

THE CAMBRIDGE EDITION OF THE
COMPLETE FICTION OF
HENRY JAMES

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00398-9 — The Bostonians
Henry James , Edited by Daniel Karlin
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

THE CAMBRIDGE EDITION OF THE
COMPLETE FICTION OF
HENRY JAMES

GENERAL EDITORS

Michael Anesko, *Pennsylvania State University*
Tamara L. Follini, *University of Cambridge*
Philip Horne, *University College London*
Adrian Poole, *University of Cambridge*

ADVISORY BOARD

Martha Banta, *University of California, Los Angeles*
Ian F. A. Bell, *Keele University*
Gert Buelens, *Universiteit Gent*
Susan M. Griffin, *University of Louisville*
Julie Rivkin, *Connecticut College*
John Carlos Rowe, *University of Southern California*
Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Yale University*
Greg Zacharias, *Creighton University*

THE CAMBRIDGE EDITION OF THE
COMPLETE FICTION OF
HENRY JAMES

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1 <i>Roderick Hudson</i> | 23 <i>A Landscape Painter and Other Tales</i> , 1864–1869 |
| 2 <i>The American</i> | 24 <i>A Passionate Pilgrim and Other Tales</i> , 1869–1874 |
| 3 <i>Watch and Ward</i> | 25 <i>Daisy Miller and Other Tales</i> , 1874–1879 |
| 4 <i>The Europeans</i> | 26 <i>The Siege of London and Other Tales</i> , 1879–1884 |
| 5 <i>Confidence</i> | 27 <i>The Aspern Papers and Other Tales</i> , 1888–1891 |
| 6 <i>Washington Square</i> | 28 <i>The Lesson of the Master and Other Tales</i> , 1892–1894 |
| 7 <i>The Portrait of a Lady</i> | 29 <i>The Middle Years and Other Tales</i> , 1895–1898 |
| 8 <i>The Bostonians</i> | 30 <i>The Turn of the Screw and Other Tales</i> , 1895–1898 |
| 9 <i>The Princess Casamassima</i> | 31 <i>The Beast in the Jungle and Other Tales</i> , 1899–1903 |
| 10 <i>The Reverberator</i> | 32 <i>The Jolly Corner and Other Tales</i> , 1903–1910 |
| 11 <i>The Tragic Muse</i> | 33 <i>The Prefaces</i> |
| 12 <i>The Other House</i> | 34 <i>The Notebooks</i> |
| 13 <i>The Spoils of Poynton</i> | |
| 14 <i>What Maisie Knew</i> | |
| 15 <i>The Awkward Age</i> | |
| 16 <i>The Sacred Fount</i> | |
| 17 <i>The Wings of the Dove</i> | |
| 18 <i>The Ambassadors</i> | |
| 19 <i>The Golden Bowl</i> | |
| 20 <i>The Outcry</i> | |
| 21 <i>The Sense of the Past</i> | |
| 22 <i>The Ivory Tower</i> | |

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00398-9 — The Bostonians
Henry James , Edited by Daniel Karlin
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

HENRY JAMES
The Bostonians

EDITED BY
DANIEL KARLIN



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00398-9 — The Bostonians
Henry James, Edited by Daniel Karlin
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.
It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107003989
DOI: 10.1017/9780511782480

© Cambridge University Press 2019

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2019

Printed in Great Britain by Clays, Elcograf S.p.A.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-107-00398-9 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of
URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication
and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain,
accurate or appropriate.

CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	page viii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	x
<i>General Editors’ Preface</i>	xiii
<i>General Chronology of James’s Life and Writings</i>	xx
<i>Introduction</i>	xxvii
<i>Textual Introduction</i>	cxv
<i>Chronology of Composition and Production</i>	cxxiv
<i>Bibliography</i>	cxxx
 The Bostonians	 1
 <i>Glossary of Foreign Words and Phrases</i>	 393
<i>Notes</i>	396
<i>Textual Variants</i>	515
<i>Emendations</i>	539
<i>Appendices</i>	543
<i>A Extract from James’s Notebook Entry of 9 Feb. 1882, on The Death of His Mother</i>	545
<i>B ‘The Solidarity of the Sex’</i>	547
<i>C James’s Proposal for The Bostonians</i>	550
<i>D Henry James: Extract from Letter to William James on the ‘Peabody Affair’</i>	553

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Faculty of Arts at the University of Bristol supported this project with generous research leave and funding for attendance at conferences held by the European Society of Jamesian Studies (Paris, 2010), the Henry James Society (London, 2012) and the American Literature Association (Boston, 2016).

I am deeply indebted to Philip Horne, who helped me at every turn with his knowledge of all things Jamesian, and in particular pointed me in the direction of writings (stories, articles, letters) that I would otherwise have overlooked. As my principal contact on the General Editors' team, he was by turns encouraging and critical, and always in a way that moved the project forward. Adrian Poole and Tamara Follini also kept me up to the mark, and I received valuable information and advice from Michael Anesko and Greg Zacharias, especially regarding James's relations with his British and American publishers.

Many colleagues in Bristol and elsewhere have shared their knowledge of texts and contexts with me over a period of several years, and the notes in particular have been enriched by their suggestions. *The Bostonians* is as allusive as – a Henry James novel; no editor could begin to trace its echoes, quotations, parallels and analogies without such help. Needless to say, any errors and omissions are my responsibility.

Samantha Matthews laid the foundations of this edition by compiling the essential list of resources – historical, bibliographical and critical – needed to get it under way, and by shaping my thoughts as to the significance of James's sense of place – especially his very 'partial portrait' of the city of Boston itself. Jeffrey Gutierrez at the Editorial Institute in Boston enhanced my knowledge of the early reviews of the novel, and also drew my attention to the article on 'The Solidarity of the Sex' in the *Boston Daily Globe* which is reproduced in Appendix B.

I owe a debt of gratitude and admiration of another order to my mentor in American literary history, Stephen Fender. He made me, at University

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

College London, a teacher of American literature and then encouraged me to begin to study the nineteenth-century writers I have always loved. *The Bostonians* featured in many of our conversations as an extraordinary summative statement of the legacy of New England to American modernity. My part in this book is dedicated to him.

ABBREVIATIONS

1886	Henry James, <i>The Bostonians</i> (London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1886)
A	Philip Horne (ed.), <i>Autobiographies: A Small Boy and Others; Notes of a Son and Brother; The Middle Years; Other Autobiographical Writings</i> (New York: Library of America, 2016)
AF	Janet Beer, Anne-Marie Ford and Katherine Joslin (ed.), <i>American Feminism: Key Source Documents 1848–1920</i> , 4 vols. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004)
AJ	Ruth Bernard Yeazell (ed.), <i>The Death and Letters of Alice James</i> (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981)
AS	Henry James, <i>The American Scene</i> (London: Chapman and Hall, 1907)
CFHJ	The Cambridge Edition of the <i>Complete Fiction of Henry James</i>
CLHJ	Pierre A. Walker and Greg. W. Zacharias (ed.), <i>Collected Letters of Henry James</i> (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006–)
CN	Leon Edel and Lyall H. Powers (ed.), <i>The Complete Notebooks of Henry James</i> (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)
CS	Henry James, <i>Complete Stories</i> , 5 vols. (New York: Library of America): Vol. I: 1864–1874, ed. Jean Strouse (1999); Vol. II: 1874–1884, ed. William L. Vance (1999); Vol. III: 1884–1891, ed. Edward Said (1999); Vol. IV: 1892–1898, ed. David Bromwich and John Hollander (1996); Vol. V: 1898–1910, ed. Denis Donoghue (1996).
FM	Michael Anesko, “Friction with the Market”: <i>Henry James and the Profession of Authorship</i> (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986)

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>HJL</i>	Leon Edel (ed.), <i>Henry James Letters</i> , 4 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press; London: Macmillan, 1974–84)
<i>HJ & HM</i>	Rayburn S. Moore (ed.), <i>The Correspondence of Henry James and the House of Macmillan, 1877–1914</i> (London: Macmillan, 1993)
<i>LC1</i>	Henry James, <i>Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature; American Writers; English Writers</i> (New York: Library of America, 1984)
<i>LC2</i>	<i>Literary Criticism: European Writers; Prefaces to the New York Edition</i> (New York: Library of America, 1984)
<i>Lewis</i>	R. W. B. Lewis, <i>The Jameses: A Family Narrative</i> (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991)
<i>LFL</i>	Michael Anesko (ed.), <i>Letters, Fictions, Lives: Henry James and William Dean Howells</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997)
<i>LHL</i>	Percy Lubbock (ed.), <i>The Letters of Henry James</i> , 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1920)
<i>LL</i>	<i>Henry James: A Life in Letters</i> , ed. Philip Horne (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1999)
<i>NSB</i>	Henry James, <i>Notes of a Son and Brother</i> (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons and London: Macmillan, 1914); text cited from A.
<i>OED</i>	Oxford English Dictionary, cited from online edition (www.oed.com).
<i>Oxford</i>	Henry James, <i>The Bostonians</i> , ed. Richard Gooder (Oxford University Press, 1986 [Oxford World's Classics])
<i>Penguin</i>	Henry James, <i>The Bostonians</i> , ed. Richard Lansdown (London: Penguin Books, 2000 [Penguin Classics])
<i>SBO</i>	Henry James, <i>A Small Boy and Others</i> (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons and London: Macmillan, 1913); text cited from A.
<i>W19C</i>	Margaret Fuller, <i>Woman in the Nineteenth Century</i> , in <i>Woman in the Nineteenth Century and Other Writings</i> , ed. Donna Dickenson (Oxford University Press, 1994)

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00398-9 — The Bostonians
Henry James , Edited by Daniel Karlin
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

The Cambridge Edition of the *Complete Fiction of Henry James* (hereafter *CFHJ*) has been undertaken in the belief that there is a need for a full scholarly, informative, historical edition of his work, presenting the texts in carefully checked, accurate form, with detailed annotation and extensive introductions. James's texts exist in a number of forms, including manuscripts (though most are lost), serial texts and volumes of various sorts, often incorporating significant amounts of revision, most conspicuously the so-called *New York Edition* (hereafter *NYE*) published by Charles Scribner's Sons in New York and Macmillan & Co. in London (1907–9). Besides these there are also pirated editions, unfinished works published posthumously, and other questionable forms. The *CFHJ* takes account of these complexities, within the framework of a textual policy which aims to be clear, orderly and consistent.

This edition aims to represent James's fictional career as it evolves, with a fresh and expanded sense of its changing contexts and an informed sense of his developing style, technique and concerns. Consequently it does not attempt to base its choices on the principle of the 'last lifetime edition', which in the case of Henry James is monumentally embodied in the twenty-four volumes of the *NYE*, the author's selection of nine longer novels (six of them in two volumes) and fifty-eight shorter novels and tales, and including eighteen specially composed Prefaces. The *CFHJ*, as a general rule, adopts rather the text of the first published book edition of a work, unless the intrinsic particularities and the publishing history of that work require an alternative choice, on the ground that emphasis on the first context in which it was written and read will permit an unprecedented fullness of attention to the transformations in James's writing over five decades, as well as the rich literary and social contexts of their original publication.

There are inevitably cases where determining 'the first published book edition' requires some care. If, for instance, James expresses a preference for the text of one particular early book edition over another, or if the first edition to be published is demonstrably inferior to a later impression or

GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

edition, or if authorial supervision of a particular early edition or impression can be established, then a case can be made for choosing a text other than the first published book edition. Volume Editors have exercised their judgment accordingly. They have made a full collation of authoritative versions including serial as well as volume publication in Britain and America, and specify which version serves as their copy text.

The *CFHJ*'s Introductions aim to be full and authoritative, detailing the histories of composition, publication (in magazine and book form), reception and authorial revision, and making economical reference to subsequent adaptation and transformation into other forms, including drama, film and opera. Editors have refrained from offering emphatic interpretations or mounting critical arguments of their own, though it is hoped the material they present will inform and stimulate new readings. Particular attention has been given to the social, political and cultural contexts of James's period, and especially those of the countries in which a specific work is set; details of James's personal exposure to relevant people and events, of the magazines and publishing houses where he published (editors, policies, politics, etc.), have provided valuable material. Introductions conclude with a Bibliography in support of the information supplied and the aspects of the text's production emphasized in the Introduction, including a list of contemporary reviews.

Each volume contains, in addition to a Chronology of James's life and literary career, a volume-specific Chronology, incorporating dates of composition, negotiation with publishers and editors, dispatch of instalments, stages of printing and initial reception history, as well as relevant comments by or to James appearing in letters or other forms.

Fullness and helpfulness of annotation is one of the main aims of the *CFHJ*. As James's world recedes into the past, more and more of its features need explanation to readers: both the physical, geographical and historical world of places and people, and the cultural world of beliefs, values, conventions, social practices and points of reference – to operas, plays, books, paintings; and indeed certain linguistic explanations have become increasingly necessary (especially regarding the presence of slang or linguistic innovation, both English and American). For such explanations, James's correspondence, criticism and other writings have been drawn on as a prime source of helpful comment, conveying his own experience and attitudes in

 GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

a way that richly illuminates his fictional texts. Newspapers and magazines of the period, travel guides, the work of other writers, also contribute, filling out the picture of the implied worlds beyond the text. Furthermore, the *CFHJ* sets out to provide the fullest possible details of James's allusions to poetry, the Bible and the plays of Shakespeare, as well as other literary and culturally significant works – offering suggestive but concise plot summaries when appropriate or quotation of the passages drawn on, so that the act of allusion is brought to life and the reader can trace something of James's allusive processes. Editors have abstained, on the other hand, from purely interpretative notes, speculation and personal comments: the notes always concern a point of information, even if that point has a critical bearing.

Appendices include sources and relevant contextual documents, including correspondence, entries from the Prefaces to the *NYE* and from the Notebooks, where appropriate. For the novels revised and published in the *NYE*, the whole Preface is printed in an Appendix; for tales revised and published in the *NYE*, the relevant extract from the Preface is reproduced. The Prefaces and Notebooks have also been collected in newly edited volumes of their own.

*

Most of James's fiction exists in a number of different textual states, most notably in the difference between initial publication (in periodical and volume form) and the revised versions of the novels and tales prepared near the end of his career for the *NYE*. (In the case of three late tales – 'Fordham Castle', 'Julia Bride' and 'The Jolly Corner' – first book publication was in the *NYE*.) Works excluded by James from the *NYE* were incorporated in the edition posthumously published in thirty-five volumes by Macmillan in 1921–3, but these were of course published without authorial revision. The textual differences affecting those works that *are* included in the *NYE* are predictably most extensive in the case of early works such as *Roderick Hudson* (1875), *The American* (1877), 'Daisy Miller' (1879) and *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881).

Readers may see for themselves the full extent of James's revisions, along with all other variants, both preceding and succeeding the texts printed here, in the lists of Textual Variants. These are normally presented in the following form. Each volume includes a comprehensive list of all substantive

GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

variants in the line of textual transmission leading up to the copy text ('Textual Variants i'), preceded by a brief commentary, in which editors address this stage of the textual history, drawing attention to the main features of the changes and dealing with questions such as house style. Variations in punctuation within a sentence (usually by the insertion or removal of commas, or changes in the use of colons and semi-colons) have not normally been considered substantive. Over end-of-sentence punctuation, however, particularly in the matter of changing full stops to exclamations or vice versa, Volume Editors have exercised their judgment. A second section ('Textual Variants ii') offers a comprehensive list of all substantive variants subsequent to copy text, and a brief commentary which summarizes the main issues raised by the changes made. The length of lists of variants and commentary inevitably varies greatly from case to case. In certain cases, for reasons explained in the volume concerned, there is a single list of 'Textual Variants'.

*

The *Complete Fiction of Henry James* consists of twenty-two novels (vols. 1–22), one hundred and thirteen tales (vols. 23–32) and two supplementary volumes (vols. 33 and 34) devoted respectively to the Prefaces that James wrote for the *NYE* and to his Notebooks. They appear in this edition in the order in which they were first published. The distinction between 'novels' and 'tales' is sometimes a crude one: between long fictions such as *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Golden Bowl* and short ones such as 'Benvolio' and 'The Beldonald Holbein', there lie many shorter novels and longer tales that it is hard to categorize with confidence, well-known works such as *Washington Square* and *The Sacred Fount*, 'The Aspern Papers' and 'The Turn of the Screw'. We have deemed to be 'novels' those fictions which when they first took volume form were published as independent entities (with the single exception of *In the Cage*, which despite its relative brevity first appeared as a slim volume), and those to be 'tales' all which were not. The former include some of James's lesser-known works, such as *Watch and Ward*, *Confidence*, *The Other House*, *The Outcry* and the two unfinished at the time of his death, *The Sense of the Past* and *The Ivory Tower*.

GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

The division of James's tales into ten volumes has been ordered chronologically on the basis of first publication, according to the following principles:

- 1) The determining date of a story's publication is that of the first appearance of any part of it (as some straddle three issues of a magazine). Thus e.g. 'A London Life' (June–September 1888, *Scribner's Magazine*) before 'The Lesson of the Master' (July–August 1888, *Universal Review*).
- 2) Where two tales have the same start date, the priority is determined by which completes its publication earlier. Thus e.g. 'The Modern Warning' (originally entitled 'Two Countries', June 1888, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*) precedes 'A London Life' (June–September 1888, *Scribner's Magazine*).
- 3) Where two tales have the same start date and the same date of completion (often only taking one issue), the priority is determined by alphabetical order (of tale title). Thus e.g. 'De Grey: A Romance' (July 1868, *Atlantic Monthly*) precedes 'Osborne's Revenge' (July 1868, *Galaxy*).
- 4) Because it cannot usually be determined exactly *when* a magazine dated only 'June' actually appeared, 'June' is treated as preceding any particular date in June, including '1 June'. Thus 'The Private Life' (April 1892, *Atlantic Monthly*) precedes 'The Real Thing' (16 April 1892, *Black and White*); and principle 4 overrides principle 2, so that The Author of "Beltraffio" (June–July 1884, *English Illustrated Magazine*) precedes 'Pandora' (1 and 8 June 1884, *New York Sun*).
- 5) Where tales have not been published in periodicals before being collected in book form, the precise date of book publication counts as first publication and determines their place in the order.
- 6) Where tales have not been published in periodicals before being collected in book form, and several tales appear in the same book, the order of tales in the book determines our ordering (even when their order of composition is known to have been different), as it is closer to the order in which original readers would preponderantly have read them.
- 7) In the single case where only a fragment of a tale survives and therefore was not published within James's lifetime, 'Hugh Merrow', the tale has been placed provisionally in accordance with the date of the only extant *Notebooks* entry, 11 September 1900.

*

GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

Emendations have been made sparingly and only to clearly erroneous readings. Where there is only one version of a work and it requires emendation, the original (erroneous) reading has been recorded in the List of Emendations. Where a later or earlier text has a reading that shows the copy text to be in error, this reading has been incorporated and the copy text's reading recorded in the apparatus. The fact that a later or earlier text has a reading that seems preferable to that of the copy text has not in itself provided sufficient grounds for emendation, although like all other variants, it has been recorded in the list of Textual Variants. Unusual and inconsistent spellings have not been altered, and only annotated in exceptional cases. Misprints and slipped letters have been corrected, and the corrections noted. Contractions have not been expanded, superscript has not been converted and spelling and punctuation have not normally been changed.

James's writings were of course published on both sides of the Atlantic, and there are corresponding differences in spelling between British and American texts, in volume and serial form: 'colour/color', 'recognise/ recognize', 'marvellous/marvelous' and so on. These differences have been preserved when they occur in the textual variants, but they have not been systematically recorded, being deemed to be matters of accident rather than substance. The form taken by inverted commas (single or double) also varies between texts, as does their placement (before or after commas, full stops etc.); being judged matters of accident, these have been regularized. Double quotation marks have been adopted for all the James texts published in this edition. When the text of the *NYE* is cited in the introduction, notes or textual apparatus, its distinctive typography has not been retained, and this also applies to the texts of the tales first published in the *NYE* and of the Prefaces: the contractions rendered there as e.g. 'is n't' and 'did n't' have here been normalized as single words, 'isn't' and 'didn't'. Editorial ellipses have been enclosed in square brackets but authorial ellipses have not.

The punctuation of the copy text adopted has also been preserved. There are considerable differences of punctuation between the different forms in which a particular work of James's appears. It is often hard to distinguish with certainty those which can be accounted for by differences in the house styles of particular publishers, British and American, and those which are matters of authorial choice. Whatever the agency behind such differences, there is a case for recognizing the difference of sense made by the presence

GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

or absence of a comma, by the change of an exclamation to a full stop and so on. Nevertheless, the scale of such differences is too great to make a comprehensive record feasible within the limits of a print edition. Volume Editors have therefore exercised their judgment over the most helpful way to inform readers of the nature of such differences.

References to money pose particular difficulties for modern readers, not only because the sums concerned have to be multiplied by an apparently ever-inflating figure to produce approximate modern equivalents, but because the quantity and quality of what could be bought and done with these sums (especially involving property or real estate) has also changed radically – and will very possibly continue to do so during the lifetime of this edition. We do, however, know that throughout James's own life the pound sterling was equal to \$4.85, and certain other figures can be established, such as that in 1875 the US dollar was equivalent to 5.19 French francs. For the calculation of particular sums in James's writings, Volume Editors have supplied readers with as much reliable information as they can command at the date of publication for this edition, but as time goes on readers will inevitably have to make adjustments.

Translations have been provided for all foreign words and phrases that appear in the text. Those which are common and uncontroversial (such as 'piazza', 'table d'hôte') are collected in a glossary at the end; those judged to be less than obvious in meaning, or dependent for their meaning on the specific context, are explained in an endnote.

The General Editors warmly acknowledge the gracious permission of Bay James, custodian of the James Estate, for the publication of material still in copyright; and the generous cooperation of Greg Zacharias and his associates at the Center for Henry James Studies at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, home of an indispensable parallel project, *The Complete Letters of Henry James*, published by the University of Nebraska Press. We thank David Supino for offering his sage advice whenever it was sought. Finally, we are deeply grateful for the guidance and support provided by our editors at Cambridge University Press, Linda Bree and Bethany Thomas, and Senior Content Manager, Victoria Parrin.

GENERAL CHRONOLOGY OF JAMES’S LIFE AND WRITINGS

Compiled by Philip Horne

1843	Henry James (HJ) is born on 15 April 1843 at 21 Washington Place in New York City, second of the five children of Henry James (1811–82), speculative theologian and social thinker, and his wife Mary Walsh Robertson James (1810–82). Siblings: William (1842–1910), psychologist, philosopher, Harvard professor; Garth Wilkinson (‘Wilky’, 1845–83); Robertson (‘Bob’, 1846–1910); Alice (1848–92), diarist.
1843–5	Taken to Paris and London by his parents; earliest memory (from age two) is of the Place Vendôme in Paris.
1845–7	Returns to United States. Childhood in Albany.
1847–55	Family settles in New York City; taught by tutors and in private schools.
1855–8	Family travels in Europe: Geneva, London, Paris, Boulogne-sur-Mer.
1858	Jameses reside in Newport, Rhode Island.
1859–60	James family travels: HJ at scientific school, then the Academy (later the University) in Geneva. Summer 1860: HJ learns German in Bonn.
1860–2	James family returns to Newport in September 1860. HJ makes friends with future critic Thomas Sargent Perry and artist John La Farge, fellow students at William Morris Hunt’s art academy. From 1860, HJ ‘was continually writing stories, mainly of a romantic kind’ (Perry). In 1861 HJ injured his back helping extinguish a fire in Newport. Along with William James, exempted from service in Civil War, in which younger brothers fought, and Wilky was seriously wounded.

 GENERAL CHRONOLOGY OF JAMES'S LIFE AND WRITINGS

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 1862 | Enters Harvard Law School for a term. Begins to send stories to magazines. |
| 1864 | February: first short story of HJ's 113, 'A Tragedy of Error', published anonymously in <i>Continental Monthly</i> . May: Jameses move to 13 Ashburton Place, Boston. October: first of HJ's many reviews, of Nassau W. Senior's <i>Essays on Fiction</i> , published unsigned in <i>North American Review</i> . |
| 1865 | March: first signed tale, 'The Story of a Year', appears in <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> . HJ appears also as a critic in first number of the <i>Nation</i> (New York). |
| 1866–8 | Summer 1866: becomes friends with William Dean Howells, novelist, critic and influential editor. November 1866: James family moves to 20 Quincy Street, beside Harvard Yard. November 1867: meets Charles Dickens at home of James T. Fields, and 'tremble[s] ... in every limb' (<i>Notes of a Son and Brother</i>). HJ continues reviewing and writing stories in Cambridge. |
| 1869–70 | On 27 February 1869 lands at Liverpool. Travels in England, meeting John Ruskin, William Morris, Charles Darwin and George Eliot; also Switzerland and Italy. 1870: death of his much-loved cousin Minny Temple. |
| 1870–2 | May 1870: reluctantly returns to Cambridge. August–December 1871: publishes first novel, <i>Watch and Ward</i> , in the <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> ; January–March 1872: publishes art reviews in <i>Atlantic</i> . |
| 1872–4 | May 1872: HJ accompanies invalid sister Alice and aunt Catherine Walsh, 'Aunt Kate', to Europe. Writes travel pieces for the <i>Nation</i> . October 1872–September 1874: periods (without family) in Paris, Rome, Switzerland, Homburg, Italy again. Spring 1874: begins first long novel, <i>Roderick Hudson</i> , in Florence. September 1874: returns to the United States. |
| 1875 | First three books published: <i>A Passionate Pilgrim</i> , and <i>Other Tales</i> (January); <i>Transatlantic Sketches</i> (April); |

GENERAL CHRONOLOGY OF JAMES'S LIFE AND WRITINGS

- Roderick Hudson* (November). Six months in New York City (111 East 25th Street); then three in Cambridge.
- 1875–6 11 November 1875: arrives at 29 Rue de Luxembourg as Paris correspondent for *New York Tribune*. Begins *The American*. Meets Gustave Flaubert, Ivan Turgenev, Edmond de Goncourt, Alphonse Daudet, Guy de Maupassant and Émile Zola.
- 1876–7 December 1876: moves to London, taking rooms at 3 Bolton Street, off Piccadilly. Visits to Paris, Florence, Rome. May 1877: *The American* published in Boston.
- 1878 February: *French Poets and Novelists* published, first collection of essays, first book published in London. May: revised version of *Watch and Ward* published in book form in Boston. June–July: 'Daisy Miller' appears in *Cornhill Magazine* and is quickly pirated by two American periodicals, establishing reputation in Britain and America. September: *The Europeans* published. Meets William Ewart Gladstone, Alfred Lord Tennyson and Robert Browning.
- 1879 June: first English edition of *Roderick Hudson*, revised; October: *The Madonna of the Future and Other Tales*; December: *Confidence* (novel); *Hawthorne* (critical biography).
- 1880 April: *The Diary of a Man of Fifty and A Bundle of Letters*; Late winter 1880: travels to Italy; meets Constance Fenimore Woolson in Florence. December 1880: *Washington Square*.
- 1881–3 October 1881: returns to United States; travels between Cambridge, New York and Washington DC. November 1881: *The Portrait of a Lady*. January 1882: death of mother. May: returns to England till father dies in December 1882. February 1883: *The Siege of London*, *The Pension Beaurepas*, and *The Point of View*; Summer 1883: returns to London; will not return to USA for twenty-one years. November 1883: Macmillan publish fourteen-volume collected

 GENERAL CHRONOLOGY OF JAMES'S LIFE AND WRITINGS

- edition of HJ's fiction. September 1883: *Daisy Miller: A Comedy*; December 1883: *Portraits of Places* (travel essays). November 1883: death of Wilky James.
- 1884 Sister Alice joins HJ in London, living nearby. September 1884: *A Little Tour in France* published; also HJ's important artistic statement 'The Art of Fiction'. October 1884: *Tales of Three Cities*. Becomes friends with Robert Louis Stevenson, Edmund Gosse. Writes to his friend Grace Norton: 'I shall never marry ... I am both happy enough and miserable enough, as it is.'
- 1885–6 Publishes two serial novels: *The Bostonians* (Century, February 1885–February 1886); *The Princess Casamassima* (Atlantic, September 1885–October 1886). February 1885: collection of tales, *The Author of Beltraffio* [&c]; May 1885: *Stories Revived*, in three volumes.
- 1886–7 February 1886: *The Bostonians* published. 6 March: moves into flat, 34 De Vere Gardens, in Kensington, West London. October 1886: *The Princess Casamassima* published. December 1886–July 1887: visits Florence and Venice. Continues friendship with American novelist Constance Fenimore Woolson.
- 1888 *The Reverberator*, *The Aspern Papers* [&c] and *Partial Portraits* all published.
- 1888–90 1889: Collection of tales, *A London Life* [&c], published. 1890: *The Tragic Muse*. Temporarily abandons the novel form in favour of playwriting.
- 1890–1 Dramatizes *The American*, which has a short run in 1891. December: young friend and (informal) agent Wolcott Balestier dies of typhoid in Dresden.
- 1892 February: story collection, *The Real Thing and Other Tales*, published. March: death of Alice James in London.
- 1893 Volumes of tales published: March, *The Real Thing*; June, *The Private Life* [&c]; September, *The Wheel of Time* [&c]; also, June, *Picture and Text* (essays on illustration) and

GENERAL CHRONOLOGY OF JAMES’S LIFE AND WRITINGS

	<i>Essays in London and Elsewhere</i> (critical and memorial essays).
1894	Deaths of Constance Fenimore Woolson (January) and Robert Louis Stevenson (December).
1895	5 January: première of <i>Guy Domville</i> , greeted by boos and applause. James abandons playwriting for years. Visits Ireland. Volumes of tales published: May, <i>Terminations</i> ; June, <i>Embarrassments</i> . Takes up cycling.
1896–7	<i>The Other House</i> (1896), <i>The Spoils of Poynton</i> (1897), <i>What Maisie Knew</i> (1897). February 1897: starts dictating, due to wrist problems. September 1897: takes lease on Lamb House, Rye.
1898	May: has signed up with literary agent James Brand Pinker, who will act for him for the rest of his life. June: moves into Lamb House. August: <i>In the Cage</i> published. October: ‘The Turn of the Screw’ published (in <i>The Two Magics</i>); proves his most popular work since ‘Daisy Miller’. Kent and Sussex neighbours include Stephen Crane, Joseph Conrad, H. G. Wells and Ford Madox Hueffer (Ford).
1899	April: <i>The Awkward Age</i> published. August: buys the freehold of Lamb House.
1900	May: shaves off his beard. August: <i>The Soft Side</i> (tales). Friendship with Edith Wharton develops. Begins <i>The Sense of the Past</i> , but leaves it unfinished.
1901	February: <i>The Sacred Fount</i> .
1902–3	August 1902: <i>The Wings of the Dove</i> published. February 1903: <i>The Better Sort</i> (tales) published. September 1903: <i>The Ambassadors</i> published (completed mid-1901, before <i>The Wings of the Dove</i> , but delayed by serialization); also <i>William Wetmore Story and his Friends</i> (biography).
1904–5	August: James sails to USA for first time in twenty-one years. November: <i>The Golden Bowl</i> published. Visits New England, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, the South, St Louis, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

 GENERAL CHRONOLOGY OF JAMES'S LIFE AND WRITINGS

- Lectures on 'The Lesson of Balzac' and 'The Question of Our Speech'. Meets President Theodore Roosevelt. Elected to American Academy of Arts and Letters.
- 1905 July 1905: writes early chapters of *The American Scene*; simultaneously begins revising works for *New York Edition of the Novels and Tales of Henry James*. October: *English Hours* (travel essays) published.
- 1906–8 Selects, arranges, prefaces and has illustrations made for *New York Edition* (published 1907–9, twenty-four volumes). January 1907: *The American Scene* published. August 1907: hires new amanuensis, Theodora Bosanquet. 1908: *The High Bid* (play) produced at Edinburgh.
- 1909–11 October 1909: *Italian Hours* (travel essays) published. Health problems, aggravated by failure of the *New York Edition*. Death of Robertson ('Bob') James. Travels to United States. William James dies 26 August 1910. October 1910: *The Finer Grain* (tales). Returns to England August 1911. October: *The Outcry* (play converted into novel) published.
- 1911 In autumn, begins work on autobiography.
- 1912 June: honorary doctorate at Oxford. October: takes flat at 21 Carlyle Mansions, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea; suffers from shingles.
- 1913 March: *A Small Boy and Others* (first autobiographical book) published. Portrait painted by John Singer Sargent for seventieth birthday on 15 April.
- 1914 March: *Notes of a Son and Brother* (second autobiographical book) published. (The fragment of a third, *The Middle Years*, appears posthumously in 1917.) When World War One breaks out, becomes passionately engaged with the British cause, working with Belgian refugees, and later wounded soldiers. October: *Notes on Novelists* published. Begins *The Ivory Tower*; resumes work on *The Sense of the Past*, but is unable to complete either novel.

