

**Henry Adams' Fictional *Democracy* :
Reflections on a Void**

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要 約

Henry Adams の虚構の「民主主義」：空虚についての考察

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この論文は左右二段組の形式をとっている。左側の段は Adams の小説（1880年出版）およびその論者による分析に照明をあたえ、明確にするような様々な引用よりなる。右側の段は論者の分析で、これは小説の中心にある空虚の考察を中心とする。この空虚は、社会に出ていく男／家庭にとどまる女、国策の理念主義／政治的プラグマティズム、公民的な仕事／ロマンチックな恋愛、ニューイングランド人の不屈／中西部人の粗野、神話的な先祖たち／現代の腐敗などといった様々な二項価値における特権的な第一項を Adams が疑問に付していることから生じている。ヒロイン Mrs. Madeleine Lightfoot Lee が「民主主義と統治という偉大なアメリカの神話の核心に至ろうと躍起になって、」ワシントンで探し求める理想は価値の無いものとわかる。批評家 Denis Donoghue が論じたような、男と家庭を求め続ける「虚しい」女であるというよりは Mrs. Lee はアメリカ式の統治の核心にある空白が暴き出される手段となっている。

... for democracy, rightly understood, is the government of the people, by the people, for the benefit of senators. . . .

Is a respectable government impossible in a democracy?

I want to go to Egypt. . . democracy has shaken my nerves to pieces.

—Henry Adams, *Democracy*, 1880

1. There are two sorts of public persons, two men of spectacle: on the one hand the orator or the preacher, on the other, the actor. The former represents himself, in him the representer and the represented are one. But the actor is born out of the rift between the representer and the represented. Like the alphabetic signifier, like the letter, the actor himself is not inspired or animated by any particular language. He signifies nothing. He hardly lives, he lends his voice. It is a mouthpiece. Of course the difference between the orator or preacher and the actor presupposes that the former does his duty, says what he has to say. If they do not assume ethical responsibility for their word, they become actors, hardly even actors, for the latter make a duty of saying what they do not think :

The orator and the preacher, it could be said, make use of their persons as does the actor. The difference is, however, very great. When the orator appears in public, it is to speak and not to show himself off ; he *represents only himself* : he fills only his own proper role, speaks only in his own name, says, or ought to say, only what he thinks ; *the man and the role being the same* [being] [*étant le même être*], he is *in his place* ; he is in

The “reflections” of the subtitle above arise from the reader’s using the texts printed in the left column to mirror and illuminate both Adams’ novel and the “void” at the heart of it. The origin and analysis of this “void” appear in the text on the right-hand side of the pages.

When Denis Donoghue wrote of the “vacancy” in the life of the heroine which he says gets the novel *Democracy* “under way,” he highlighted only the most obvious traditional feminine failure to achieve fulfillment in sex roles designated womanly in a male-dominated society. He not only neglected the political “vacancy” of non-enfranchisement of the woman who is “bent upon getting to the heart of the great American mystery of democracy and government,” (17) and who fails to become First Lady, but, more importantly, he neglected to pursue the essential vacancy at the heart of the “great American mystery” of the corruption-haunted 1870s—that represented by the Websterian political orator, Senator Ratcliffe, tragically vacant of Webster’s as well as Washington’s legacy of leadership.

If we consider Adams’ use of familiar pairs of terms:

the situation of any citizen who fulfils the function of his estate. But an actor on the stage, displaying other sentiments than his own, saying only what he is made to say, *often representing a chimerical being*, annihilates himself, as it were, and is lost in his hero. And, in this forgetting of the man, if something remains of him, it is used as the plaything of the spectators. (Derrida, 305)

24. Why American Writers and Orators Often Use an Inflated Style

I have frequently remarked that the Americans, who generally treat of business in clear, plain language, devoid of all ornament, and so extremely simple as to be often coarse, are apt to become inflated as soon as they attempt a more poetical discourse. They then vent their pomposity from one end of a harangue to the other; and to hear them lavish imagery on every occasion, one might fancy that they never spoke of anything with simplicity.

.....

This appears to me sufficiently to explain why men in democracies, whose concerns are in general so paltry, call upon their poets for conceptions so vast and descriptions so unlimited.

