

Preface

The Illustration of the Master: Henry James and the Magazine Revolution examines the crucial role of the illustrated press in the formation of the reading public and the writing profession during Henry James's lifetime. The book rereads a significant portion of James's oeuvre in light of the explosive growth of the magazine industry in the United States and abroad during the final decades of the nineteenth century—a revolutionary period in publishing history when the rise of the pictorial challenged the primacy of the written text.

My project began several years ago with an inquiry into the original publication of one of James's late tales of the artist, "The Beldonald Holbein." The story appeared in 1901 in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* with three mediocre illustrations by a staff artist, Lucius Hitchcock. The fact that these pictures were hackwork at best and contradictory to the text at worst did not lessen their significance for me as telling glimpses into the literacy practices of James's contemporary audience. I searched out other periodical stories by James that had first been seen with illustrations (according to James's bibliographers, these numbered twenty-six, roughly one-quarter of his output of short fiction for the magazines) and along the way encountered nonfiction pieces by James that had been lavishly illustrated. So began the archeological phase of my research, which entailed recovering hundreds of pictures that accompanied James's writing for the periodicals, including drawings, paintings, photographs, and advertising images.

The fact is that these nineteenth-century contexts are disappearing from the public record. Drawings that introduced magazine readers to

the work of James and his colleagues have generally been expunged from literary anthologies and authoritative editions. Copies of the tales and essays as they first appeared are often difficult to come by, since relatively few libraries have runs of some of the more obscure or short-lived turn-of-the-century periodicals. Holdings of journals like *Truth* (N.Y.) and *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly Magazine* are likely to be incomplete, the remaining issues often perilously preserved. Advertisements, publishers' notices, and other ephemera were typically removed from library volumes throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when the periodicals were rebound. As a result, these revealing bits of realia are also missing from the scanned issues of selected pre-1900 journals available on Web sites such as Cornell University's otherwise indispensable *Making of America* project. ProQuest's *American Periodicals Series Online to 1900* does catalogue advertisements, but the reproductions, having been taken for the most part from microfilmed copies, are often of poor quality. In each case, the reader comes away with at best a fragmentary impression of the way a given piece of writing fits into the larger scheme of its original presentation.

My first goal has been to provide an overview of the periodicals scene in James's time. In this cultural context I reexamine James's considerable production for the magazines, concentrating on areas of his oeuvre that have received comparatively scant critical commentary: his travel articles, a selection of short stories from the 1890s, and numerous essays on the topic of modern illustration. My analysis of James's negotiations with illustrators, agents, and editors for the venues in which his writing appeared draws as well on unpublished archival material from a variety of sources, including the Papers of Henry James in the Barrett Library at the University of Virginia; the Joseph and Elizabeth Robins Pennell Collection at the Library of Congress; the Charles S. Reinhart Papers at Columbia University; the James Papers (particularly his correspondence with James Brand Pinker, his agent) at Yale; the company files for Harper & Brothers at the Library of Congress and Columbia University; and the records of Pinker and Son, A. P. Watt and Son, and the Century Company in the Berg Collection and the Manuscripts and Archives division of the New York Public Library.

In the past several decades, research by Michael Anesko, Philip Horne,

Fred Kaplan, Marcia Jacobson, Anne T. Margolis, and Richard Salmon has amply documented how James persistently sought a wider audience in both quality journals and mass-circulation magazines. Yet relatively little attention has been given to the rich visual material surrounding James's writing for the popular press, or, more generally, to the complex interplay of word and image that helped define print culture for James's contemporaries. The omission is all the more puzzling given the roster of celebrated artists who illustrated James's work, including W. J. Hennessy, Joseph Pennell, George Du Maurier, Charles S. Reinhart, Howard Chandler Christy, Howard Pyle, and John La Farge.