GENERAL CHRONOLOGY OF JAMES’S LIFE AND WRITINGS

- 1915 Honorary president of the American Volunteer Motor Ambulance Corps. July: quarrels with H. G. Wells about purpose of art, declaring ‘It is art that *makes* life, makes interest, makes importance’; becomes a British citizen in protest against US neutrality, describing the decision to his nephew Harry (Henry James III) as ‘a simple act and offering of allegiance and devotion’ after his forty-year domicile. Writes essays about the War (collected in *Within the Rim*, 1919), and Preface to *Letters from America* (1916) by his dead friend Rupert Brooke. On 2 December suffers a stroke. First volumes of Uniform Edition of Tales published by Martin Secker, in fourteen vols. 1915–20.
- 1916 Awarded the Order of Merit. Dies on 28 February. Funeral in Chelsea Old Church; ashes smuggled back to America by sister-in-law and buried in the family plot in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

INTRODUCTION

The Origins of the Novel

When he began writing *The Bostonians*, in the late summer of 1884, Henry James was forty-one years old. He had been living abroad since November 1875, first in Paris and then in London. His literary career to date had been founded on the ‘international’ theme, dealing with encounters between American and European characters and values: his first great success came with ‘Daisy Miller’ (1878), which takes its place amid a cluster of such works, among them *Roderick Hudson* and *A Passionate Pilgrim and Other Tales* (both 1875), *The American* (1877), *The Europeans* (1878) and above all *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). The publication of this novel confirmed James’s status as a major modern novelist, and his regular journalism, criticism and travel writing (*Transatlantic Sketches*, 1875; *French Poets and Novelists*, 1878; *A Little Tour in France*, 1884) seemed to indicate that he had found his ‘vein’ and would stick to it. *The Bostonians* marks a sharp swerve out of this track, a swerve that James did not, however, anticipate or deliberately design.

The Bostonians is the fruit of James’s two return visits to the United States in 1881–2 and 1882–3, but when he set out he had no intention of making literary capital out of these trips. He sailed from London to Boston in October 1881, staying first with his parents in Quincy Street, Cambridge, then at the Brunswick Hotel in Boston. On 25 November he recorded in his journal a rejection of his ‘home’ country and his embrace of the ‘old world’:

Here I am back in America [...] after six years of absence, & likely while here to see and learn a great deal that ought not to become mere waste material. Here I am, da vero [in truth], and here I am likely to be for the next five months. I am glad I have come—it was a wise thing to do. I needed to see again *les miens* [my family, those belonging to me], to revive my relations with them, and my sense of the consequences that these relations entail. Such relations, such consequences, are a part of one’s life, and the best life, the most complete, is the one that takes full account of such things. One can only do this by seeing one’s people from time to time, by being

 INTRODUCTION

with them, by entering into their lives. Apart from this I hold it was not necessary that I should come to this country. I am 37 years old, I have made my choice, & God knows that I have now no time to waste. My choice is the old world—my choice, my need, my life. [...] My impressions here are exactly what I expected they would be, & I scarcely see the place, and feel the manners, the race, the tone of things, now that I am on the spot, more vividly than I did while I was still in Europe. My work lies there—and with this vast new world, *je n'ai que faire* [I have nothing to do, it's not my concern]. [...] My impressions of America, however, I shall after all, not write here. I don't need to write them (at least not *à propos* of Boston); I know too well what they are.¹

This sounds decisive, both as to the choice of where to live and what to write about. Journalists and critics hostile to James were in agreement that he had nothing to do with America, whether as person or artist – that he was, in the words of one such critic, ‘an international novelist of accidental American birth.’² Yet less than eighteenth months later, he was writing to his publisher with the idea for *The Bostonians*, and expressing to himself his determination ‘to show that I *can* write an American story’. He persisted in this project even though, by this stage, he was back in England and this ‘very *American* tale’ was therefore not written on native ground.³ What happened to make him change his mind?

Part of the answer lies in events that occurred in James's immediate family, the first of them two months after his notebook entry, the second nearly a year later: the death on 29 January 1882 of his mother, and on 18 December 1882 of his father. Both took place in James's absence: he was in Washington when he received news of his mother's illness, and in England

¹ Journal entry dated ‘Brunswick Hotel, Boston, November 25th, 1881’ (CN 214). As the editors point out, James mistakes his own age: he was 38, not 37. The text of quotations from James's notebooks draws on that prepared by Philip Horne, to be published in *CFHJ* vol. 34.

² ‘A Scorching for Henry James’ (*Boston Globe*, 18 Jan. 1885, p. 13, reprinting an item from *Life Magazine*). This was barely a fortnight before *The Bostonians* began its serialization in the *Century*. The item continues: ‘He wrote “The Europeans” from observation, but he evolved “The American” from his inner consciousness.’

³ See Chronology of Composition, and Appendix C.

INTRODUCTION

when he received news of his father's. (He reached Cambridge in time to attend his mother's funeral, but missed that of his father.) James's sense of the 'wisdom' of having come to America and 'see[ing] again *les [s]iens*' had been predicated on 'reviv[ing] [his] relations with them', 'entering into their lives'. Now it was their deaths that he had to 'enter into'.

The loss of his parents affected James in differing ways. His response to his mother's death was overwhelmingly emotional, but also profoundly reflective. He wrote in his journal on 9 February 1882 that 'she was the key-stone of the arch', who 'held us all together', but that 'her work was done—her long patience had done its utmost [...] the weariness of age had come upon her'. James dwells on this theme, giving it a specific grounding in the local conditions of his mother's life:

She went about her usual activities, but the burden of life had grown heavy for her, & she needed rest. [...] Summer after summer she never left Cambridge—it was impossible that father should leave his own house. The country, the sea, the change of air & scene, were an exquisite enjoyment to her; but she bore with the deepest gentleness & patience the constant loss of such opportunities. She passed her nights & her days in that dry, flat, hot, stale & odious Cambridge, and had never a thought while she did so but for Father and Alice. It was a perfect mother's life—the life of a perfect wife.⁴

There are suggestive analogies, as well as differences, between this passage and the depiction of Miss Birdseye's life and death in *The Bostonians*. Like Mrs James, Miss Birdseye is exhausted, attenuated, at the close of a lifetime of self-sacrifice and devotion to others. She has had a 'long and beautiful career', in Olive Chancellor's eyes, filled with 'earnest, unremitting work', but is now going through the motions: 'she might pretend still to go about the business of unpopular causes [...] [but] she ached and was weary' (20: 157). She, too, has been the 'key-stone of the arch'; as Verena passionately expresses

⁴ CN 229–30, slightly emended; a longer extract from this notebook entry is reprinted in Appendix A. The 'impossibility' of Henry James Sr leaving Cambridge relates to his 'inability to deal with rural roads and paths, then rougher things than now; by reason of an accident received in early youth and which had so lamed him for life that he could circulate to any convenience but on even surfaces' (NSB, Ch. 6 (A 372)).

 INTRODUCTION

it: 'You are our heroine, you are our saint, and there has never been any one like you!' (38: 348). Her weariness, her yearning for rest, are recompensed in the novel in a poignant act of wish-fulfilment, for Miss Birdseye is taken to die at the fictional Cape Cod resort of Marmion, where '[t]he country, the sea, the change of air and scene' give her the 'exquisite enjoyment' of which Mrs James was deprived.

Miss Birdseye, however, is not a wife or mother, and has had virtually no personal life. Her devotion to others has been public and impersonal, and her children are the 'friends of the new generation', the 'fresh lives which began with more advantages than hers' (20: 158). The 'perfection' of Mrs James's life is bound up with suffering and self-sacrifice, but the depth of feeling with which James interprets his mother's acceptance of that burden is answered, in the novel, by a corresponding depth of feeling on the opposite side of the question – Olive Chancellor's un-maternal, un-filial, un-spousal anger at 'the suffering of women', her refusal to accept that suffering as either natural or noble.

If the death of his mother gave James a powerful motive for thinking about the position of women, the death of his father may have triggered an equally powerful set of feelings about America, and especially New England, the scene of his father's long years of heroic, wasted intellectual labour.⁵ R. W. B. Lewis suggests that the 'controlling theme' of *The Bostonians* is 'that of some tremendous loss, some kind of huge withdrawal that has resulted in a terrible, even fatal, deterioration on the human, cultural, social, sexual, and even physical American landscape. It is here that the effect of Henry Senior's departure from the scene is most evident'.⁶ This may be true but is not the whole story. The sense of loss was there already; indeed it is intrinsic to a major tendency in American writing, manifest in works as separate in time and outlook as Bradford's *History of Plymouth Plantation* (1630–51) and Thoreau's *Walden* (1854), a tendency that is sceptical of 'progress' and alert to signs of degeneration and decay.

⁵ Henry James Sr had become a New England type by adoption; many people assumed he was native to the soil, a 'falsifying legend' that James rebuts in his autobiography (*NSB*, Ch. 6 (A 369–72)).

⁶ R. W. B. Lewis, *The Jameses: A Family Narrative* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991), p. 359; hereafter *Lewis*.

 INTRODUCTION

James had doubts about the worth of his father's work – doubts which he laid bare in his long, probing analysis, in *Notes of a Son and Brother*, of the writing of this other Henry James. His father's 'unsurpassable patience and independence, in the interest of the convictions he cherished and the expression of them' were a model for his own, though the 'convictions' lacked body and the 'expression' form and colour. Henry James Senior's failings as a writer were accompanied by the failure to bring his ideas to market. The 'play of his remarkable genius', James observes, 'brought him in fact throughout the long years no ghost of a reward in the shape of pence'.⁷ Baffled though he was by his father's style, which could neither move, nor persuade, nor sell, James was conscious of its author's unqualified assurance, a prize that could not be bequeathed. Where did this assurance come from? Was it merely a psychological trait, peculiar to the individual concerned? *The Bostonians* tells us otherwise. Henry James Senior's career – disinterested, unremunerated, ineffectual – is mirrored, again, in the figure of Miss Birdseye. As Lewis puts it: 'No personality could seem more remote from the elder James than Miss Birdseye [...] Yet in her selfless and tireless humanity [...] she belongs in Henry Senior's company.' Miss Birdseye comes irresistibly to mind when, in a letter to William James which reflects on *The Bostonians* as 'a fiasco' (a word that resonates in the novel – see 3: 17), James immediately adds: 'But how can one murmur at one's success not being what one would like when one thinks of the pathetic, tragic ineffectualness of poor Father's lifelong effort, and the silence and oblivion that seems to have swallowed it up?'⁸

To the deaths of James's parents may be added that of James's younger brother Garth Wilkinson (Wilky) in November 1883. Along with Robertson (Bob) James, Wilky had fought in the Civil War, had become an officer in the 54th Massachusetts Regiment (the first to deploy African Americans in combat) and had been badly wounded in the assault on Fort Wagner in July 1863. He never really recovered, either physically or psychologically; his post-war career was a muddle of ill-founded business ventures, including a project to buy plantations in Florida and run them with free black workers. He borrowed from his family to sustain this and other doomed enterprises,

⁷ NSB, Ch. 6 (A 351).

⁸ Letter of 9 Oct. 1885, LL 181.

 INTRODUCTION

to the extent that when Henry James Senior made his will a few months before his death in 1882, he left nothing to Wilky on the grounds that he had already received, and spent, his share of the inheritance. As his father's executor, James spent the first half of 1883 – again, we must remember, the seed-time of *The Bostonians* – dealing with the consequences of this act of unfeeling justice. He took the lead in persuading William, Alice and Bob to ignore the will and to make provision for Wilky, and in this respect at least softened the last few painful months of his brother's life.

On a visit to Wilky in Milwaukee in January 1883, James witnessed for himself his brother's decline: 'a sadly broken and changed person'.⁹ The 'change' takes us back to the heroic time of Wilky's enlisting, and the first weeks and months of combat, which James recalls as a kind of apotheosis of his brother's masculine sociability. Wilky was at ease as a soldier, in his element, and his letters home were marked by what James calls the '*appreciation of the thing seen* [...] an affluence of life stood out from every line'.¹⁰ In 1883 the crippled outcome of Wilky's youthful valour might well have seemed a bitter comment on Northern idealism; his decline and death in the autumn of 1883 may have influenced James's decision to make the aftermath of the Civil War a significant factor in the story.

The life of one other James sibling has a bearing on the genesis of the novel. Alice James, Henry James's younger sister (1848–92) came to live in England (permanently, as it turned out) in November 1884. Like James himself, she was coming to terms with the loss of their mother and father, and like him she was single (the other James children were all married). Unlike James, however, Alice had known no other home than that of her parents. Although she avoided the fate of so many unmarried daughters in that she was financially independent, and so did not rely on the charity of her male relatives, she had no profession and her ill health had become her occupation.¹¹

⁹ Letter to William James, 23 Jan. 1883 (*HJL* 3:402).

¹⁰ *NSB*, Ch. 11 (A 485).

¹¹ Alice's financial security was the result of James's principled adjustment of the terms of their father's will.

 INTRODUCTION

When Alice arrived, James had only recently launched himself into the composition of *The Bostonians*, so that Alice was in his company, and to a certain extent in his care, during the production of the greater part of the novel. Her combination of intellectual strength and psychological fragility has been taken as a ‘New England female’ template for Olive Chancellor; but Olive lacks both Alice’s physical debility and her wit. Alice had a relish for gossip (James was disconcerted to discover after her death how many of his indiscreet anecdotes she had remembered and recorded); her letters and journals, filled with clever, often indecorous observation of herself and others, and mostly unconcerned with abstract ideas or political causes, are not at all like those one might imagine Olive writing. James’s friend Grace Norton worried that in coming to England Alice was going to make James’s life a misery, but James laughed off the suggestion: ‘I *may* be wrong, and it *may* wreck and blight my existence, but it will have to exert itself tremendously to do so.’ Alice, he insisted, was ‘unspeakably un-dependent and independent.’¹² As it happens, he underestimated how much time he would have to devote to caring for her, but he was right about her self-possession. Here – on the ground of strength of character – the link with Olive Chancellor becomes more plausible.

One particular aspect of Alice’s life has been put forward as a direct source for the novel’s depiction of female relationships. In his notebook entry of 8 April 1883, after transcribing his letter to Osgood outlining the plot of the novel, James wrote: ‘The relation of the two girls should be a study of one of those friendships between women which are so common in New England.’¹³ This has been taken as a periphrasis for lesbianism, and as an allusion to what was known in the period as the ‘Boston marriage’ – two women living together, whose relationship might, or might not, be sexual in nature, but who were ‘partners’ in either case. Among the models for such a couple, James would have known that of Annie Fields, widow of the publisher James T. Fields, and the novelist and short story writer Sarah Orne Jewett. Fields and Jewett lived together from 1881 at 148 Charles Street – the original, as Boston readers immediately recognized, of Olive Chancellor’s house,

¹² Letter of 3 Nov. 1884; *HJL* 3:52.

¹³ *CN* 19.

INTRODUCTION

with its 'queer corridor-shaped drawing-room' and view over the Back Bay (3: 16–18).¹⁴ Alice James's friendship was with a young woman of her own age, Katharine Peabody Loring, whom she met in 1875; in 1879, after holidaying with Katharine in the Adirondacks, Alice wrote to a friend: 'I wish you could know Katharine Loring, she is a most wonderful being. She has all the mere brute superiority which distinguishes man from woman combined with all the distinctive feminine virtues. There is nothing she cannot do from hewing wood and drawing water to driving run-away horses and educating all the women in North America.'¹⁵ Loring both cared for Alice as an invalid, and encouraged her to break through her invalidism. By 1881, when they travelled to England together, their companionship appeared to James to be both intense and exclusive. 'Alice and Miss L. are very independent of me,' he wrote to his parents in August, '—& A. indeed seems so extraordinarily fond of Miss L. that a third person is rather a superfluous appendage.'¹⁶ When Alice returned to England in 1884, Katharine was with her — Alice's nurse, amanuensis, companion, friend, possibly lover. But their friendship, however intimate, does not really correspond to that between Olive and Verena, except insofar as we have some evidence that Alice was possessive about Katharine and resented claims made on her by others.¹⁷ Loring was Alice's social and intellectual equal, not her protégée, and did not resemble Verena, either physically or temperamentally, any more than Alice resembled Olive. On the other hand the closeness of the two women, their absorption in each other, did offer James a model of female attachment — even if such an attachment is presented, in *The Bostonians*, only to be broken.

¹⁴ In one of his last published pieces, 'Mr. and Mrs. James T. Fields', which appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in July 1915, James wrote that Jewett's 'prevailing presence in her [Fields's] life had come little by little to give it something like a new centre [...] She [Jewett] had come to Mrs. Fields as an adoptive daughter, both a sharer and sustainer, and nothing could more have warmed the ancient faith of their [...] disoriented countryman than the association of the elder and younger lady in such an emphasized susceptibility' (*LC* 174–5).

¹⁵ To Sara Sedgwick Darwin, 9 Aug. 1879, in *AJ* 82.

¹⁶ Cited in *Lewis* 325.

¹⁷ *Lewis*, citing Jean Strouse's biography of Alice James (1980), describes 'a pattern of response, whereby Alice took to her bed as a way of expressing displeasure at having to share Katharine Loring with anyone else' (p. 324).

