A. Dunning, "Henry Adams on Things in General," *Political Science Quarterly* 34 (1919): 305-11.

⁷ Henry Steele Commager, "Henry Adams," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 25 (July 1927): 252-65; Robert Spiller, "Henry Adams: Man of Letters," *Saturday Review of Literature* (22 February 1947): 11-12, 33-34; John Orr, "Back to the Future: The Continuing Appeal of *The Education of Henry Adams*," *Kenyon Review* (Summer 2008), <https://kenyonreview.org/kr-online-issue/2008-summer/selections/back-to-the-future-the-continuing-appeal-of-the-education-of-henry-adams>; T.J. Jackson Lears, "In Defense of Henry Adams," *The Wilson Quarterly* 7 (Autumn 1983): 85.

⁸ The manuscript introduction to the first edition of *The Education of Henry Adams*, which Lodge lent his name to, was in Adams's handwriting: "Editor's preface and contents to *The Education of Henry Adams*," 1916, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts; Edward Chalfant and Conrad Edick Wright, eds., *The Education of Henry Adams: A Centennial Version* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007, vii. Early editions of *The Education* included

the misleading subtitle: “An Autobiography,” which Ernest Samuels’s and the Massachusetts Historical Society editions dropped. Houghton Mifflin also printed a special run of the book with a title page that read, “Printed at the Riverside Press for the Massachusetts Historical Society 1918.” I thank the Society’s Peter Drummeley for alerting me to this additional printing and for all his help. For all the various printings see *WorldCat*. For names of several others who received the initial 1907 version of the book see William Decker, *The Literary Vocation of Henry Adams* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 44–46.

⁹ Henry Adams to Charles Milnes Gaskell, 31 July 1896, in *The Letters of Henry Adams*, ed. J.C. Levenson, Ernest Samuels, Charles Vandersee, and Viola Winner, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982–1988), 4:409–10. Typical of so many, Adams scholar J.C. Levenson dismissed Adams’s anti-Semitism as “a stereotype and cliché,” something common among “Victorians on both sides of the Atlantic.” Unfortunately, that was precisely the problem. J.C. Levenson, *The Mind and Art of Henry Adams* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), 224–26; *The Education* even proved a stumbling block to a fair assessment of the intellectual history of the white South. See: Michael O’Brien, *Henry Adams & the Southern Question* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), xi–xiii.

¹⁰ Alfred Kazin, *An American Procession* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 5; Eric F. Goldman, *Rendezvous with Destiny: A History of Modern American Reform* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), 15; “Henry Adams to William James,” 17 February 1908, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 4:19–20; Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., 2 February 1896, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 4:367; T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 284–85, 287–89.

¹¹ All references to Adams’s text are to the 1974 edition: Ernest Samuels, ed., *The Education of Henry Adams* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), 32, 436; Russell L. Hanson and W. Richard Merriman, “Henry Adams and the Decline of the Republican Tradition,” *American Transcendental Quarterly*, 4 no. 3 (September 1990): 167–68; Garry Wills, *Henry Adams and the Making of America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 4, 11–32; Katherine L. Morrison, “A Reexamination of Brooks and Henry on John Quincy Adams,” *The New England Quarterly* 54 (1981): 167; Henry Adams to Brooks Adams, 18 February 1909, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 6:226; Henry Adams to Samuel J. Tilden, 24 January 1883, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 2:490–91.

¹² Samuel Eliot Morison, “A Letter and a Few Reminiscences of Henry Adams,” *The New England Quarterly* 27 (1954): 95–97. Adams loathed the arch-Federalist Alexander Hamilton: “a Scotch prig in a nasty form.” Henry Adams to John Hay, 30 April 1882, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 2:455; Henry Adams, ed., *Documents Related to New England Federalism, 1800–1815* (Boston: Little Brown, 1877), vii–viii; Ernest Samuels, *Henry Adams* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964),

2:378.

¹³ Henry Adams to Charles Milnes Gaskell, 25 November 1877, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 2:326.

¹⁴ Lewis Mumford, “Introduction,” Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (1905, New York: Collier Books, 1963), 8; Brooks D. Simpson, “Henry Adams and the Age of Grant,” *Hayes Historical Journal* 8 (Spring 1989).

¹⁵ *The Education of Henry Adams*, 379-90, quoted 381.

¹⁶ Edward Chalfant, “An Invitation,” in *The Education of Henry Adams*, x-xi; Henry Adams, “The Rule of Phase Applied to History,” in *Degradation of the Democratic Dogma*, ed. Brooks Adams (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 283; Henry Adams, *Esther, A Novel* (1884 New York: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1938), 72; Henry Adams, “Tendency of History,” in *The Great Secession Winter of 1860-61 and Other Essays*, ed. George Hochfield (New York: Sagamore Press, 1958), 418.

¹⁷ Henry Adams to Brooks Adams, 10 August 1902, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 5:400; Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 195.

