

Tatjana Jukic  
University of Zagreb

Abstract Title:

An Heiress to Austin:

Stanley Cavell, Henry James and The Hollywood Melodrama of the Unknown Woman

Abstract:

When addressing "the peculiar distribution of power between arts" (here, between film and literature)—at that point in *Contesting Tears* where he posits film and psychoanalysis as technologies where philosophy is inherited—Stanley Cavell uses Henry James as a figure that anticipates this positionality from within literature. James marks this spectral positionality throughout Cavell, most conspicuously perhaps in chapter titles like "Henry James Returns to America and to Shakespeare" (*Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow*)—the chapter concluding symptomatically with a reference to Derrida's *Specters of Marx*. One could almost argue that Henry James is to Cavell what Hamlet is to Marx and then to Derrida, in *Specters of Marx*: both the ghost of literature and the literature of ghosts, where this "both" opens as a positionality to philosophy's own (mnemo) technology.

In order to approach Henry James from this perspective, and see what Cavell does to James in the re emergence of James within philosophy, I will take up Washington Square as a kind of parable. On the one hand, Washington Square works as a ghost in James's oeuvre, contesting what James acknowledges as legacy and anticipation; on the other, this novel was ultimately inherited as film (William Wyler's *The Heiress*, 1949), specifically where film exposes its co-genealogy with psychoanalysis—the juncture towards philosophy that Cavell in *Contesting Tears* analyzes as the Hollywood melodrama of the unknown woman.