The authors, on their part, do not fail to obey a propensity of which they themselves partake; they perpetually inflate their imaginations, and, expanding them beyond all bounds, they not unfrequently abandon the great in order to reach the gigantic. By these means, they hope to attract the observations of the multitude, and to fix it easily upon themselves; nor are their hopes disappointed; for, as the multitude seeks for nothing in poetry but objects of vast dimensions, it has neither the time to measure with accuracy the proportions of all the objects set before it,

public man/domestic woman
statecraft-idealism/political pragmatism
civic work/romantic love
Yankee hardiness/Midwestern rawness
mythical forefathers/contemporary
corruption

to name the most obvious, we find that in all cases he voids the usually valuable first term. In this parade of pairs that Adams uses to forward his tale, the seemingly privileged side is repeatedly shown to be the inferior, thus leaving a complete vacancy at the heart of each dyad. Senator Ratcliffe, the "Prairie Giant," is as lacking in all that is expected of him as the real George Washington is lacking in all that the myth requires him to be. Vacant is the man to whom the woman is to submit; vacant is the myth on which the country stands; vacant is the work to which love is sacrificed; vacant is the democratic system of government on which so many hopes, private and public, are pinned. The great men are "giants on a political prairie" (176). Adams insists on, capitalizes, POWER as political, though; thus the "giants" are those who garner, by fair means or foul, the most power on a field where is all is decided by generally unsavory power plays.

The vacancy that saddened Adams, the male failure to live up to the greatness of one's forefathers, like the feminine problem of unfilled sex roles, he finds to be socially created. The absence of greatness is an impossibility of greatness. "Public men," says Senator Ratcliffe during a visit to Mount Vernon, "cannot be dressing themselves today in Washington's old clothes. If Washington were President now, he would have to learn our ways or lose the next election.

nor a taste sufficiently correct to perceive at once in what respect they are out of proportion. The author and the public at once vitiate one another. (de Tocqueville, 184)

... It is said that the right of suffrage is not valued when it is indiscriminately bestowed, and there may be some truth in this, for I have observed that what men prize most is a privilege, even if it be that of chief mourner at a funeral. But is there not danger that it will be valued at more than its worth if denied, and that some illegitimate way will be sought to make up for the want of it? Men who have a voice in public are at once affiliated with one or other of the great parties between which society is divided, merge their individual hopes and opinions in its safer, because more generalized, hopes and opinions, are disciplined by its tactics, and acquire, to a certain degree, the orderly qualities of an army. They no longer belong to a class, but to a body corporate. Of one thing, at least, we may be certain, that, under whatever method of helping things to go wrong man's wit can contrive, those who have the divine right to govern will be found to govern in the end, and that the highest privilege to which the majority of mankind can aspire is that of being governed by those wiser than they. (Lowell, 32)

If there is a rank in the world suited to make illustrious those who hold it, it is doubtless the one given by talents and virtue, the one of which you have made yourself worthy, and to which your fellow Citizens have raised you. Their own merit adds to yours still another luster; chosen by men capable of governing others, in order that they them-

Only fools and theorists imagine that our society can be handled with gloves or long poles. One must make oneself a part of it. If virtue won't answer our purpose, we must use vice, or our opponents will put us out of office, and this was as true in Washington's day as it is now, and always will be." (80)

Donoghue names the "vacancy" he identifies as the vacancy of a woman with "nothing much to do," and likens it to the vacancy of the heroine of Adams' *Esther*. "What is such a woman [a thirty-year old childless widow or a twenty-five-year-old unmarried woman] to do with her life, assuming she must do something and that she has desires, gifts of mind and feature, and a sense of what it means to be, in her time and place, a woman?" (187)

In what aching vacancy has Adams actually embedded his "vacant" heroines? To look at the story-within-the-story-within-the-story of *Democracy* is to see Adams' view of the original vacancy, the bankruptcy of the social system named "democracy" in America. Moving beyond cynicism, Adams inscribes the old familiar story of love renounced within a Jamesian (the Henry James of "Pandora") paradigm of feminist self-consciousness, and both story and shaping paradigm within a hollow, vacant parody of the social contract.

If Madeleine Lightfoot Lee, related by marriage to the Virginia Lees in spite of being "half Yankee," seems the shadow of the defeated Confederate general, then the arguments for political reform take on a painful patina. Another pair, Union vs. Confederate, is revealed as another void. The valuable Union was saved in part by

selves be governed, you I find to be as much above other Magistrates as a free People, and especially the one which you have the honor to lead, is, by its lights and by its reason, above the populace of other States. (Rousseau, cited in Miller, 40)

But the familiarity of Rousseau's apparently anachronistic picture is deceptive. Since he wrote, it has become a commonplace to cite the old Swiss cantons as a colorful, albeit irrelevant, model of an ideal democracy. (Miller, 41)

... but I am one of those who believe that the real will never find an irremovable basis till it rests on the ideal. It used to be thought that a democracy was possible only in a small territory, and this is doubtless true of a democracy strictly defined, for in such all the citizens decide directly upon every question of public concern in a general assembly. An example still survives in the tiny Swiss canton of Appenzell. But this immediate intervention of the people in their own affairs is not of the essence of democracy; it is not necessary, nor indeed, in most cases, practicable. (Lowell, 22)

Similarly, since [Rousseau's] time, it has become a cliché of sorts to think of pure democracy in terms of an impossibly homogeneous community populated by sober rustics of rare virtue. Yet, for over two thousand years, that was not at all the picture most men had of democracy. If democracy in Rousseau evokes unity and happiness, freedom and secure good order, to most political theorists before him, it had spelled only disorder and decay, license and tyranny.