 INTRODUCTION

Historical Contexts

(1) *The Civil War and the South*

James wrote three short stories on Civil War subjects: ‘The Story of a Year’ (1865); ‘Poor Richard’ (1867); and ‘A Most Extraordinary Case’ (1868).¹⁸ He was revising the two last for republication in *Stories Revived* (1885), so their attitude to the conflict does come into play as part of the background to the composition of the novel.¹⁹ All three stories feature romances between young women and Union soldiers; none has a happy ending; none features a character from the Confederate side. The war itself is rarely discussed, and the Northern patriotism of the characters is mostly taken for granted. A rare exception is the exchange in ‘Poor Richard’ between Gertrude Whittaker and Major Luttrell when he gives her the news of the death of Captain Severn, the man she loved. To Gertrude’s outburst that war is ‘an infamy’ and ‘a miserable business for those who stay at home, and do the thinking and the—the *missing*! [...] a miserable business for women’, the Major replies:

“War is certainly an abomination, both at home and in the field. But as wars go, Miss Whittaker, our own is a very satisfactory one. It involves important issues. It won’t leave us as it found us. We are in the midst of a revolution, and what is a revolution but a turning upside down? It makes sad work with our habits and theories—our traditions and convictions. But, on the other hand,” Luttrell pursued, warming to his task, “it leaves something untouched which is better than these—I mean our capacity to *feel*, Miss Whittaker.”

With characteristic irony, James places the ‘public’ or political justification of the war in the mouth of a hypocritical scoundrel: Luttrell is angling for Gertrude’s money and his turn towards ‘feeling’ at the end of his speech is a calculated ploy. Although Gertrude’s polemic finds an echo in *The Bostonians* (e.g. the passage in Verena’s speech at Miss Birdseye’s beginning

¹⁸ See Vivian Zenari, ‘Henry James’s Civil War Stories: The Homefront Experience and War Romance’, *War, Literature & the Arts* 27 (2015).

¹⁹ Neither was included in the *New York Edition*; ‘The Story of a Year’, which appeared in the *Atlantic Magazine*, was never reprinted.

 INTRODUCTION

‘Wars, always more wars’ (8: 56)), her emphasis on its being ‘a miserable business for those who stay at home [...] a miserable business for women’ is less in evidence. Indeed, Major Luttrell’s formulaic phrases about the war being ‘a revolution’, ‘a turning upside down’ which will challenge ‘traditions and convictions’, are transposed in the novel into the domain of the feminist struggle, which for Olive is ‘the great, the just revolution’ (5: 34), while Mrs Farrinder is described as ‘the great leader of the feminine revolution’ (19: 143). Just as the movement for women’s rights could be seen as the successor to abolitionism, so another ‘civil war’ might be thought of as raging in America, this time between the sexes. As has often been remarked, the novel is filled from beginning to end with military imagery: Miss Birdseye hopes that Mrs Farrinder will ‘favour the company with a few reminiscences of her last campaign’ (4: 30) and Basil later learns that Verena ‘was to take the field in the manner of Mrs. Farrinder, for a winter campaign, carrying with her a tremendous big gun’ (38: 343). The internecine aspect of the Civil War is represented by Olive’s declaration to Verena that most men’s hatred and scorn for their movement is inveterate, that they want to ‘stamp it out [...] it is war upon us to the knife’ (17: 122), a phrase later applied to her personal struggle with Basil (37: 335).

In a novel where both author and characters deal in national, regional, social and cultural ‘types’, the depiction of Basil Ransom articulates a number of preconceptions about ‘the South’ which would have been familiar to the novel’s (mostly) Northern readership; but these preconceptions are not necessarily fixed through the course of the novel. Take, for example, the concept of Southern ‘chivalry’. When Mrs Luna first employs the term (1: 9) it implies that Southern gentlemen are more ‘gallant’ and courteous towards women than their Yankee counterparts; her use of it is knowing, as is Olive’s (6: 36); and it emerges in the ‘manner of Mississippi’, with its ‘richness of compliment’, which Basil displays towards Dr Prance in the same chapter (p. 38). Yet Basil himself, although he sees nothing funny in the proposition that ‘whatever might be the defects of Southern gentlemen, they were at any rate remarkable for their chivalry’ (21: 171), later denies Olive’s right to be treated ‘chivalrously’ in the contest for Verena (38: 342). By this time the term has become more complex, more ambivalent. It hides as much as it reveals. The whole treatment of the relation between North and South follows

INTRODUCTION

this trajectory from an apparently unproblematic, and potentially comic, play of received ideas to something less familiar, and less comforting.²⁰

James's models for Southern character-types and opinions were predominantly literary. He would have known modern classics such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), which he recalled in his autobiography as 'much less a book than a state of vision, of feeling and of consciousness, in which [people] didn't sit and read and appraise and pass the time, but walked and talked and laughed and cried'.²¹ In the 1870s he formed a close friendship with the British-born actress Fanny Kemble, who had married into a slaveholding family and recorded her experiences in *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation* (1863). He knew the work of several contemporary Southern writers, notably George Washington Cable, and he would have been aware of Cable's contributions to the debates over the future of the South conducted in the *Century* around the time the novel was serialized (see below). But he had no personal experience of this part of America when he wrote *The Bostonians*. He had never been south of Washington, and his acquaintance with Southerners (white or black) was, with a few exceptions, extremely limited. One of these exceptions is important because James acknowledges it as a source for the figure of Basil Ransom.²² In May 1885, the politician and author John Hay wrote to James to tell him that his friend Lucius Lamar, Senator for Mississippi and newly appointed Secretary of the Interior, admired the depiction of Basil (he would by then have seen the first three instalments of the serial in the *Century*). 'I am immensely touched & gratified by your friendly note anent the *Bostonians* & the noble Lamar,' James responded.

²⁰ Southern 'chivalry' is ironically treated in a letter written from the front during the Civil War by James's brother Wilky. Wilky remarks that most of the Southern forces facing them 'are militia composed of old men and boys, the flower of the chivalry being just now engaged with Sherman at Savannah. We hear very heavy firing in that direction this morning, and I guess the chivalry is getting the worst of it' (NSB, Ch. 11 (A 492).

²¹ SBO, Ch. 12 (A 100).

²² Ian F. A. Bell suggests that the name 'Ransom' derives from Emerson's 'Boston Hymn', which James heard Emerson recite at the Music Hall on 31 December 1862, the eve of the Emancipation Proclamation: 'Pay ransom to the owner / And fill the bag to the brim. / Who is the owner? The slave is owner, / And ever was. Pay *him!*' ('Language, Setting, and Self in *The Bostonians*', *Modern Language Quarterly* 49.3 (Sept. 1988), 211–38).

 INTRODUCTION

It was a kind thought in you that led you to repeat to me his appreciative judgment of my rather reckless attempt to represent a youthful Southron. It makes me believe for a moment that that attempt is less futile than it has seemed to me on seeing the story in print; & I am delighted, at any rate, that the benevolent Senator should have recognized in it some intelligence of intention, some happy divination. He himself, for that matter is in it a little, for I met him once or twice in Washington & he is one of the few very Mississippians with whom I have had the pleasure of conversing. Basil Ransom is made up of wandering airs & chance impressions, & I fear that as the story goes on he doesn't become as solid as he ought to be. He remains a rather vague & artificial creation, & so far as he looks at all real, is only *fait de chic* [done off the cuff], as the French say. But if you ever get a chance, without betraying to Lamar that you betrayed him, do whisper to him that it gave me very great pleasure to know that in the figure of B.R. he did recognize something human & Mississippian.²³

Portraits of Lamar show a handsome man with flowing hair and deep-set eyes. He was famous for his oratory and his courtly 'Southern' manner, and when James says of Basil that he had a head 'to be seen above the level of a crowd, on some judicial bench or political platform, or even on a bronze medal' (1: 6) there is little doubt that he has Lamar in mind. (The point about the 'bronze medal' is strengthened when we take into account Lamar's full classical name – Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar.) But the differences are equally striking. Lamar (1825–93) was thirty-six years old when the Civil War began, considerably older than Ransom, who is still a 'young man' at the time of the novel. Lamar was a senior officer and statesman, who wrote the official Mississippi Ordinance of Secession, raised his own regiment, the 19th Mississippi Infantry, and served as an envoy in the Confederate government. The conversations between Lamar and James are unlikely to have shaped the depiction of Basil as a political and social thinker – it is inconceivable, for example, that Lamar would have given to James the kind of 'historical summary of the slavery-question' that Basil gives to Verena, in which he characterizes it as an 'example of human imbecility' (38: 345).

²³ Letter of 13 May 1885, *LL* 175–6. James uses '*fait de chic*' as a criticism of Daudet's depiction of Mme Autheman in *L'Évangéliste*: see below, p. lxxviii.

 INTRODUCTION

A second exception to James's ignorance is more important; it refers to an intense experience of childhood. In his account of the family's New York neighbours when they lived on Fourteenth Street (1847–55), James speaks of 'the southern glow of the Norcoms, who had lately arrived *en masse* from Louisville and had improvised a fine old Kentucky home in the last house of our row'.²⁴ James gives what seems at first like a nostalgic and clichéd picture of this 'southern glow of the Norcoms', which includes 'the large, the lavish, ease of their hospitality', centred on 'a glazed southern gallery, known to its occupants as the "poo'ch"', and featuring 'the free, quite the profuse, consumption of hot cakes and molasses'.²⁵ And the flavour of the Old South was completed by the fact that the Norcoms had brought with them 'two pieces of precious property [...] the pair of affectionate black retainers whose presence contributed most to their exotic note'.²⁶ The James children are enthralled:

We revelled in the fact that Davy and Aunt Sylvia (pronounced An'silvy,) a light-brown lad with extraordinarily shining eyes and his straight, grave, deeper-coloured mother, not radiant as to anything but her vivid turban, had been born and kept in slavery of the most approved pattern and such as this intensity of their condition made them a joy, a joy to the curious mind, to consort with.

But the 'curious mind' of the James children – and that of the reader of this text – is in for a shock:

What was not our dismay therefore when we suddenly learnt—it must have blown right up and down the street—that mother and son had fled, in the dead of night, from bondage? had taken advantage of their visit to the North simply to leave the house and not return, covering their tracks, successfully disappearing. They had never been for us so beautifully slaves as in this achievement of their freedom; for they did brilliantly achieve it—they escaped, on northern soil, beyond recall or recovery.

²⁴ *SBO*, Ch. 18 (A 151). The significance of the Norcoms for *The Bostonians* was first pointed out by Charles R. Anderson in 'James's Portrait of the Southerner', *American Literature* 27 (1955), 309–31. Anderson does not, however, mention the slaves in the Norcom household.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 152.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 152–3.

 INTRODUCTION

The hammer-blows at the end of that last sentence demolish the sickly illusions ('affectionate black retainers') which James has allowed, if not encouraged us to build up. In the passage that follows he broadens the scope of his analysis:

I think we had already then, on the spot, the sense of some degree of presence at the making of history; the question of what persons of colour and of their condition might or mightn't do was intensely in the air; this was exactly the season of the freshness of Mrs. Stowe's great novel.²⁷

The real-life mother and son do what the fugitive slave Eliza and her child do in Chapter 8 of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, when they escape their pursuers by crossing the treacherous ice-floes on the Ohio River from Kentucky to Ohio. And although one of the iniquities against which Stowe's novel protested, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which obliged 'free' states to enforce the return of escaped slaves to their owners, was technically in force in New York, the Norcoms knew better than to try to make use of it, aggrieved though they were: these 'good people', as James sardonically calls them, 'who had been so fond of their humble dependents and supposed this affection returned, were shocked at such ingratitude, though I remember taking a vague little inward Northern comfort in their inability, in their discreet decision, not to raise the hue and cry'.

With ironic symmetry, the Norcoms themselves disappear from Fourteenth Street as suddenly as their slaves. 'I don't remember their going,' James remarks,

nor any pangs of parting; I remember only knowing with wonderment that they had gone, that obscurity had somehow engulfed them; and how afterwards, in the light of later things, memory and fancy attended them, figured their history as the public complication grew and the great intersectional plot thickened; felt even, absurdly and disproportionately, that they had helped one to "know Southerners".

The allusion to the Civil War – the culmination of 'the great intersectional plot' – implies that to 'know Southerners' in this context is to know their defeat, their bafflement, their disappearance. Only one trace of sympathetic

²⁷ Ibid. 153.

INTRODUCTION

identification with the South remains intact; once more it is typical, and this time it bears directly on *The Bostonians*. It concerns one of the older Norcom sons. ‘The slim, the sallow, the straight-haired and dark-eyed Eugene’, though not James’s ‘comrade of election’, nevertheless ‘haunted [his] imagination’: ‘I cherished the thought of the fine fearless young fire-eater he would have become and, when the War had broken out, I know not what dark but pitying vision of him stretched stark after a battle.’²⁸ Even allowing for the effect of retrospection here, we can see how the feeling for valour, whether in the ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ cause, enters not just into the portrait of Basil himself, but into the depiction of the scene in Harvard’s Memorial Hall in which he re-lives ‘the simple emotion of the old fighting-time’ (25: 213).

This ‘simple emotion’, however, with its even-handed distribution of pathos, does not sum up James’s response to the Civil War. Early in the novel Basil is given this reflection on the cause for which he had fought: ‘He had seen in his younger years one of the biggest failures that history commemorates, an immense national fiasco, and it had implanted in his mind a deep aversion to the ineffectual’ (3: 17).²⁹ We can add to this passage his view of slavery as an ‘example of human imbecility’ (38: 345). Whether or not it is probable that Basil would hold such views, they were certainly those of his author. The keywords *failure*, *fiasco*, *ineffectual*, *imbecility* defined James’s point of view at the time, and remained with him; variants of them occur in Chapter 12 of *The American Scene*, written after he had finally visited the South in person, forty years after the end of the Civil War. Wandering around Richmond, struggling to connect its utter lack of feature with the ‘lurid, fuliginous, vividly tragic’ city of his ‘young imagination’, he realizes that the very blankness of the place, with its ‘shallow vistas’ and ‘loose perspectives’, constitutes its historical truth:

I was tasting, mystically, of the very essence of the old Southern idea—the hugest fallacy, as it hovered there to one’s backward, one’s ranging vision, for which hundreds of thousands of men had ever laid down their lives.

²⁸ Ibid. 154.

²⁹ Some critics assume that the ‘immense national fiasco’ refers to the Civil War as a whole, but this is based on the mistaken assumption that ‘national’ refers to the United States, whereas Basil thinks of the Confederacy as a nation.

 INTRODUCTION

I was tasting of the very bitterness of the immense, grotesque, defeated project—the project, extravagant, fantastic, and to-day pathetic in its folly, of a vast Slave State (as the old term ran) artfully, savingly isolated in the world that was to contain it and trade with it. This was what everything round me meant—that that absurdity had once flourished there[.]³⁰

James was capable of ornate gestures of courtesy and compliment towards the South, but the flintiness of his opinion of its social and political structures never softened. In making the hero of *The Bostonians* a Southerner, and one who defeats his Northern rival, James was not expressing ambivalence about the Union cause, or nostalgia for the romantic Old South – a state of mind represented, in the novel, by Mrs Luna, with her fatuous vision of Basil as ‘a French *gentilhomme de province* after the Revolution’ (22: 183).

The fact that the novel was published in the *Century Magazine* has led some critics to suggest that, if not exactly sympathetic to the South, James was at least sympathetic to the project of national reconciliation promoted by the magazine and exemplified by one of its most celebrated features. In November 1884 – three months before the first instalment of *The Bostonians* appeared – the *Century* began a series of articles called *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, consisting mainly of personal accounts by veterans from both sides. The series ran for three years, during which time the circulation of the magazine rose from 127,000 to 225,000, making it the best-selling magazine in the United States. The aim (apart from profit) was to collect and present eye-witness testimony, and to foster a spirit of mutual respect and reconciliation in the (white) partisans of the Union and the Confederacy. The series caught the national mood. The period of ‘Reconstruction’ which followed the defeat of the Confederacy in 1865 had come to an end in 1876; the economic and political problems of re-absorbing the South into the Union were by no means over, and the position of African Americans in particular was a wound that was easier to ignore than to heal, but most white Americans wanted to believe that the future could be made to work, and that the revanchists in either camp were a spent force. Accounts of battles, or of debates about military strategy, could be exchanged and circulated

³⁰ AS 371. Note that both ‘lurid’ (12: 86) and ‘fuliginous’ (26: 219) are used in connection with Basil’s eyes.

INTRODUCTION

without rancour. When the series was published in volume form in 1887, the editors claimed that ‘Coincident with the progress of the series during the past three years, may be noted a marked increase in the number of fraternal meetings between Union and Confederate veterans, enforcing the conviction that the nation is restored in spirit as in fact, and that each side is contributing its share to the new heritage of manhood and peace.’³¹

As well as these documentary pieces, the *Century* published essays, poems and fiction which explicitly or implicitly promoted reconciliation between North and South. A good proportion of these pieces were by Southern writers, though their voices were not always in accord. George Washington Cable, author of *The Grandissimes* (1880), one of the major literary treatments of race in this period, was a Confederate veteran who espoused the cause of civil rights for freed slaves.³² His articles in the *Century*, such as ‘The Silent South’ and ‘The Freedman’s Case in Equity’ were opposed by other writers from the South, and it has been claimed that Cable’s viewpoint lost out in contrast to a more assertive and ‘unreconstructed’ Southern polemic by writers such as Thomas Nelson Page and Constance Cary Harrison.³³ The *Century*, according to this analysis, was more interested in integrating white Southerners than African Americans into the post-bellum Union.