¹⁸ *The Education of Henry Adams*, 285, 429; J.C. Levenson, *The Mind and Art of Henry Adams* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), 296; also see Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 285-95. Adams possessed a view of Medieval faith in which “the unity of the Church and State, God and Man, Peace and War, Life and Death, Good and Bad” could be plainly seen. Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, 62.

¹⁹ *The Education of Henry Adams*, 285.

²⁰ See Brooks Adams, *The Law of Civilization and Decay: An Essay on History*, ed., Charles A. Beard (1896, New York: Vintage Books, 1959); Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 275; John P. Diggins, *The Lost Soul of American Politics: Virtue, Self-Interest, and the Foundations of Liberalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 266; Henry Adams to Elizabeth Cameron, 15 September 1893, 11 June 1896, 27 July 1896, Henry Adams to John Jay, 4 October 1895, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 4:128, 337, 388, 403-06.

²¹ J.C. Levenson, “The Etiology of Israel Adams: The Onset, Waning, and Relevance of Henry Adams’s Anti-Semitism,” *New Literary History* 25 (1994): 569-600; Eric L. Goldstein, “The Unstable Other: Locating the Jew in Progressive-Era American Racial Discourse,” *American Jewish History* 89 (2001): 389-91; Robert Rockaway and Arnon Gutfeld, “Demonic Images of the Jew in the Nineteenth Century United States,” *American Jewish History* 89 no. 4 (2001): 355-81, especially 375; Samuels, *Henry Adams*, 3:357-59.

²² *Vim* was a short-lived New York weekly which, according to the Library of Congress, probably ran for just ten issues, from 22 June to 24 August 1898.

²³ Henry Adams to Elizabeth Cameron, 15 September 1893, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 4:127-28.

²⁴ Samuels, *Henry Adams*, 1:244, 2:452-65; James P. Young, *Henry Adams: The Historian as Political Theorist* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 186-88; Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 11 quoted, 18, 44; Henry Adams to John Hay, 22 July 1888, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 3:128.

²⁵ Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 11, 18, 44; John Jay Chapman to Elizabeth Chanler Chapman, 13 August 1908, John Jay Chapman papers, Ms Am1854, Houghton Library, Harvard University. By 1920, Chapman would descend into rabid anti-Semitism and anti-Catholicism. For example, see: John Jay Chapman to Louis Marshall, 13 December 1920, "Additional John Jay Chapman Papers," Ms Am1854.1, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

²⁶ Dawidoff, *The Genteel Tradition and the Sacred Rage*, 34; on anti-Semitism in the 1920s see, Linda Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition* (New York: Liveright, 2017), 11, 20, 27-28, 49-54, 176, 197, 203.

²⁷ "Textual Note," *The Education of Henry Adams*, xxiv.

²⁸ This and the previous paragraph are based on: Henry Adams to Whitelaw Reid, 13 September 1908, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 6:178; Edward Chalfant, "An Invitation," *The Education of Henry Adams: A Centennial Version*, x-xii; Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the 'Racial' Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 237 and *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 4-7, 20-22; Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 156-58; Kathleen M. Ashley, "The Guiler Beguiled: Christ and Satan as Theological Tricksters in Medieval Religious Literature," *Criticism* 24 (Spring 1982): 126-37; Winifred Morgan, *The Trickster Figure in American Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

²⁹ "Henry Adams to William James," 9 December 1907, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 6:92; *The Education of Henry Adams*, xxix-xxx.

³⁰ *The Education of Henry Adams*, 287, 344-45.

³¹ Henry Adams, *The History of the United States During the First Administration of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1962), 1:377-98, especially see 378, where Adams wrote that L'Ouverture's influence in the US proved "as decisive as that of any European ruler"; *The Education of Henry Adams*, 42, 44, 45, 256, 268; also see Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., 22 June 1869, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 2:38-39, 39n.2, where Adams related his contempt for Phillips to his brother.

³² *The Education of Henry Adams*, 44-45, quoted on the South, 47, 100, 102-4; Henry Adams to Hugh Blair Grigsby, 9 October 1877, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 2:322-23; Wills, *Henry Adams and the Making of America*, 28-29, 136, 403; Decker, *Literary Vocation of Henry Adams*, 198-203; Samuels, *Henry Adams*, 3:330; Van

Wyck Brooks, *New England Indian Summer, 1865-1915* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1940), 255-56.

³³ Henry Brooks Adams, "The Session," *North American Review* 108 (April 1869): 611.

³⁴ Wills, *Henry Adams and the Making of America*, 11-32; Adams, "The Session," 613; Henry Adams to John Bright, 30 May 1869, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 2:33-34; *The Education of Henry Adams*, 261; Henry Adams, *Democracy: An American Novel* (1880 New York: New American Library, 1961), 132-33; O'Brien, *Henry Adams & the Southern Question*, 13-14, 43-72; Donald Yacovone, ed., *A Voice of Thunder: The Civil War Letters of George E. Stephens* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 84-85; Robert Mirak, "John Quincy Adams, Jr., and the Reconstruction Crisis," *The New England Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (June 1962): 187-202.