With few exceptions, scholarship on the subject has focused more narrowly on two examples of James's illustrated texts: the frontispieces he commissioned for the New York Edition of his collected works and the drawings that accompanied his short story "The Real Thing" in *Black and White* magazine. Alvin Langdon Coburn's photographs for the New York Edition have been discussed at length, beginning with Joseph Firebaugh's early appreciation (1955) and continuing with studies by Charles Higgins (1982), Mike Weaver (1986), Carol Shloss (1987), and Stanley Tick (1993). In an influential collection of essays (edited by David McWhirter, 1995) on the New York Edition, McWhirter, Stuart Culver, and Ira B. Nadel examine the frontispieces, along with James's extensive instructions to the photographer, in terms of James's careful "construction of authorship." Charles Harmon (2002) demonstrates how Coburn's pictures advanced James's "implicit evangelization for the cause of literary ambiguity" (300). Wendy Graham (2003) considers the art of Coburn and another of James's illustrators, Joseph Pennell, in the context of the decision to omit pictorials from *The American Scene*. Building on earlier notes by Robert Gale (1963), Valerie Shaw (1983), and Stuart Burrows (2002), Adam Sonstegard (2003) maintains that "The Real Thing" as it has come down to modern readers "is only half of the story's original text," for James's contemporary readers would have seen the story's metafictional references reflected in the "singularly bad" illustrations for the tale. Apart from these examples, research has not significantly expanded on the insights of two seminal books of the 1980s, Ralph F. Bogardus's *Pictures and Texts: Henry James, A. L. Coburn, and New Ways of Seeing in Literary Culture* (1984) and Adeline Tintner's *The Museum World of Henry James* (1986).

The present study takes a more comprehensive look at what literary historian Cathy N. Davidson describes as “the contingencies that influence the fluctuating evaluations of given authors or works and the mechanisms by which literature is brought before the reading public” (5). The project of historicizing James’s work for the magazines begins in Chapter 1 with a survey of key developments in the periodicals industry on both sides of the Atlantic in the latter half of the nineteenth century, focusing on the impact of the graphic arts on readers, authors, and publishers during James’s lifetime.

Chapter 2 presents four “case studies” of James’s illustrated tales of the 1890s, examining the original publications for the ways in which written and visual texts work in tandem to shape reader response. For instance, several stories from this period appeared simultaneously in English and American journals, both with and without—or with markedly different—pictorial accompaniment. As Nancy Glazener observes, “Through page layouts, announcements and advertisements, illustrations and typography, addresses to readers, and a variety of other signals, a periodical provokes certain kinds of attention and creates certain interpellating identifications for its readers” (189). Chapter 2 demonstrates how the same work of fiction can make varying and even contradictory appeals to different subsets of implied readers.

As consumer-oriented editorial policies began to dictate the terms in which his work was presented in mass-market periodicals around the turn of the century, James grew increasingly preoccupied with the question of who controlled the literary property. Chapter 2 reveals the extent to which the author’s anxieties about his more commercial venues and newer constituencies came to be reflected in his short fiction. Indeed, for evidence of James’s serious and sustained consideration of the competitive relationship of image and text, we need look no further than the author’s repeated thematizing of the subject in the tales of authors and artists he took up with renewed intensity through the 1890s. James’s theme is variously expressed in terms of the opposition of journalism and “serious” literature, illustration and fine art, society portraiture and the uncompromisingly “authentic” portrait. Together these stories form an extended meditation on the complex fate of the modern artist seeking popular recognition from an often unappreciative public.

Chapter 3 continues the work of the preceding chapter by focusing exclusively on one of James's later tales of the artist. "The Beldonald Holbein" (1901) appeared after two frustrating years of editorial delay in *Harper's Monthly* along with three disastrously misconceived illustrations by Lucius Hitchcock, a *Harper's* regular. More than a century after its publication, the story has yet to attract much critical notice, and the significance of its multiple allusions to the sixteenth-century painter Hans Holbein the Younger, forming the most intricate skein of reference to an actual artist in all of James's fiction, has for the most part gone unexplored. Taking as its starting point the question of how and why Hitchcock's drawings contradict James's narrative, the chapter argues that the "Holbein" story depends for its success on the reader's ability to supplement the narrative with appropriate mental "illustrations" and inferences drawn from the historical Holbein's oeuvre. To this end, I look at the numerous commentaries James offered in the course of his career on the work of Holbein the Younger. I consider the relevance of these *nonfictional* statements to "The Beldonald Holbein" and, more broadly, to James's methods as a fiction writer working to redefine the realist mode at the beginning of the new century.

Chapters 4 and 5 examine two substantial categories of nonfiction James produced for the magazines: his essays on illustration and his travelogues. For all his ardent objections to illustration, the truth is that James himself, more than any other fiction writer of his time, repeatedly and at length made the case for a serious consideration of "the art of illustration in black and white." Besides paying affectionate homage in his memoirs to the picture books of his youth, he wrote several articles on the work of his friend George Du Maurier and provided catalogue notes for illustrators such as Edwin Abbey and Alfred Parsons. He devoted the greater part of an essay for *Literature* magazine (1898) and a considerable portion of his final Preface for the New York Edition (1909) to the topic of modern illustration.