The sub-genre of fiction that Nina Silber names ‘the romance of reunion’ plays an important role in this project.³⁴ Its staple plot is the marriage of a Northern soldier and a Southern belle, in which various losses and prejudices on either side have to be overcome and forgiven. The *Century* published novels and short stories that belong in this category, and James would have known of others. It is easy to imagine him deploring it, as he deplored all

³¹ Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buell (eds.), *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, 4 vols. (New York: Century Company, 1887), vol. I, p. ix. See, on this subject, Timothy P. Caron, “‘How Changeable Are the Events of War’: National Reconciliation in the *Century Magazine*’s ‘Battles and Leaders of the Civil War’”, *American Periodicals* 16.2 (2006), 151–71, and David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: the Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 173–81.

³² *The Grandissimes*, like Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*, is a historical novel whose action takes place before the Civil War, but which offers a parable of racial attitudes in its aftermath. James knew this work, which had been sent to him by W. D. Howells soon after it appeared (*LFL* 156).

³³ Caron, pp. 157–8.

³⁴ Nina Silber, *Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865–1900* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

INTRODUCTION

fiction that made art subservient to politics, but it is more interesting to speculate on its influence. We know, for example, that in his original scheme for *The Bostonians*, produced in April 1883, Basil Ransom was not denominated as a Southerner, but simply as Olive's cousin, who had spent ten years in the West. In the absence of any other information, we might well assume that he was a Northerner, like his cousin. By the late summer of 1884, when James actually began writing the novel, he had become a Southerner.³⁵ The effect, as several critics have pointed out, is to make *The Bostonians* a 'romance of reunion' in reverse, in which a Southern soldier marries a Northern belle; but it also partakes of the spirit of *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* by staging a kind of 'fraternal' encounter between Basil Ransom and his former foes at the Memorial Hall in Harvard (25: 212–13).

Setting the novel in the aftermath of the Civil War is not as simple as it might appear. Basil recalls 'the horrible period of reconstruction' (8: 52) but James makes no mention, either as narrator or from the point of view of any of the characters, of the particular circumstances that obtained in Mississippi in that period, such as the violent attempts to preserve white supremacy, or the advent of the sharecropping system, or the economic consequences of the low price of cotton, and he may simply not have been well-enough informed about such matters to make them part of Basil's 'back-story'. Basil does contemplate going into politics, and reflects that 'People might be found eccentric enough to vote for him in Mississippi' (21: 168), but this refers to his personal brand of Carlylean conservatism and has nothing to do with the actual conditions – fraught with racial violence and internecine struggles within the political parties – of electoral politics in Mississippi at the time. Later he entertains Mrs Luna with picturesque anecdotes, equally vague, of 'the ruin

³⁵ Herbert F. Smith and Michael Peinovich argue that James made this change in response to a specific request by the magazine's editor, R. W. Gilder: 'Doubtless the agreement that started James to work on *The Bostonians* in April 1883 was for some form of novel that would help in the "reconciliation" of North and South that seemed to be the *Century's* self-imposed duty of the period. James only had to make one change in his original plan for the novel to fit the *Century* formula: he converted Basil Ransom from a Westerner to a native of Mississippi' ('*The Bostonians: Creation and Revision*', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 73 (May 1969), 298–308 (p. 300)). However, James did not start work on *The Bostonians* in April 1883, but over a year later; and Basil was not originally a 'Westerner', but someone who has spent time in the West. There is no documentary evidence that Gilder asked James to make Basil a Southerner so that the novel would 'fit the *Century* formula'.

INTRODUCTION

wrought by the war, the dilapidated gentry, the queer types of superannuated fire-eaters, ragged and unreconciled, all the pathos and all the comedy of it' (22: 183), stories whose real aim is to prevent her from making any further sexual advances. It was not until his travels through the South in 1904–5 that James was able to speak from observation of the legacy of the Civil War in that region of America, in particular of the survival of visceral racism.³⁶ He meets a young Virginian in the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, whose father fought in the Civil War, and who proudly relates 'some paternal adventure which comprised a desperate evasion of capture, or worse, by the lucky smashing of the skull of a Union soldier'.³⁷ James can take this with equanimity, even with apparent humour; the young man is 'a fine contemporary young American, incapable, so to speak, of hurting a Northern fly—as Northern', and his Southern patriotism seems a kind of 'platonic passion'—until James remembers that 'though he wouldn't have hurt a Northern fly, there were things (ah, we had touched on some of these!) that, all fair, engaging, smiling, as he stood there, he would have done to a Southern negro'.³⁸ It is long after the event; too long to read into the countenance of this young man the lineaments of Basil Ransom.

It is noticeable that Basil's stories do not involve any mention of ex-slaves, but such negative evidence is hard to interpret. His views on slavery as an 'example of human imbecility' might mean that he believed whites and blacks to be equal, or the opposite: we don't know, because the novel gives us virtually no opportunity of finding out. African Americans are absent not just from Basil's stories, but from the novel as a whole. The *table d'hôte* at his dingy New York lodgings is presided over by 'a couple of shuffling negresses, who mingled in the conversation and indulged in low, mysterious chuckles when it took a facetious turn' (21: 166); at Olive Chancellor's hotel in Tenth Street, 'the gong announcing the repast was beaten, at the foot of the stairs, by a negro in a white jacket' (30: 251). These are the only African Americans who feature in the novel's contemporary setting. All other references are historical.

³⁶ He would, of course, have been aware of racism in the North, especially that which had manifested itself around the issue of black soldiers during the Civil War and Wilky's participation in the 54th regiment under Robert Gould Shaw.

³⁷ AS 388 (Ch. 12).

³⁸ Ibid. 388–9.

 INTRODUCTION

The Bostonians may avoid, or evade, confronting the racial aftermath of the Civil War, but nor does it really fit the project of reconciliation between white Americans of the North and South fostered by the *Century*. The marriage between Basil Ransom and Verena Tarrant is not such a reconciliation; still less is it a ‘victory’ for the South. Ransom by the end of the novel is arguably no longer a Southerner in this sectarian sense, and Verena is not converted to his point of view. He evidently has no intention of taking her back to Mississippi; their escape from Boston is, for better or worse, an escape to New York.

(2) *The Women’s Movement*

In his letter to Osgood of 8 April 1883, in which he outlined the plot of the new novel he proposed to write, James stated that it ‘relates an episode connected with the so-called “women’s movement”’, and he went on to define the aims of this movement as ‘the emancipation of woman, giving her the suffrage, releasing her from bondage, co-educating her with men &c.’.³⁹ After copying this letter into his notebook (with some changes), James added notes to himself, recording his belief that ‘the most salient and peculiar point in our social life’ was ‘the situation of women, the decline of the sentiment of sex, the agitation on their behalf’.⁴⁰ Taken together, these statements might suggest that James was well informed about the ‘women’s movement’, and that its political platform (suffrage, co-education) would feature in the novel. The first of these suppositions was contradicted by James himself; the second is only partially true. In a letter to his brother William of 13 June 1886, James accepted William’s criticism of the novel as too diffuse:

The whole thing is too long & dawdling. This came from the fact (partly) that I had the sense of knowing terribly little about the kind of life I had attempted to describe—and felt a constant pressure to make the picture substantial by thinking it out—pencilling & “shading.” I was afraid of the

³⁹ LL 144–5. The passage from the letter relating to *The Bostonians* is reproduced in full in Appendix C, with variants from the text James copied into his notebook.

⁴⁰ CN 20.

INTRODUCTION

reproach (having *seen* so little of the whole business treated of,) of being superficial & cheap[.]⁴¹

To what extent, then, is it appropriate or helpful to measure James's representation of the 'women's movement' on an objective historical scale? Some of the broad outlines of his depiction of the movement are historically accurate, for example its close link with Abolitionism; as Margaret Fuller observed, many of the most active and prominent 'champions of the enslaved African' were women, and they applied the vocabulary of bondage and emancipation to both causes: 'As the friend of the negro assumes that one man cannot, by right, hold another in bondage, so should the friend of woman assume that man cannot, by right, lay even well-meant restrictions on women.'⁴² James was clearly also aware of the tendency among some American reformers to assume that the end of the Civil War and the emancipation of the slaves had somehow resolved the race issue in America, allowing them to turn their energies to other causes.⁴³ Yet the link between Abolitionism and feminism also marks one of the major blind spots in the novel, as far as historical accuracy is concerned. James has nothing to say, and may not have known about, the split within American feminism that followed the Civil War and centred on the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution. This Amendment, ratified on 9 July 1868, granted citizenship to 'all persons born or naturalized in the United States,' including freed slaves; it thus effectively established universal *male* suffrage for both whites and African Americans, but it left African American *women* in the same disenfranchised position as their white sisters. Activists such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton opposed what they saw as a betrayal of the traditional alliance between Abolitionism and feminism; on the other side, Lucy Stone and Julia Ward Howe, with the influential support of Frederick Douglass, argued that one of the crucial goals of emancipation, the equal basis of citizenship for all races, must not be thrown away. The two factions formed rival organizations, the radicals founding the National Woman Suffrage Association in May 1869, and the moderates the American Woman Suffrage Association in November of the same year; the two did not

⁴¹ *LL* 184.

⁴² *W19C* 14, 20.

⁴³ See the exchange on this subject between Basil and Miss Birdseye in 23: 215.

INTRODUCTION

merge into the National American Woman Suffrage Association until 1890. At the time the novel is set, therefore, as well as when it was published, this schism was still in existence; but there is no evidence that the leading feminist in the novel, Mrs Farrinder, belongs to either side; rather, she gives the impression of being an independent agent with her own campaigning and fundraising organization.⁴⁴ James does portray a rift within the women's movement, but it is personal, not ideological, caused by a clash of 'imperial' egos between Olive and Mrs Farrinder (19: 143–4).

The same vagueness affects the depiction of the 'Female Convention' in Boston at which Verena has her first public success. Such conventions had been a feature of the women's movement since the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, which produced a 'Declaration of Sentiments', one of the founding documents of American feminism.⁴⁵ But by the time of the novel the movement was no longer unified, and conventions proliferated on all sides, some devoted to single issues such as the suffrage, others to a broader platform. None, however, corresponds to the event described in *The Bostonians*. When we first hear of it, it is described as 'a grand Female Convention' in Boston, at which Mrs Farrinder is to preside (19: 143). Later, Basil hears from Mrs Luna in New York that one of her friends in Boston sent her a copy of the *Boston Evening Transcript* with a 'report of [Verena's] great speech' at the convention (22: 180); but Mrs Farrinder is not mentioned, nor does she figure in Miss Birdseye's tribute to Verena's 'great success' (23: 192). Verena herself gives an enthusiastic account to Basil of the 'crowd of people and of ideas' and the 'great thoughts and brilliant sayings [that] flew round like darting fire-flies' (25: 208), but without going into detail about the convention's specific aims, or its national political orientation.

Of the issues that preoccupied campaigners for women's rights in the post-bellum period, only the suffrage and co-education feature in the novel; others, such as workers' rights, entry into the professions, property law, domestic violence and prostitution, are not mentioned. More surprisingly, perhaps, there is very little debate about women's rights in general; the

⁴⁴ Other feminist organizations did exist, for example the American Association for the Advancement of Women, whose focus was mainly on education; one of its co-founders, Maria Mitchell, was the first professional woman astronomer in America and taught at Vassar College.

⁴⁵ Reprinted in *AFI* 10–12. The 'Declaration' was pointedly modelled on the Declaration of Independence.

INTRODUCTION

exchange between Basil and Verena during their outing in Central Park (34: 291–4) is the only substantial passage of argument in the novel between a feminist and anti-feminist point of view.

One ‘live’ contemporary issue does feature in the novel, signalled by the presence of Dr Mary Prance. There was a fashion for stories about women doctors in the period, reflecting their increased numbers and visibility, and there were also many articles in British and American newspapers and magazines.⁴⁶ James’s ‘doctress’, with her all-female patient list, her Spartan lifestyle, her strong work ethic and her interest in medical research, was a credible figure, as reviewers (and at least one prominent woman doctor) remarked at the time; Wegener cites an essay by Sophia Jex-Blake, ‘one of England’s first officially accredited women doctors’, which appeared in 1893, and in which James is praised for his portrayal of Dr Prance: ‘For almost the first time, we feel that we are standing face to face with a real person, whom we might have met in the street any day, and whose characteristics are genuine and consistent from first to last.’⁴⁷ She is, moreover, typical in being not just an urban figure (most women doctors preferred to work in cities) but a Bostonian, since Boston at this period had a higher percentage

⁴⁶ See Frederick Wegener, ‘“A Line of Her Own”: Henry James’s “Sturdy Little Doctress” and the Medical Woman as Literary Type in Gilded-Age America,’ *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 39.2 (Summer 1997), 139–80. Wegener cites three American novels close in time to *The Bostonians*: William Dean Howells’s novel *Dr. Breen’s Practice* (1881); Elizabeth Stuart Phelps’s *Doctor Zay* (1882); and Sarah Orne Jewett’s *A Country Doctor*, 1884. For more on *Dr. Breen’s Practice* see the section on Howells below.

⁴⁷ ‘Medical Women in Fiction,’ *Nineteenth Century* 33 [Feb. 1893] 261; cited Wegener, p. 140. Dr Prance’s interest in medical research also aligns her with Dr Lydgate in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* (1872). Lydgate’s prospects are frustrated by his disastrous marriage to the pretty, self-centred Rosamond Vincy; Dr Prance has a greater chance of success because she is unmarried and (we infer) has no wish to marry. Robert Emmett Long, in ‘A Source for Dr Mary Prance in *The Bostonians*,’ *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 19.1 (June 1964), 87–8, suggests that James’s model was indeed ‘a real person,’ Dr Mary Walker (1832–1919), who graduated from Geneva Medical College (in upstate New York) in 1855 and served in the Civil War; she is the only woman (to date) to have received the Medal of Honor. Long’s suggestion that James transmuted ‘Mary Walker’ to ‘Mary Prance’ is ingenious, but the differences are too great: Walker married a fellow medical student (whom she later divorced), and did not practise medicine after the Civil War; she became an outspoken social reformer, and by the 1880s was known principally as an advocate of female suffrage.

INTRODUCTION

of female physicians than any other American city.⁴⁸ On the other hand, her being celibate, or asexual (Basil Ransom treats her as a kind of honorary man), accords more with a popular stereotype; in fact a majority of women doctors were married.⁴⁹ It is harder to determine whether Dr Prance's scepticism as regards women's rights in general is representative of her profession. As Wegener notes, Sophia Jex-Blake cites her view, expressed to Basil, that 'the time hadn't come when a lady-doctor was sent for by a gentleman, and she hoped it never would, though some people seemed to think that this was what lady-doctors were working for' (6: 39) as 'an illustration of the authenticity of James's portrayal'; but there were radical voices on the other side of the question.⁵⁰ As for Olive, she comes to dislike Dr Prance precisely because she has 'no sympathy with their movement, no general ideas', and confines herself to 'petty questions of physiological science and of her own professional activity' (37: 329).

What, in fact, does Olive want? What kind of feminism does she advocate? The novel does not give a clear answer. Verena's speeches emphasize a change of consciousness (in men) rather than a mere change in behaviour, but when Olive challenges Verena to state what she would consider to be 'success' in their undertaking, she has the 'right' answer ready to hand: "'Producing a pressure that shall be irresistible. Causing certain laws to be repealed by Congress and by the State legislatures, and others to be enacted'" (18: 129). Admittedly Verena is teasing Olive here by 'converting one of their most sacred formulas into a pleasantry', but that doesn't make the formula any less serious. Although a historical emphasis on women's suffering can be found in feminist rhetoric,⁵¹ it rarely takes the extreme form that Olive gives to it, and Olive's hatred of men 'as a class' (3: 22) was actively disavowed by most leading feminists. Her revanchist programme ('after so

⁴⁸ Wegener, pp. 146 and 173 n.22, citing Mary Roth Walsh, *Doctors Wanted: No Women Need Apply: Sexual Barriers in the Medical Profession, 1835–1975* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977).

⁴⁹ The marriage statistics for women doctors are cited in Wegener, p. 175 n.31.

⁵⁰ Wegener, pp. 157–8. Wegener notes that Basil envisages consulting Dr Prance in Chapter 35 (p. 309).

⁵¹ See, for example, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's address to the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848: 'wherever we turn, the history of woman is sad and dark, without any alleviating circumstances, nothing from which we can draw consolation' (AF I 15).

INTRODUCTION

many ages of wrong [...] men must take *their* turn, men must pay!’ (20: 161)) did not form part of any mainstream feminist programme in the period.