After all, the original prototype of democracy was not Geneva, but ancient Athens: the commercial capital of a large empire, a city, it was said, of ambitious

vote-fixing, explains Senator Ratcliffe.

When he was governor of Illinois, he believed "the fate of the war to depend on the result [of the Presidential election of Lincoln]," and when that result was in doubt "we telegraphed to our northern returning officers to make the vote of their districts such and such, thereby overbalancing the adverse returns and giving the State to us. This was done, and as I am now senator I have a right to suppose that what I did was approved. I am not proud of the transaction, but I would do it again, and worse than that, if I thought it would save this country from disunion." (64)

Mrs. Lee's (Rebel?) idealism matches poorly with the Yankee pragmatism at work in the Reconstruction government of Ratcliffe and his cronies. Her goals of love and knowledge match poorly with those of work and secretiveness in Washington; indeed, the Virginia-rooted women and their British friends stand at Mount Vernon, in view of the tomb of General Washington, and argue in opposition to the Midwestern political men now in power, only to see their own values voided. "Mrs. Lee, with much earnestness of manner, still pressed her question, 'Surely something can be done to check corruption. Are we for ever to be at the mercy of thieves and ruffians? Is a respectable government impossible in a democracy?'" (47)

Voided and vacant is the idealized democratic dream embodied in the myth of George Washington: "The truth is that General Washington was a raw-boned country farmer, very hard-featured, very awkward, very illiterate and very dull;

demagogues and unruly plebians, an undisciplined people responsible for losing the Peloponnesian War to Sparta, an ignorant mob responsible for persecuting Socrates and forcing the wise man to die. (Miller, 41)

Where the poor rule, that is a democracy.
—Aristotle (Miller, 111)

Men who live in democratic communities not only seldom indulge in meditation, but they naturally entertain very little esteem for it. A democratic state of society and democratic institutions keep the greater part of men in constant activity; and the habits of mind which are suited to an active life are not always suited to a contemplative one. The man of action is frequently obliged to content himself with the best he can get because he would never accomplish his purpose if he chose to carry every detail to perfection. He has perpetually occasion to rely on ideas which he has not had leisure to search to the bottom; for he is much more frequently aided by the seasonableness of an idea than by its strict accuracy; and, in the long run, he risks less in making use of some false principles, than in spending his time in establishing all his principles, on the basis of truth. The world is not led by long or learned demonstrations; a rapid glance at particular incidents, the daily study of the fleeting passions of the multitude, the accidents of the moment and the art of turning them to account, decide all its affairs. (de Tocqueville, 165)

We are told that the inevitable result of democracy is to sap the foundations of personal independence, to weaken the

very bad tempered, very profane, and generally tipsy after dinner. You must not believe what you read, and not a word of what Mr. Carrington will say. He is a Virginian and will tell you no end of fine stories and not a syllable of truth in one of them. We are all patriotic about Washington and like to hide his faults." (72) "Mendacious" storytelling, with a foundation in truth, this account given by the flighty Miss Dare contrasts with the former minister at Madrid, Mr. Nathan Gore's assertion: "For all that, we idolize him. To us he is Morality, Justice, Duty, Truth; half a dozen Roman gods with capital letters." (77)

Vacant is the idealism of those who mythologize an all-too-human Washington; vacant is the idealism of Mrs. Lee "bent upon getting to the heart of the great American mystery of democracy and government" (17); vacant is the idealism of Adams himself in his 1900 essay, "The Dynamo and the Virgin"—pragmatism carries the day. Pragmatism as a term had been in circulation for two years prior to the publication of *Democracy*, and its power to void idealism came hard to Adams' hand as author and American. Adams' awareness of the vacancy at the heart of the privileged values to which he clung gives the tensions of his novel a deeper resonance, a resonance beyond the "vacancy" of a woman alone at beginning and end of her adventurous search for the "heart" of democratic government.