James's most significant body of writing on the subject is a group of papers on contemporary illustrators published in *Harper's Monthly* and *Harper's Weekly* between 1886 and 1890 (and subsequently collected in *Picture and Text*, 1903). In these essays, analyzed in Chapter 4, James highlights similarities between the illustrator and the writer of short

stories—both, in Baudelaire’s phrase, painters of modern life. He maintains that “abundant, intelligent, interpretive work in black and white is, to the sense of the writer of these lines, one of the pleasantest things of the time, having only to rise to the occasion to enjoy a great future” (*PT* 64). James characteristically hedges his praise in the essays with provisos of this kind, and Chapter 4 focuses on the carefully cultivated ambiguities of his critical appreciation. My argument is that in his commentaries on the modern illustrators with whom his work was often linked in the periodicals, James continues the critical project begun in 1884 with “The Art of Fiction,” namely, to create a discriminating readership for his fiction. In the *Harper’s* essays, he specifically addresses the audience for his shorter fiction in the magazines. The chapter shows how James deploys a series of rhetorical strategies for “containing” the magazine pictorials and for subtly promoting the view that “‘quiet,’ psychological, conversational modern tale[s]” like his are *not* amenable to illustration.

Chapter 5 looks at another category of James’s prolific output of nonfiction for the periodicals, the illustrated travel essay. Like many prominent writers during the 1870s and 1880s, James routinely turned out the kind of travelogue that was, next to fiction, the most popular fixture of the upscale American monthlies. Again, comparatively little critical analysis has been devoted to James’s travel pieces, still less to the role of the artists who illustrated them. Yet here was a genre that James considered companionable with the art of illustration, once he found an artist who shared his views.

In the first decade of the new century, James gathered his travel essays, most written years earlier, and repackaged them in the form of several books and deluxe editions. Joseph Pennell made literally hundreds of drawings and etchings for these volumes. Chapter 5 shows how James’s project of authorial re-presentation was buttressed by the lavish illustration that attended republication. Of particular interest here is the behind-the-scenes story of the production of the travel books, told through hitherto unpublished letters preserved in the Pennell Collection at the Library of Congress. In his prefaces to the travel volumes, James was quick to point out how much his “re-titivated” essays benefited from Pennell’s participation. Chapter 5 backs up his claims with archival evidence that illuminates James’s working rela-

tionship with Pennell and reveals the pivotal role the artist assumed in getting the books published.

On the basis of the pieced-together publication history of the travel books, as well as of the demonstrably close ties between the pictures and texts, I maintain that James sustained a collaboration with Pennell extending over two decades and multiple volumes in large part because he found the artist's "impressionistic" experiments with viewpoint, technique, and medium consonant with his own literary objectives. Pennell contributed to the Jamesian image of the worldly and aesthetically keen American traveler abroad, a persona that can be seen as a stand-in for the kind of ideal reader James posited in his fiction. It is of no small significance that James released his refurbished travel essays in the years preceding and during his work on the New York Edition. In his Prefaces for the New York Edition he systematically revisited his oeuvre and laid out his aims and methods for what he hoped was a wider audience. His collections of travel essays can be seen as a pendant to the major critical project of the New York Edition, and Pennell's illustrations, like the frontispieces James and A. L. Coburn created together for the New York Edition, as an integral part of that effort.

The illustrated magazine format by its very nature foregrounds intertextuality and the collectivity of authorship. Nicholson Baker has made the case for considering the periodical publication as a whole, its advertisements, feature stories, cartoons, and drawings all contributing to our understanding of the historical moment. "Reading a paper like this," Baker maintains, "is not the only way to understand the lost past life of a city, but no other way will enclose you so completely within one time-stratum's universe of miscellaneous possibility. Nothing makes an amateur historian of you with more dispatch" (39). Henry James would agree. Writing about George Du Maurier's illustrations for *Punch*, he asserts, "The accumulated volumes of this periodical contain evidence on a multitude of points of which there is no mention in the serious works—not even in the novels—of the day. The smallest details of social habit are depicted there, and the oddities of a race of people in whom oddity is strangely compatible with the dominion of convention" (*Partial Portraits* 333–34). Evidence drawn from the range of James's venues—beginning

with “elite” belletristic journals and culminating with the advertising-sponsored “slicks” founded during the technology-spurred “magazine revolution” of the 1890s—reveals the surprising extent to which James’s writing both influenced and responded to the conditions of publication and readership in the mass marketplace.