A particular problem is the issue of sexual relations. During Olive’s first long conversation with Verena, in Chapter 11, the subject of ‘the marriage-tie’ comes up, precipitating a clash between Olive’s radical ideas and her social conservatism. Verena has ‘grown up among lady-editors of newspapers advocating new religions, and people who disapproved of the marriage-tie’, and Olive dislikes ‘the “atmosphere” of circles in which such institutions were called into question’; when Verena declares that she ‘prefer[s] free unions’, Olive has to ‘[hold] her breath an instant; such an idea was so disagreeable to her’ (p. 75). Why should this be the case? The link between marriage as a political institution and as a form of sexual oppression had long since been articulated in Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792): ‘The divine right of husbands, like the divine rights of kings, may, it is to be hoped, in this enlightened age, be contested without danger.’ The critique of marriage was continually brought up by American feminists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who wrote in 1860 that ‘the marriage question [...] lies at the very foundation of all progress.’⁵² But Olive’s opposition is not to this idea in itself, but to its social habitat; she is thinking specifically of Verena’s upbringing on the margins of respectability, and she also has a general ‘bourgeois’ aversion to Bohemianism and what we would now call ‘alternative lifestyles’. Someone like Victoria C. Woodhull, editor of *Woodhull & Claflin’s Weekly*, exemplifies the kind of ‘lady-editor’ who horrifies Olive. She had been, like Selah Tarrant, a ‘magnetic healer’, and in 1872 she ran for President as the candidate of the Equal Rights Party, only to be arrested on obscenity charges a few days before the poll. Her ‘oration’ *The Elixir of Life*, delivered at the tenth annual convention of the American Association of Spiritualists in 1873, speaks openly about female sexual satisfaction, orgasm and masturbation, and strongly advocates complete sexual freedom: ‘All sexual love based upon consent must be free love, since there is no compulsion involved.’⁵³ Woodhull’s views are marked by feminist

⁵² Cited in Françoise Basch, ‘Women’s Rights and the Wrongs of Marriage in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America’, *History Workshop Journal* 22.1 (1986), 21.

⁵³ AF III 23. See also 10: 72 and note. Verena uses the phrase ‘the elixir of life’ in her speech at Mrs Burrage’s, though not (or not directly) in a sexual sense: see 28: 234 and note.

 INTRODUCTION

polemic, but not in a way that would appeal to Olive. For example, she claims that ‘every woman [...] know[s] that the degenerate and demoralized condition of female humanity is to be attributed to false sexual relations; but who among them have the courage to declare it?’ (ibid. 18). Olive’s social conservatism does not in itself account for the depth of her revulsion, which is a revulsion from heterosexuality itself. According to Woodhull, ‘freedom for love’ will result in ‘the elevation of humanity out of the awful chasm of misery and despair into which it has been precipitated by slavery [...] to purity, peace and happiness’ (AF III 23). This millenarian idea is echoed by Verena in her speech at Mrs Burrage’s *soirée*, in which she proclaims her vision of an earthly paradise, a world ‘redeemed, transfigured’ by the influence of women, and which requires ‘simply freedom’ to bring about (28: 235). Verena does not refer directly to sexual freedom, but her ‘vision’ is still founded on the relationship between men and women: ‘I am not here to recriminate, nor to deepen the gulf that already yawns between the sexes, and I don’t accept the doctrine that they are natural enemies, since my plea is for a union far more intimate—provided it be equal—than any that the sages and philosophers of former times have ever dreamed of’ (28: 235).⁵⁴ We know that Olive *does* believe that men and women are ‘natural enemies’, and that her attitude to men precludes ‘union’ with them of any kind; her deepest yearning is for ‘a friend of *her own sex* with whom she might have a union of soul’ (11: 71, emphasis added). Separatism, based on same-sex desire, is incompatible with a programme of ‘equal rights’, one of whose goals is to heal the division between the sexes. The novel proposes no solution to this knot.

(3) *Publicity*

The Bostonians belongs to a cluster of works by James in the 1880s and 1890s in which modern ‘publicity’ (comprising journalism, advertising and what we would now call ‘celebrity culture’) is a central concern, and this period coincides with James’s own most sustained effort to meet the demands of the

⁵⁴ Verena’s rhetoric here echoes that of Margaret Fuller in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*; see n. 507 (p. 491).

INTRODUCTION

literary marketplace.⁵⁵ James's plan for the novel called 'indispensably' for 'a type of newspaper man—the man whose ideal is the energetic reporter'; the story would deal with 'the impudent invasion of privacy—the extinction of all conception of privacy, etc.'⁵⁶ This phenomenon is central to modernity, the force that corrupts Olive Chancellor's integrity and commodifies Verena's genius, and to which only the ambiguous figure of Basil Ransom offers any real resistance.

James lived through a period in which the expansion of literacy in Europe and America reached unprecedented levels, and in which the number of newspapers and magazines catering for this vast new reading public grew in proportion – a process driven by advances in the technologies of printing and communication, and by the development of recognizably modern methods of marketing and distribution. But the expansion of literacy, or the spread of railways, or the invention of the electric telegraph, do not in themselves account for the evil that James wants to expose. It is more to do with cultural politics – how institutions and individuals responded to these material developments.

The theme of publicity in the novel has two linked strands. One concerns the aggressive intrusiveness of American newspapers, conducted by mercenary editors and 'energetic reporters'. James was not the first American novelist to satirize this type; Michael Anesko draws particular attention to W. D. Howells's *A Modern Instance* (1882), both because of Howells's influence on James in this period, and because, with the character of the newspaperman Bartley Hubbard, Howells was 'one of our first novelists to discern the peculiar social significance of the modern newspaper and to gauge its effects on American manners'.⁵⁷ In *The Bostonians*, Matthias Pardon is described as having 'begun his career, at the age of fourteen' by

⁵⁵ See Michael Anesko's account in *FM*, esp. Ch. 5, 'Melodrama in the Marketplace: the Making of *The Bostonians*'.

⁵⁶ *CN* 19; the passage is quoted in full in Appendix B.

⁵⁷ *LFL* 173. For Howells's influence see below (p. xciii). *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, which began its serialization in the *Century* in November 1884 (three months before *The Bostonians*) opens with Silas Lapham being interviewed by Bartley Hubbard, who is given a kind of cameo role as a shrewd journalist exploiting his subject's vanity and naiveté. James went on to make the interview of an unwitting victim by an unscrupulous reporter central to his novella *The Reverberator* (1888).

 INTRODUCTION

snooping in hotel registers ‘on behalf of a vigilant public opinion, the pride of a democratic State, to the great end of preventing the American citizen from attempting clandestine journeys’ (16: 109–10). The conclusion is bathetic, but the bathos masks a serious point about the surveillance to which the ‘American citizen’ is subject.

This form of surveillance has another ancestor, namely Puritanism – the kind described in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, in which a religious community exacts conformity from its members and generates a pathological obsession with secrecy and discovery. Such a mentality forms part of the inheritance of *The Bostonians*, but what is new, in the world James depicts, is the commercial element. Democracy may mean that one’s business is no longer private, but modern journalism turns that notion another way. One’s privacy becomes its business; a newspaper ‘story’ packages its subject and circulates it for profit. We witness Verena Tarrant being made into a ‘commodity’ in the course of the novel, a process that culminates in her planned appearance at the Music Hall, where Basil sees her ‘immensely advertised’ (41: 372). In Basil’s view, the nexus of publicity and profit is doubly, trebly damaging. After witnessing Verena’s performance at Mrs Burrage’s New York *soirée*, he reflects that

she might easily have a big career, like that of a distinguished actress or singer [...] The sort of thing she was able to do, to say, was an article for which there was more and more demand—fluent, pretty, third-rate palaver, conscious or unconscious perfected humbug; the stupid, gregarious, gullible public, the enlightened democracy of his native land, could swallow unlimited draughts of it. (33: 280)

Basil’s radical conservative vision links democracy to capitalism, seeing them indeed as interdependent: ideas become commodities in a market which favours ‘third-rate palaver’, since the collective taste will always tend towards the simplistic and the commonplace. The market and the public reinforce (or corrupt) each other, so that the public’s ‘demand’ for something easy to swallow is met by the willingness of producers and performers to supply it for financial gain. ‘Publicity’ is the gearing of this connection between democracy and the market.

James himself could not escape involvement in this process. In 1882 W. D. Howells published an article on his friend in the *Century*, which

INTRODUCTION

is now seen as marking an important stage in the development of nineteenth-century American realism, but which at the time got both its author and his subject into trouble. In it Howells stated that the ‘new school’ of fiction, of which James was the ‘chief exemplar’, practised a ‘finer art’ than that of Dickens and Thackeray.⁵⁸ Howells did not mean that James was a greater novelist than Dickens and Thackeray – he was speaking about a particular point of narrative technique – but journalists in Britain pounced on what they saw as American arrogance and pretension.⁵⁹ The fact that Howells’s article appeared in a magazine that regularly published James’s fiction was the subject of a scathing comment by the *Quarterly Review*:

Whatever may be the differences of opinion as to the value of the new ‘school,’ it must be acknowledged on all sides that a novelist enjoys an immense advantage in being a contributor to an illustrated magazine, which is ready not only to publish his works, but to issue elaborate articles on their merits—accompanied, as we have said, by that most affecting of souvenirs, a ‘portrait of the author,’ duly softened and idealized. The art of puffery gets ‘finer’ every day, whatever we may think about the art of novel-writing.⁶⁰

This accusation – unjust, but horribly plausible – struck home to James. The controversy was still running in March 1883, when he wrote to Howells: ‘articles about you & me are as thick as blackberries—we are daily immolated on the altar of Thackeray & Dickens.’⁶¹ He made his own subsequent article on Howells deliberately cool out of ‘a horror of appearing too mutual & reciprocal.’⁶² The *Quarterly*’s sneer at the ‘portrait of the author,’ and its reference to ‘the art of puffery,’ left an imprint on *The Bostonians*, in the scene at the Music Hall where photographs of Verena are hawked about in an ‘exhibition of enterprise and puffery’ (41: 375).

⁵⁸ ‘Henry James, Jr,’ *Century Magazine* 25 (Nov. 1882), 25–29 (LFL 229–35).

⁵⁹ Michael Anesko points out an editorial in the *New York Tribune* suggesting that American journalists were getting back at Howells for his portrayal of their ‘vulgar little souls’ in the character of Bartley Hubbard in *A Modern Instance* (‘The Case of Mr. Howells,’ *New York Tribune*, 18 March 1883, LFL 174).

⁶⁰ [Louis John Jennings], ‘American Novels,’ *Quarterly Review* 155 (Jan. 1883), 219 (LFL 168).

⁶¹ Letter to Howells of 20 March 1883 (LFL 240).

⁶² Letter to Howells of 19 Oct. 1886 (LFL 256).

 INTRODUCTION

(4) *Public Speaking*

In Chapter 10, we learn that ‘the only very definite criticism’ that Mrs Tarrant, daughter of the leading Abolitionist Abraham Greenstreet, makes of her husband Selah is ‘that he didn’t know how to speak’:

He couldn’t hold the attention of an audience, he was not acceptable as a lecturer. [...] Public speaking had been a Greenstreet tradition, and if Mrs. Tarrant had been asked whether in her younger years she had ever supposed she should marry a mesmeric healer, she would have replied: ‘Well, I never thought I should marry a gentleman who would be silent on the platform!’ (p. 66)

The ‘Greenstreet tradition’ is a New England tradition; New England had been, since Puritan times, the home of the sermon as public and political event, and the tradition of public speaking was carried on by political oratory and by the main vehicle of intellectual culture in the first half of the nineteenth century, the lecture. Reform movements, notably Abolitionism, were powered by orators such as Frederick Douglass, and new movements such as Spiritualism gave rise to ‘inspirational speakers’ who could attract large audiences and command high fees. No wonder, then, that Mrs Tarrant feels blessed in being ‘the mother of an inspired maiden, a young lady from whose lips eloquence flowed in streams’ (p. 67).

Verena’s trajectory – from appearances at private gatherings such as Miss Birdseye’s to the carefully planned event at the Boston Music Hall which is meant to launch her national career – is thus set in a recognizable historical context; but it is also the subject of James’s critical scrutiny, as an older form of charismatic vocal performance becomes corrupted by the vices of publicity and commercialism. Verena’s ‘eloquence’ – at least according to Basil – is that of an actor or opera singer, voicing ideas and opinions not her own but scripted by others; her vocal gift itself partakes of the occult, casting a spell which operates without regard to the truth-value of what is expressed.

In terms of ‘conventional’ political oratory, James would have known about figures such as Anna Elizabeth Dickinson (1842–1932), whose career was in decline by the date of the novel but who had been a national celebrity in the 1860s and 1870s, as a speaker on the radical wing of the Republican party, and an outspoken Abolitionist and feminist. Like Verena, Dickinson came of what Miss Birdseye calls ‘old Abolitionist stock’ (4: 32), and like

INTRODUCTION

her, she made her *début* at a young age, with a speech to the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society in 1860. James probably knew that she was referred to as ‘the American Joan of Arc’, an analogy that Verena herself invokes (11: 76). Dickinson had several intense friendships with women, though whether James would have known about this aspect of her life is not certain.

Besides political oratory, the principal form of public speaking in the ‘Greenstreet tradition’ is the lecture, which inherits the moral and intellectual energies of the sermon. The transition between sermon and lecture is represented by Emerson’s famous ‘Divinity School Address’, delivered in 1838 to an audience of young men training for the ministry, but which marked Emerson’s decisive break with orthodox Christian doctrine, even in so attenuated a form as that of Unitarianism. But the significance of this occasion owed as much, in James’s retrospective vision, to Emerson’s personality as a speaker as to the content of the ‘Address’. Emerson’s ‘divine persuasiveness’, James wrote, was carried ‘by word of mouth, face to face, with a rare, irresistible voice and a beautiful mild, modest authority’.⁶³ In his biography of Hawthorne he identifies this quality as belonging to New England in its ‘keenly sentient period’:

One certainly envies the privilege of having heard the finest of Emerson’s orations poured forth in their early newness. They were the most poetical, the most beautiful productions of the American mind, and they were thoroughly local and national. They had a music and a magic, and when one remembers the remarkable charm of the speaker, the beautiful modulation of his utterances, one regrets in especial that one might not have been present on a certain occasion which made a sensation, an era—the delivery of an address to the Divinity School of Harvard University, on a summer evening in 1838. In the light, fresh American air, unthickened and undarkened by customs and institutions established, these things, as the phrase is, told.⁶⁴

‘Music and magic’, the ‘remarkable charm of the speaker’, ‘the beautiful modulation of his utterances’ – with a change of pronoun this could

⁶³ ‘The Life of Emerson’, *Macmillan’s Magazine*, Dec. 1887; repr. with the simpler title ‘Emerson’ in *Partial Portraits* (1888; *LC1* 255).

⁶⁴ *Hawthorne* (1879), Ch. 4 (*LC1* 384–5).

INTRODUCTION

be Verena; the difference is less gender than context, the ‘early newness’ of Emerson’s performance corresponding to the ‘light, fresh American air’ which is itself atmosphere, music and breath. Verena’s freshness, her unaffected charm, are out of time; she is a belated figure, whose hearers seek only to possess or exploit her. What is ‘thoroughly local and national’ about her career is articulated less in anything she herself utters than in the journalist Matthew Pardon’s coarse observation: ‘There’s money for some one in that girl; you see if she don’t have quite a run!’ (8: 57).

James did not have first-hand experience of Emerson’s ‘early newness’, but his father did; in this account of Emerson as a lecturer, written in 1868 though not published until 1904, Henry James Senior sounds as though he, too, has been listening to Verena Tarrant:

I tried assiduously during the early days of our intimacy to solve intellectually the mystery of his immense fascination; but I did not succeed. I could very well see what the charm was not. It did not the least consist, for example, in any intellectual mastery he exhibited; for what he mainly held to be true I could not help regarding as false, and what he mainly held to be false I regarded as true. [...] what the magic actually *was*, I could not at all divine, save that it was intensely personal, attaching much more to what he was in himself, or by nature, than to what he was in aspiration, or by culture. I often found myself, in fact, thinking: if this man were only a woman, I should be sure to fall in love with him. [...] no maiden ever appealed more potently to your enamoured and admiring sympathy.⁶⁵

We have here a model for Basil’s response to Verena: like Henry James Senior, he disregards the speaker’s ‘intellectual mastery’ in favour of her ‘intensely personal’ appeal; he too *hears* her voice but does not *listen* to what she says. It is an immersive experience, and it lends itself readily to an erotic vocabulary infused with the occult: ‘intimacy’, ‘fascination’, ‘charm’, ‘magic’, ‘enamoured’. Henry James Senior compares Emerson to a ‘maiden’ whose utterance ‘appealed [...] to your enamoured and admiring sympathy’, and Basil compares Verena to the most famous literary instance of this type, the Italian *improvisatrice* and heroine of Mme de Staël’s *Corinne*;

⁶⁵ Henry James Sr, ‘Emerson’, *The Atlantic*, Dec. 1904; William James, in a prefatory note, gives the date as ‘1868, or thereabouts’, and states that it was ‘read a few times to private audiences’.