The observations of the drawing room or of the Ladies' Gallery in Congress are the observations of the non-enfranchised distaff citizenry of the democracy, used here as the narrational center of a tale of

principle of authority, to lessen the respect due to eminence, whether in station, virtue, or genius. If these things were so, society could not hold together. . . . As for authority, it is one of the symptoms of the time that the religious reverence for it is declining everywhere, but this is due partly to the fact that statecraft is no longer looked upon as a mystery, but as a business, and partly to the decay of superstition, by which I mean the habit of respecting what we are told to respect rather than what is respectable in itself. There is more rough and tumble in the American democracy than is altogether agreeable to people of sensitive nerves and refined habits, and the people take their political duties lightly and laughingly, as is, perhaps, neither unnatural nor unbecoming in a young giant. (Lowell, 34-35)

"And your Chief—in personal colloquy?"

"He keeps a calm front. I may tell you;—there is nothing I would not confide to you: he has let fall some dubious words in private. I don't know what to think of them."

"But if he should waver?"

"It's not wavering. It's the openness of his mind."

"Ah! the mind. We imagine it free. The House and the country are the sentient frame governing the mind of the politician more than his ideas. He cannot think independently of them:—nor I of my natural anatomy. You will test the truth of that after your omelette and piquette, and marvel at the quitting of your line of route for Paris. As soon as the mind attempts to think independently, it is like a kite with the cord cut, and performs a series of darts and frisks, that have the look of wildest liberty till you see it fall flat to earth. The openness of his mind is most honourable to him."

"Ominous for his party."

"Likely to be good for his country."

unexpected corruption. A view to the void is more shocking when seen through the innocent eyes of the believer. Moral bankruptcy is the only legacy left by Mrs. Lee's abdication of her precarious position in an unreformed democracy and an unfulfilled love life. What would usually be seen as emptiness, "vacancy," however, is in the end a positive individualism, a morality that does not bow to expediency or the desire for illicit money to further even the best of causes. The "vacancy" of the woman alone in a foreign land (Egypt) turns out to be the valuable side of the balance of beliefs, for a refusal of pragmatic corruption is not here a romantic idealism, but a real choice.

Ambition, service, democracy—high-sounding terms for the postwar society woman in search of meaning and purpose in life, but, as Adams asserted in "The Dynamo and the Virgin":

...in America neither Venus nor Virgin ever had value as force;—at most as sentiment. No American had ever been truly afraid of either.

The Woman had once been supreme; in France she still seemed potent, not merely as sentiment but as a force; why was she unknown in America? for evidently America was ashamed of her, and she was ashamed of herself, otherwise they would not have strewn fig-leaves so profusely all over her.

When she was a true force, she was ignorant of fig-leaves, but the monthly-magazine-made American female had not a feature that would have been recognized by Adam. (Adams, 1070)

A woman as narrative focus in a novel of democracy-as-corruption throws into relief the skewed value system in which over and over again the traditionally

"That is the question."

(Diana Warwick and Percy Darcier,
Meredith, 211)

Then there are significant new factors in the political field itself, above all, the conversion of politics into an occupation, in the narrow sense of that word and on a very large scale. There have, of course, been other societies in which politicians or courtiers devoted themselves more or less fully to government—the late Roman Republic and the Roman Empire or modern autocracies—but these were not politicians in the strict sense, and certainly not in the democratic sense, and anyway their numbers were always small, their interests either individual or as representatives of an aristocratic estate, not those of an occupational group. One contemporary consequence is the close link between political occupation and money-making, with or without corruption, but I consider that a minor consequence compared with the creation of a new and powerful interest-group in society, the politicians. (Finley, 34)

I shall not now attempt to give all the particulars of our retreat to the Delaware; suffice it for the present to say, that both officers and men, though greatly harrassed and fatigued, frequently without rest, covering, or provision, the inevitable consequences of a long retreat, bore it with a manly and martial spirit. All their wishes centered in one, which was that the country would turn out and help them to drive the enemy back. Voltaire has remarked that King William never appeared to full advantage but in difficulties and in action; the same remark may be made on General Washington, for

value-marked first term is devalued. She does not speak with the voice of authority to explain or to criticize and yet her voice carries the narrative rather than undermines it. Its content undermines it, in contrast to the usual relation of voice and material; the unraveling of the ugliness of politics and the destruction of the innocence of the apolitical but willing political man's supporter in some ways foreshadows Meredith's Diana Merion Warwick "writing to the lover who had an hour previously been hearing her voice; the note of her theme being Party; and how to serve it, when to sacrifice it to the Country." (Meredith, 287)