³⁵ Charles Vandersee, "Henry Adams and the Invisible Negro," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 66 (Winter 1967): 26-27.

³⁶ Henry Adams to Charles Milnes Gaskell, 22 August 1877, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 2:316; Henry Adams to Charles Milnes Gaskell, 23 January 1894, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 4:156; Charles Francis Adams, "Lee's Centennial," in *Studies Military and Diplomatic, 1775-1865* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1911), 292; Charles Francis Adams, *An Autobiography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), 166; Charles Francis Adams, Jr. to Prof. Kelly Miller, 21 May 1906, Box 1, Moorfield Storey Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts; Wills, *Henry Adams and the Making of America*, 11-32; O'Brien, *Henry Adams & the Southern Question*, 13-14, 43-72; Brooks D. Simpson, *The Political Education of Henry Adams* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 25-26.

³⁷ *The Education of Henry Adams*, 262-68; Henry Adams to Charles Milnes Gaskell, 22 August 1877 and Henry Adams to James H. Wilson, 20 May 1884, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 2:316, 540-41; Wills, *Henry Adams and the Making of America*, 11-32; O'Brien, *Henry Adams & the Southern Question*, 13-14, 43-72. Despite the title, Adams scholar Paul Nagel did not discuss Henry Adams's views of the Reconstruction Era: Paul C. Nagel, "Reconstruction, Adams Style," *The Journal of Southern History* 52, no. 1 (February 1986): 3-18.

³⁸ Adams said almost nothing about the trip in *The Education of Henry Adams*, 316; Patricia O'Toole, *The Five of Hearts: An Intimate Portrait of Henry Adams and his Friends, 1880-1918* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990), 367; Henry Adams to Theodore F. Dwight, 23 October 1890, Henry Adams to Rebecca Dodge Rae, 8 November 1890, Henry Adams to Mabel Hooper, 19 January 1890 in *Supplement to the Letters of Henry Adams*, ed. J.C. Levenson, Ernest Samuels, Charles Vandersee, Viola Hopkins Winner, Jayne N. Samuels, and Eleanor Pearre Abbot (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1989), 1; Edward L. Galligan, "Henry Adams's Tahiti," *The Sewanee Review* 115, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 455-62 never looked deeply into Adams's opinions; Henry Adams to Charles Milnes Gaskell,

28 April 1894, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 4:185.

³⁹ Martha Sandweiss, *Passing Strange: A Gilded Age Tale of Love and Deception Across the Color Line* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 196-98; Henry Adams to Elizabeth Cameron, 12 January 1902, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 5:323, 324; Hay, King, and Adams were all in the “Five of Hearts Club,” along with the wives of Hay and Adams. Hay also led something of a duplicitous life, being in love with the wife of Henry Cabot Lodge, as Adams was in love with Elizabeth Cameron, the wife of Pennsylvania’s US Sen. J. Donald Cameron. See O’Toole, *The Five of Hearts*, 217-222.

⁴⁰ Henry Adams to Mary Cadwalader Jones, 20 April 1912, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 6:537-38; Samuels, *Henry Adams*, 2:70; Adams, *Democracy: An American Novel*, 47-48; Decker, *Literary Vocation of Henry Adams*, 14; Adams based the “Bulgarian minister” on Aristarchi Bey, the Turkish foreign minister. Natalie Dykstra, *Clover Adams: A Gilded and Heartbreaking Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2012), 138; <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/friedrich-jacobi>.

⁴¹ William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and the American National Character* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 21, 48, 95-96, 201, 251; Adams, *Democracy*, 24-25, 178; Hanson and Merriman, “Henry Adams and the Decline of the Republican Tradition,” 172-73; Dykstra, *Clover Adams*, 118. The 1857 case not only decided the fate of the Missouri slave Dred Scott, but Chief Justice Roger B. Taney famously concluded in the Court’s majority opinion that African Americans were never contemplated when the Founding Fathers crafted the US Constitution and, thus, “had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.” See: Don Edward Fehrenbacher, *The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in American Law and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). During the fateful congressional controversy over the expansion of slavery into the western territories, Sen. Charles Sumner had insulted Sen. Andrew Butler of South Carolina, claiming his support for slavery was an “embrace” of his favourite “mistress.” On 22 May 1856, Butler’s cousin, Congressman Preston Brooks, confidently strode into the Senate chambers and nearly beat Sumner to death with a Gutta Percha cane—an item that immediately became an icon to Southerners. See David Herbert Donald, *Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 289-311, 341, 354.

⁴² John Carlos Rowe, ed., *New Essays on The Education of Henry Adams* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 10, quoted. Rowe, like so many others, excuses Adams’s racism but simultaneously recognizes his failure to “represent” African Americans, 12-13.