INTRODUCTION

ou l'Italie (1807). Staël's novel stages a conflict between Corinne's vocation and her doomed passion for the Scottish aristocrat Lord Nelvil, and Basil casts Verena as 'a New England Corinna, with a mission instead of a lyre' (28: 232).⁶⁶

Basil has in mind 'a chastened, modern, American version of the type' (*ibid.*), but there were plenty of examples of female inspirational speech which were just as modern, and just as American, but not at all 'chastened'. As John McClymer points out, James drew on the scandalous, and immensely successful, figure of Cora L. V. Hatch, a spiritualist medium whose extempore speeches attracted huge audiences, and whose sensational love life contributed to her celebrity, or notoriety, in mid-century America.⁶⁷ James had attended one of Hatch's performances in New York in October 1863, but left before the conclusion of her speech, which consisted, he wrote to a friend, of 'a string of such arrant platitudes, that after about an hour of it, when there seemed to be no signs of a let-up we turned and fled. So much for Cora'.⁶⁸ McClymer suggests that the final dismissive remark should not be taken at face value, and that the impression made on James by Hatch was to bear fruit in *The Bostonians*. To begin with, Hatch is almost certainly the original of Mrs Ada T. P. Foat, the 'celebrated trance-lecturer' with whom Selah Tarrant was 'associated' at the Cayuga community, and whose biography Basil Ransom picks up, and puts down, at the Tarrant house in Cambridge.⁶⁹ Hatch's husband, self-styled 'Dr' B. F. Hatch, is a model for Selah Tarrant, whose medical qualifications are equally dubious; Dr Hatch, like Selah, dabbled in spiritualism and mesmeric healing, and his ministrations were especially directed at women. Verena, when we first encounter her at Miss Birdseye's, sounds very like a 'trance-lecturer', claiming that her inspiration has a mysterious origin, entering into a trance-like state under

⁶⁶ The terms 'improvisatrice' and 'New England Corinna' were also associated with Margaret Fuller: see n. 503 (pp. 489–90).

⁶⁷ John McClymer, 'Who Is Mrs. Ada T.P. Foat? And Why Should Historians Care?: An Historical Reading of Henry James' "The Bostonians"', *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 2.2 (April, 2003), 191–217.

⁶⁸ To Thomas Sergeant Perry, 1 Nov. 1863, *HJL* 1:44–5; cited McClymer, p. 193.

⁶⁹ Mrs Foat appears first in Chapter 10, where Mrs Tarrant recalls 'with bitterness' her lectures on 'the Summer-land' and her relationship with her husband (see p. 65 and note); for the biography, see 24: 196.

 INTRODUCTION

the influence of her father, beginning her speech ‘incoherently, almost inaudibly, as if she were talking in a dream’ and proceeding ‘as if she were listening for the prompter’ (8: 53–4). But by the end of the novel, when she is preparing her speech at the Music Hall, her performance has a title and a script, and is intensively rehearsed; as she tells Basil, ‘[s]he wasn’t going to trust to inspiration this time’ (38: 343). She has become, not a ‘trance-lecturer’ but simply a lecturer, and what she says comes from her reading and study under Olive’s guidance.

(5) *Mesmerism and Spiritualism*

(i) Mesmerism

Mesmerism took its name from its Austrian founder, Franz Mesmer (1734–1815), whose theory of ‘animal magnetism’ enjoyed a century-long vogue, until it was displaced by the more scientifically based practice of hypnotism. Mesmerism involved the practitioner making ‘passes’ over the head of the subject with his or her hands, thus influencing the flow of the ‘magnetic fluid’ which Mesmer believed to have a material, physiological basis. By the mid-nineteenth century the ‘mesmeric healer’, as Selah Tarrant is described to Basil Ransom (6: 40), was an established figure, claiming to cure both psychological and physical ailments. Boston, hospitable as ever to new social trends, offered a wide variety of ‘mesmeric’ and ‘magnetic’ treatments, some more medically minded than others; it should also be emphasized that the lines between mesmerism, spiritualism and other forms of occult practice such as clairvoyance were often blurred. ‘Sadie Johnson’, for example, practising at 14 Hanover St. in Boston, advertised herself as ‘the world-renowned medical and business clairvoyant, and magnetic physician’.⁷⁰ Mesmerism, like Spiritualism, retained a popular, ‘parlour-game’ aspect, and Mrs Farrinder, along with Basil Ransom, initially suspects that Verena’s performance at Miss Birdseye’s is going to have this frivolous character. Selah Tarrant’s method as a ‘healer’ is not described in detail, but since most of his ‘patients’ are women, I think we are meant to infer that his

⁷⁰ Broadside held at Harvard (Countway Medicine Rare Books BF1325 .J63), conjecturally dated Boston, 1879. A Boston newspaper advertisement in 1882 places her at 37 Tremont St.

INTRODUCTION

practice is morally as well as medically suspect; Dr Prance comes close to saying so in her disparaging comments about him to Basil (6: 40).

Mrs Tarrant's resentment at her husband's having 'magnetised her' (10: 66) springs from the popular association of mesmerism with superior willpower and the urge to dominate others. Verena repeats this impression, with increased emphasis, when she tells Olive that her father is 'wonderfully magnetic' (11: 72). Professor Fargo, in James's early story of that name, makes a (tipsy) speech on the subject:

"The great thing now is to be able to exercise a mysterious influence over living organisms. You can do it with your eye, you can do it with your voice, you can do it with certain motions of your hand—as thus, you perceive; you can do it with nothing at all by just setting your mind on it. [...] Some folks call it animal magnetism, but I call it spiritual magnetism."
 (CS II 24–5)⁷¹

In Daudet's *L'Évangéliste* (see below, *Literary sources*), the future Mme Autheman already possesses, as a young girl, 'la puissance magnétique de la parole et de ses regards' [the magnetic power of speech and of her looks] (Ch. 5).

On the other hand, 'magnetism' could be seen as a positive mental power, and Margaret Fuller associates it specifically with women:

The electrical, the magnetic element in Woman has not been fairly brought out at any period. Everything might be expected from it; she has far more of it than Man. This is commonly expressed by saying that her intuitions are more rapid and more correct [...] allow room enough, and the electric fluid will be found to invigorate and embellish, not destroy life. Such women are the great actresses, the songsters.⁷²

See also n. 576 (p. 505).

⁷¹ 'Professor Fargo' was published in the *Galaxy* 18.2 (Aug. 1874). James did not reprint the story; it was first reprinted in a posthumously published volume of uncollected tales, *Travelling Companions* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919). In 'A London Life' (1888) the elderly Lady Davenant does not recognize the term 'magnetic' when it is used by Mr Wendover, and assumes it is an Americanism: 'such a jargon as you *do* speak!' (CS III 487).

⁷² *W19C* 66, 67.

 INTRODUCTION

Mesmerism is allied to older forms of occult influence, denoted in the novel by repeated allusions to characters casting a ‘spell’ on others: Mrs Farrinder (5: 34), Olive (17: 123), Verena (17: 126), Mrs Luna (22: 175) and Basil (four times: 33: 287, 38: 337, 39: 356, 42: 384) are credited with this ability. ‘Spell’ is reinforced by ‘charm’, associated with Verena’s power over her audience (8: 54) and Olive’s over Verena (20: 148, where James himself comments on the word).

(ii) Spiritualism

Nineteenth-century Spiritualism began in 1848 with the ‘Rochester rappers’ – two sisters, Kate and Margaret Fox, aged twelve and ten, who lived near Rochester in New York State, and claimed to be in communication with a spirit who replied to their questions in coded ‘raps’. Forty years later they confessed that they had faked these communications (by cracking their toe-joints) – though the veracity of the confession itself was subsequently dismissed by believers. But by the 1880s the movement had already grown beyond refutation, with thousands of professional ‘mediums’ and a wide range of phenomena – rapping, table-turning, spirit-voices, musical performances, levitation, etc. Spiritualists were repeatedly challenged to provide scientific evidence of their ‘manifestations’; James has Selah Tarrant remember ‘a committee of gentlemen who had investigated the phenomena of the “materialization” of spirits, some ten years before, and had bent the fierce light of the scientific method upon him’, probably alluding to a real-life investigation conducted by a group of Harvard professors (see 18: 136 and note). But despite the regular unmasking of quacks and charlatans, spiritualism remained a widespread, indeed pervasive social phenomenon – part ‘alternative’ religion, part home entertainment, part political discourse. Some of its most fervent advocates were middle-class reform-minded women, and the ‘communications’ they received from the spirit world tended to give voice to the causes they supported.⁷³

⁷³ Ann Braude, in *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women’s Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1989) points out that by acting as ‘mediums’ for the expression of unorthodox opinions, women were able to deflect the accusation that they were behaving improperly by speaking on such subjects at all.

 INTRODUCTION

The general association of spiritualism with reform is found in American fiction well before *The Bostonians*, for example in Catherine Maria Sedgwick's *Married or Single?* (1857), in which one character says of another: 'I would bet that he is a believer in mesmerism, spiritualism, homeopathy, and hydropathy—that he is an anti-slavery, anti-tariff, anti-capital punishment man' (Ch. 14). It was already a cliché by the time Mrs Luna informs Basil Ransom that her sister, Olive Chancellor, associates with 'witches and wizards, mediums, and spirit-rappers, and roaring radicals' (1: 7).

James's own attitude to spiritualism seems, at first sight, unequivocally hostile. In 'Professor Fargo' (1874), the narrator, killing time in a small country town, sees a poster advertising the appearance of 'PROFESSOR FARGO, THE INFALLIBLE WAKING MEDIUM AND MAGICIAN, CLAIRVOYANT, PROPHET, AND SEER!', accompanied by 'COLONEL GIFFORD, THE FAMOUS LIGHTNING CALCULATOR AND MATHEMATICAL REFORMER!' (CS II 2). Almost immediately he encounters the red-haired Fargo himself, who in many respects anticipates Selah Tarrant in his physical repulsiveness, vulgarity, charlatanism and cracked eloquence. His gift is not that of prophecy but of 'consummate Yankee shrewdness', and he has 'the most impudent pair of eyes I ever beheld' (p. 262). He boasts of having 'great magnetism' and of being a 'healing medium' (p. 264). His fellow-showman, Colonel Gifford, is a gentleman and has an authentic mathematical gift; he appears on stage with his daughter, whom Fargo describes to the narrator as 'an exquisite young creature of seventeen' (p. 263), but who is deaf-and-dumb. The narrator later describes her as having 'no brilliant beauty, but a sort of meagre, attenuated, angular grace, the delicacy and fragility of the characteristic American type' (p. 272). The crass Professor ends up by eloping with the girl, whom he has 'fascinated', and with whom he proposes to begin a new, more 'sensational' partnership.

The narrator of 'Professor Fargo' candidly tells the Professor himself, "I don't believe in messages from the spirit world. [...] I don't believe people who have expressed themselves for a lifetime in excellent English can ever be content with conversation by raps on the dinner table. I don't believe that you know anything more about the future world than you do about the penal code of China'" (p. 263). In *The Bostonians*, too, spiritualism is treated as a fraudulent practice; Mrs Tarrant remembers 'helping' her husband in 'those exciting

 INTRODUCTION

days of his mediumship, when the table, sometimes, wouldn't rise from the ground, the sofa wouldn't float through the air, and the soft hand of a lost loved one was not so alert as it might have been to visit the circle' (10: 65).⁷⁴

Yet James's own personal and family ties to spiritualism were active at the time the novel was being written. His brother William founded the American branch of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in Boston in 1884 (begun in Britain in 1882), and, following the death of his infant son Herman in 1885, William attended séances with the 'trance medium' Leonora Piper. In 1890 he wrote a paper about Mrs Piper for the British SPR, which James read on his behalf at a meeting of the Society. A further séance took place at William's house in Boston in 1893, attended this time by other members of William's family. Scepticism about the reality of the spirit world co-existed, for James as much as for William, with an enduring interest in psychic 'transactions'; many of his novels and stories (*Roderick Hudson*, 'The Turn of the Screw', 'Nona Vincent', *The Sacred Fount*, *The Ambassadors*, 'The Jolly Corner', *The Sense of the Past*) deal with the exercise of influence or power by one person over another, and with the 'presence' of the dead among the living.

Places

(1) *New England*

'New England' in *The Bostonians* appears as a cultural cliché. All the characters who use the term do so with a knowing emphasis: Basil Ransom attributes the character of the 'Yankee female' in part to 'the New England school-system' (6: 37); Mrs Farrinder boasts that 'Miss Tarrant is of the best New England stock' (9: 59); Olive Chancellor sees the tough-minded law-student Mr Gracie as 'a genuine son of New England' (15: 107); Miss Catching, the Harvard librarian, seems to Basil 'in the highest degree a New England type' (25: 212); Miss Birdseye, seeing Basil and Verena together,

⁷⁴ James's irony here resembles that of a poem he knew and admired, Robert Browning's 'Mr. Sludge, "the Medium"' (*Dramatis Personae*, 1864), which is set in Boston and is based on the career of the American medium, Daniel Dunglas Home.

 INTRODUCTION

rejoices ‘to see the stiff-necked young Southerner led captive by a daughter of New England trained in the right school’ (36: 321). Nineteenth-century New England’s claim to intellectual and moral pre-eminence was popularly thought to derive from its Puritan history, combining old-fashioned notions of rectitude and severity with pride of ancestry, but also from the Revolutionary period, embodying ideals of citizenship and public service; in the novel a more recent period, that of the ‘Transcendentalist’ movement of the 1830s and 1840s, the age of Emerson, Thoreau and Margaret Fuller, comes into play. James would have expected his readers – at least his American readers – to recognize this ‘New England type’, just as he expected them to recognize the equivalent type-casting of Basil as a Southern gentleman.

Two key terms map the outlines of New England’s historical legend: *conscience* and *reform*. Puritanism as an ethical and psychological system, enjoining perpetual self-scrutiny and striving to reconcile self-interest with the common good, is incarnated in Olive Chancellor, whose ‘nature [was] to look out for duties, to appeal to her conscience for tasks’ (2: 13). At one point Olive’s ‘quick conscience’ seems to require her ‘in the name of duty to lend a hand to the torture of her own spirit’ (32: 271), and is experienced not as a divinely implanted inward voice but as an ‘insufferable’ persecutor, ‘bristling like some irritated animal’ (p. 274). Olive’s predicament is extreme, but not singular: Mrs Tarrant’s conscience, for example, has become ‘distended and demoralised’ in the course of her marriage to her colossally impudent husband (10: 70).

The decay of the New England conscience is marked in Olive’s case by a particular term, first deployed by Basil Ransom when he observes that she ‘was visibly morbid; it was plain as day that she was morbid’ (2: 12). The narrator exposes the limited nature of this insight: ‘It proved nothing of any importance, with regard to Miss Chancellor, to say that she was morbid; any sufficient account of her would lie very much to the rear of that. Why was she morbid, and why was her morbidness typical?’ The implication is that Olive’s ‘morbid’ personality is ‘typical’ of a certain kind of New

INTRODUCTION

England sensibility, ‘given to unwholesome brooding’ (*OED* 2) – a legacy of Puritanism’s excessive introspection and spiritual anxiety.⁷⁵

What applies on the personal scale applies also on the social. New England had been identified for over half a century with movements for political and social reform. In his essay ‘New England Reformers’, published in 1844, Emerson summed up this phase:

What a fertility of projects for the salvation of the world! One apostle thought all men should go to farming; and another, that no man should buy or sell: that the use of money was the cardinal evil; another, that the mischief was in our diet, that we eat and drink damnation. [...] With these appeared the adepts of homœopathy, of hydropathy, of mesmerism, of phrenology, and their wonderful theories of the Christian miracles! Others assailed particular vocations, as that of the lawyer, that of the merchant, of the manufacturer, of the clergyman, of the scholar. Others attacked the institution of marriage, as the fountain of social evils.⁷⁶

James’s account of the careers of Miss Birdseye and Selah Tarrant reads like an extended crib from this portion of the essay, and Emerson’s powerful advocacy of individualism, his insistence that ‘society gains nothing whilst a man, not himself renovated, attempts to renovate things around him’, finds an echo in Basil Ransom’s ‘private vision of reform’, whose ‘first principle was to reform the reformers’ (3: 19). But the differences are also marked. The older magician has a magic carpet on which to make his escape: ‘Life must be lived on a higher plane. We must go up to a higher platform, to which we are always invited to ascend; there, the whole aspect of things changes.’

⁷⁵ James follows Hawthorne, who uses the term repeatedly in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850); cf. also the scene in Hawthorne’s posthumously published romance *Septimius Felton* (1872), in which two young women walk arm in arm: ‘there could not well be a pair more unlike, – the one so natural, so healthy, so fit to live in the world; the other such a morbid, pale thing’. New England does not have a monopoly on the term: in *Portrait of a Lady*, when Isabel Archer (from Albany) meets Lord Warburton’s sisters, she shows herself conscious of its more general American application: “‘They’re not morbid, at any rate, whatever they are,’” our heroine said to herself; and she deemed this a great charm, for two or three of the friends of her girlhood had been regrettably open to the charge [...] to say nothing of Isabel’s having occasionally suspected it as a tendency of her own’ (Ch. 9).