Vacancy appears further in the meshes of the love story in which Adams' astute political observations are loosely entangled. Love without the language of love, notably in Ratcliffe's proposal to Mrs. Lee, reveals a vast void in the search for the "heart":

I am not one of those who are happy in political life. I am a politician because I cannot help myself; it is the trade I am fittest for, and ambition is my resource to make it tolerable. In politics we cannot keep our hands clean. I have done many things in my political career that are not defensible. To act with entire honesty and self-respect, one should always live in a pure atmosphere, and the atmosphere of politics is impure. Domestic life is the salvation of many public men, but I have for many years been deprived of it. I have now come to that point where increasing responsibilities and temptations make me require help. I must have it. You alone can give it to me. You are kind, thoughtful, conscientious, high-minded, cultivated, fitted better than any woman I ever saw for public duties. Your place is there. You belong among those who exercise an influence beyond their time. I only ask you to take the place which is yours. (162)

the character fits him. There is a natural firmness in some minds which cannot be unlocked by trifles, but which, when unlocked, discovers a cabinet of fortitude; and I reckon it among those kind of public blessings, which we do not immediately see, that God hath blessed him with uninterrupted health, and given him a mind that can even flourish upon care. (Paine, *The Crisis*)

Since coming to Congress, said Ratcliffe, I have learned more about General Washington, and have been surprised to find what a narrow base his reputation rests on. A fair military officer, who made many blunders, and who never had more men than would make a full army corps under his command, he got an enormous reputation in Europe because he did not make himself king, as though he ever had a chance of doing it. A respectable, painstaking President, he was treated by the Opposition with an amount of deference that would have made government easy to a baby, but it worried him to death. His official papers are fairly done, and contain good average sense such as a hundred thousand men in the United States would now write. . . . This government can show today a dozen men of equal abilities, but we don't deify them. What most wonder at in him is not his military or political genius at all, for I doubt whether he had much, but a curious Yankee shrewdness in money matters. (Adams, *Democracy*, 78)

I speak of the women of the [Swiss] demicanton of Appenzell who still do not have the right to vote. Yes, because in the other demi-canton of Appenzell (a canton

A complete absence of erotic attraction, of personal affection, of a hint of romance points to a "vacancy" at the very heart of the plot—> does Mrs. Lee refuse Senator Ratcliffe because she knows a secret which reveals his moral void in her value system? Because that secret may prevent his becoming President and her First Lady? Because there is a gaping void of personal love between them? Both the "heart of the great American mystery of democracy" and the heart of the man who was to have met her ambition and rewarded it are voids. Like the myth of George Washington, the myth of love in a democracy balances on a "narrow base" between what *was* and what is believed. For love to lose out to work is an acceptable resolution of the dyad; but for love to come up bankrupt is a double loss, and for the bankruptcy to depend upon a loss of respect for the work is a destruction of the source, the base, the origin of an adult life order. Madeleine Lightfoot Lee responds in the only possible manner; she loses desire: "I want to go to Egypt. Democracy has shaken my nerves to pieces. Oh, what rest it would be to live in the Great Pyramid and look out for ever at the polar star!" These are the last words of the story; but Adams could not resist a conclusion, a final sardonic twist: Mrs. Lee's P. S. to a letter written by her sister to the Virginia lawyer, Carrington: "The bitterest part of all this horrid story is that nine out of ten of our countrymen would say I had made a mistake." (191)

The unveiling of the void is greeted with flight and with ultimate cynicism. Neither civic nor personal assertiveness is possible to a "vacant" woman in a "vacant" democracy. Mrs. Lee has no "place," not

is composed of two demi-cantons), they've made it, they've gotten the vote. It happened two weeks ago [in mid-May, 1989]. The men assembled in Hundwill Plaza (which you can hunt for on a map of Switzerland) and voted by means of raised hands for or against women's suffrage. Were there any who raised two hands or even one simply to ask what the fuss was about? But the Swiss chancellor, who counted the hands, then divided by five, slowly announced the verdict: "Gentlemen, you have accepted women's suffrage."

(Christine Bravo, *Elle*, 29 May 1989)
[translation, Catherine Broderick]

because she is a childless, husbandless woman, but because there is no world in which to take a place. The social contract/code which she had assumed coherent and accessible in American government crumbles to a confusion of Egyptian hieroglyphics in which, however, there remains the desire for a guiding spirit ("look out for ever at the polar star"). The story *ends* with vacancy—but a larger vacancy than that of a woman "who has nothing much to do" (Donoghue, 186). The public servant, the idealism of statecraft, civic work, Yankee hardiness, the mythical forefather—all have been revealed as vacant in Henry Adams' reflections on the void of democracy in America.

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