⁷⁶ ‘New England Reformers’, *Essays, Second Series* (1844), in *Essays and Lectures* (New York: Library of America, 1983), pp. 591–2.

INTRODUCTION

There is no ‘higher platform’, in *The Bostonians*, than that of the lecturer, the ‘inspirational speaker’, the performer.⁷⁷ Emerson’s essay concludes with a rhetorical question to which it would have been easier to nod assent in the 1840s than the 1880s: ‘Shall not the heart which has received so much, trust the Power by which it lives? May it not quit other leadings, and listen to the Soul that has guided it so gently, and taught it so much, secure that the future will be worthy of the past?’ That security has disappeared from the post-Civil War world of *The Bostonians*, as regards not just the future, but the very ‘worth’ of the past.

In June 1883 James wrote a long review-essay on the correspondence between Emerson and Thomas Carlyle; this volume had been published in Boston by Osgood, who had recently become James’s own publisher, and the essay appeared in the *Century Magazine*, where *The Bostonians* was to be serialized. James begins by placing both men, but especially Emerson, in ‘a past which is already remote’:

It was, in fact, in the current of an earlier world that the Correspondence began. The first letter, which is from Emerson as the last is from Carlyle, is of the date of 1834. Emerson was the voice of New England in those days, and New England has changed not a little. There is something peculiarly young and tender in the social scene in which we see him engaged; for, in the interval that separates us from the period included in the whole of the first of these volumes and in the greater part of the second, a great many things have come and gone. [...] Transcendentalism has come and gone, and the abolition of slavery, and the novelty of the Unitarian creed, and the revelation of Goethe, and the doctrine of a vegetable diet, and a great many other reforms then deemed urgent.⁷⁸

In *The Bostonians* Emerson’s legacy is not quite so firmly relegated to history. The ‘abolition of slavery’ has metamorphosed into the struggle for women’s emancipation; Miss Birdseye is evidence of this continuity, even if she is also represented as exhausted and outmoded. The fact that Miss Birdseye

⁷⁷ ‘Platform’ is frequently used in the novel (twenty-six occurrences), almost always in association with Verena’s public speaking.

⁷⁸ Review of *The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1834–1872*, 2 vols. (Boston, MA: J. R. Osgood & Co., 1883) (LC1 233–49 (233)).

INTRODUCTION

is animated by ‘the unquenched flame of her transcendentalism’ and that ‘the only thing that was still actual for her was the elevation of the species by the reading of Emerson and the frequentation of Tremont Temple’ (20: 158–9) may seem quaint, but James also makes clear its inspirational appeal to Olive and Verena: ‘It was the perennial freshness of Miss Birdseye’s faith that had had such a contagion for these modern maidens’. Perhaps Emerson is no longer ‘the voice of New England’, and the novel proposes no successor; but Emerson’s voice itself, musical and enchanting, plays a part in the representation of Verena’s vocal power.⁷⁹

(2) *Boston and Bostonians*

James’s representation of Boston before *The Bostonians* had been amused and amusing, and readers would have had very recent experience of it in the story ‘A New England Winter’, which had appeared in the *Century* a few months before the novel began its serialization. Readers with longer memories would recall *The Europeans*, the short novel published in 1878, which occupies the place in James’s canon that *Under the Greenwood Tree* occupies in Thomas Hardy’s – brilliant, light-hearted, and with, for a wonder, a happy ending. In that work Bostonian rectitude is played mainly for laughs, as is Boston’s provincial self-importance – one of the characters is ‘too good a Bostonian to regard in the light of an eccentricity the desire of even the remotest alien to visit the New England metropolis’ (Ch. 6). But the laughter is not cruel; moreover, in both *The Europeans* and ‘A New England Winter’, Boston is seen by outsiders, whose view the narrator to some extent shares, but whose limitations he also exposes.

‘A New England Winter’ is set in contemporary Boston, where the expatriate Florimond Daintry, who lives in Paris and has become a minor Impressionist painter – James is very funny on just how minor he is – returns to spend the winter with his mother. Mrs Daintry, anxious that her superior son will be bored by Boston’s lack of metropolitan stimulus, persuades her sister-in-law to invite a reputedly clever young woman from New York who will attract Florimond’s interest. (The consequences, needless to say, are not what she intends.) The narrator is more a realist than an impressionist in his

⁷⁹ See above, ‘Public speaking’ (pp. LV–LVI).

INTRODUCTION

depiction of the contemporary scene, noting its social geography, for example, with an accurate touch: Mrs Daintry is said to have ‘[taken] the inevitable course of good Bostonians’ and moved ‘from the “hill” to the “new land”’, that is from the neighbourhood of Beacon Hill to the newly reclaimed land of the Back Bay. (For an explanation of this ‘inevitable course’, see below.) She thinks the south side of Commonwealth Avenue a ‘beautiful prospect’, and the narrator doesn’t mock her too much for doing so. The houses, the furniture, the decorations, the way of life of the modern, middle-class inhabitants of Boston are exposed to very gentle ridicule; James himself described it, in a letter to R. W. Gilder, the editor of the *Century*, as ‘*lacteal* in its satire.’⁸⁰ There are shadows – shades, rather – of what is to come in *The Bostonians*, but they are easily missed and probably appear only with hindsight. Miss Daintry, for example, Mrs Daintry’s acerbic sister-in-law, though she does not share Olive Chancellor’s political views, has the same zeal for good causes; but this zeal lacks psychological depth, as James’s deployment of *zeugma* suggests: ‘she had in an eminent degree the physiognomy, the accent, the costume, the conscience, and the little eyeglass, of her native place’. Olive’s ‘conscience’ could not take its place in such a list. The Boston of ‘A New England Winter’ forms the stage for a comedy of manners in which the joke, in the end, is on the returning American aesthete. W. D. Howells, who read the story at the Canadian resort of Campobello, wrote to James of its popularity with the ‘many well-dressed and well-read [American] girls’ he met there, and he praised James’s description of Boston society: ‘The fashionableness which is so unlike the fashionableness of other towns—no one touches that but you; and you contrive also to indicate its contiguity, in its most etherial intangibility, to something that is very plain and dully practical.’⁸¹ James himself thought that the social aspect of the story was its strong point; he wrote to Howells: ‘It is not very good—on the contrary; but it will perhaps seem to you to put into form a certain impression of Boston.’⁸²

In *The Bostonians* this familiar, comfortable social world is present only in glimpses, and the narrator’s inside knowledge of Boston is turned to a different, sharper purpose. When, early in the novel, Basil Ransom reflects that

⁸⁰ 1 Feb. 1884, *HJL* 3:24.

⁸¹ Letter of 22 Aug. 1884 (*LFL* 246–7).

⁸² Letter of 21 Feb. 1884 (*LFL* 241).

INTRODUCTION

the ‘general character’ of Olive Chancellor’s drawing-room ‘struck him as Bostonian’, he means that it lives up to his expectations: ‘this was, in fact, very much what he had supposed Boston to be’ (3: 17). Later in the chapter, when Olive invites him to accompany her to Miss Birdseye’s house, he expresses the hope that the occasion will be ‘something very Bostonian’ (p. 18); he wants to get the full value of the stereotype he has brought with him. These are the only two adjectival uses of the term in the novel; elsewhere, as in the title, ‘Bostonian’ refers to an inhabitant of the city, though the stereotype remains. The narrator describes Olive as ‘a typical Bostonian’ (20: 156), and Olive herself takes pleasure at being treated in New York as ‘a representative woman, an important Bostonian’ (30: 250). In calling the novel *The Bostonians*, therefore, James knew that many readers would assume he was playing on this ‘typical’ meaning. ‘I shall be much abused for the title’, he wrote to William, ‘but it exactly & literally fits the story, & is much the best, simplest & most dignified I could have chosen.’⁸³ That was before the book began its serialization; after it appeared in volume form, James again protested to William that in giving the novel its title he had no ‘invidious intention’: ‘I hadn’t a dream of generalizing—but thought the title simple & handy, & meant only to designate Olive & Verena by it, as they appeared to the mind of Ransom, the southerner & outsider, looking at them from New York. I didn’t [sic] even mean it to cover Miss Birdseye & the others; though it might very well. I shall write another: “The Other Bostonians”’ (13 June 1886, *LL* 184). Yet this denial is phrased in such a way as to undo itself, for Basil’s point of view is, precisely, ‘generalizing’, and the narrator has seemed to many readers not to be as detached from this point of view as he claims.⁸⁴

⁸³ 5 Oct. 1884, *Correspondence of William James*, vol. I, ed. Ignas K. Skrupskelis and Elizabeth M. Berkeley (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1992), p. 382. For James’s difficulty in finding a title for the novel see *Chronology of Composition* (p. cxxvi).

⁸⁴ James’s statement that by ‘Bostonians’ he ‘meant only to designate Olive & Verena’ raises the issue of gender, on which the English language is neutral. French, by contrast, has to make a choice: the current French translation (Jeanne Collin-Lemercier, 1955) chooses *Les Bostoniennes*, i.e. the feminine form, rather than *Les Bostoniens*, which would (nominally) include both genders, and which was the name under which the book was reviewed, with excerpts in translation, by Paul Gervais in 1886 (‘Romans Américains: Les Bostoniens de Henry James’, *Bibliothèque Universelle et Revue Suisse* 31 (Aug. 1886), 363–86). Basil seems to agree with this gender-inflection in 35: 303, where ‘He knew that the Bostonians had been drawn [to Marmion]’ refers specifically to Olive and Verena.

INTRODUCTION

In the period when *The Bostonians* was published, Boston was the fifth largest city in the United States, with a population of around 370,000.⁸⁵ Its demographic had shifted over the course of the century, with a huge influx of immigrants, notably Irish and Italians. An older 'aristocratic' stratum, based on families descended from the Puritan settlers of Massachusetts, still held its social pre-eminence, though challenged by the increasing wealth and political influence of a mercantile and financial class which had profited enormously from the Civil War. Neither the Boston aristocracy, nor the new rich, nor the immigrants appear in *The Bostonians*, except in a few glancing allusions. James's joke about writing 'The Other Bostonians' would not have seemed funny to those American reviewers who pointed out just how selective he had been. 'Mr. James really meant *some* Bostonians', according to the *Critic*, which produced a 'negative catalogue' of those that had been left out: 'the Bostonians of the Somerset, Union, or St. Botolph clubs, of Trinity Church or the Old Corner Bookstore, of the Athenaeum or the Art Museum' (17 April 1886, pp. 191–2). M. W. Hazeltine, in the New York *Sun*, similarly remarked on 'a Boston without Beacon street, a Boston for which the term society has a mystic philosophical rather than conventional significance' (4 April 1886, p. 4). This is the Boston which thought of itself (and was satirically referred to) as 'the Hub of the Universe', or just 'the Hub'.⁸⁶

As these reviewers noticed, James's attention is fixed on aspects of Boston's social scene that belong to its history as 'the city of reform' (Basil Ransom's phrase) – the New England capital of progressive ideas and radical politics. But to the reviewer in *The Boston Evening Traveler*, who was in other respects hostile to the book, that was its one real strength:

No candid observer can look upon this Boston life, with its multitudinous phases of inquiry and pursuit—with its advocates of suffrage and anti-suffrage; its discussions of mind-cure, metaphysical cure, mesmerism, spiritualism, theosophy; its hermetic following, its work for the Indians, the refugees—heaven knows what—without finding all Mr. James's material around us.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ The US Bureau of the Census gives 362,839 as the population in 1880; New York had 1,206,299.

⁸⁶ The nickname derived from a half-serious remark by Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr in *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* (1858): '[The] Boston State-House is the hub of the solar system' (Ch. 6).

⁸⁷ 19 March 1886, p. 2; CR 157.

 INTRODUCTION

Boston had been one of the most vehement centres of Abolitionism in the 1830s, housing its most extreme faction, led by William Lloyd Garrison; Mrs Tarrant, in the novel, clings to her residual social status as the daughter of the (fictional) Abraham Greenstreet, and she is proud of having ‘passed her youth in the first Abolitionist circles’ (10: 64). Boston was also strongly associated, to the point of cliché, with every other kind of progressive cause and social experiment, exemplified by Basil Ransom’s vague impression of Miss Birdseye as ‘a revelation of a class’, embodying ‘a multitude of socialistic figures, of names and episodes that he had heard of [...] She looked as if she had spent her life on platforms, in audiences, in conventions, in phalansteries, in *séances*’ (4: 26). Along with reform, Boston was also stereotyped as a ‘city of culture’ – meaning a culture of high seriousness in intellectual and artistic matters. Again, the phrase is Basil Ransom’s: looking around Olive Chancellor’s drawing-room, he sees evidence of this culture in her books (especially the German ones), in the ‘photographs and water-colours that covered the walls’, and even in the furniture and the ‘curtains that were festooned rather stiffly in the doorways’ (3: 17). Later, this high seriousness comes out in her taste for music, in which, the narrator tells us, she ‘went in [...] for the superior programmes’ (20: 157).

Backing up the intellectual ferment of both politics and culture, though also standing to one side of it, was Harvard University, founded in 1636, and still the standard-bearer in American public life for ‘pure’ scholarship and disinterested learning – while also fulfilling its role as a finishing-school for young men of the world, such as, in the novel, the New Yorker Henry Burrage, who frankly confesses to Verena that ‘he was not really studying law at all; he had only come to Cambridge for the form’ (18: 132), and whose agreeable rooms are filled with aesthetic trinkets. The mention of ‘Cambridge’ reminds us that in the period of the novel the two places were more distinct than they are today. Cambridge lies north and west of Boston, across the Charles River; it was one of the original settlements of the 1630 Massachusetts Bay colony, had been incorporated as a city since 1846, and had a large industrial and commercial economy, including brickworks, glass manufacture and ice-cutting. In the novel, however, it is associated mainly with Harvard University and with the Tarrants’ bare, vulgar house in Monadnoc Place, as seen through the eyes of both Olive (14: 98) and Basil (24: 196). In the period of the novel Cambridge was an unfashionable place

INTRODUCTION

to live, despite the prestige of the university; Verena thinks of Basil Ransom's coming to see her as 'an arduous pilgrimage', because 'she knew well enough how people in Boston regarded a winter journey to the academic suburb' (24: 203). The Cambridge where James's own family lived from 1866, at 20 Quincy St (near Harvard), and where so many family and personal friends were still living when he wrote *The Bostonians*, barely features in the novel.⁸⁸

Boston's expansion, in population and economic activity, had dramatic consequences for its physical environment. One of the most ambitious projects of land reclamation ever undertaken was near completion when James returned in 1881, and he was able to see for himself the scale and social significance of what had been accomplished. This project involved the filling-in of what had been the tidal marshes of Boston's Back Bay, west of the Shawmut Peninsula between Boston and Cambridge. In the early nineteenth century a 'mill dam' was constructed across the bay, to harness the water power of the tidal Charles River for manufacturing; however the dam proved a commercial failure, and in 1857 it was decided to fill in the 'receiving basin' of the Back Bay, creating the 'new land' which is alluded to by Mrs Tarrant (see 16: 113 and note). This massive development was complete as far as the Back Bay itself was concerned by 1882, though the area inland from the Charles River was still being developed.⁸⁹ Gradually, the 'new land' began to rival the traditional centre of status and influence in 'old Boston', the neighbourhood around Beacon Hill; it became fashionable, as well as a sign of prosperity, to build on, or move to, the Back Bay. Olive is proud of the view over the Bay from her drawing-room window, which Basil finds 'very picturesque' (3: 16), and which is treated at length in Chapter 20. An exchange in 1884 between James and his friend and fellow-novelist W. D. Howells may have influenced these passages. James wrote to Howells that he had heard

of your having bought a house in Beacon St., overlooking the lagoon (if I understand it right) & I hasten to express all my satisfaction at your being

⁸⁸ It is evoked, as 'my poor little personal C., of the far-off unspeakable first years', in a notebook entry of 29 March 1905, made, of all places, in Coronado Beach in California (A 691).

⁸⁹ See William A. Newman and Wilfred E. Holton, *Boston's Back Bay: The Story of America's Greatest Nineteenth-Century Landfill Project* (Lebanon, NH: Northeastern University Press, 2005).

INTRODUCTION

so happily & healthily domiciled. I see you in a lovely study that commands the shining estuary, visited by a muse whom the most pressing engagements elsewhere cannot induce to leave so sweet a spot.⁹⁰

Howells replied on 22 August:

it is a pretty house and an extremely fine situation [...] I can speak confidently and authoritatively of the sunsets from the library windows. The sun goes down over Cambridge with as much apparent interest as if he were a Harvard graduate; possibly he is; and he spreads a glory over the Back Bay [...] Drolly enough, I am writing a story in which the chief personage builds a house “on the water side of Beacon,” and I shall be able to use my experience, down to the quick.⁹¹

This work-in-progress was *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, which began its serialization in the *Century* in November 1884, three months before *The Bostonians*, and in which the social value of older neighbourhoods such as the South End, which had once been fashionable but was now down-at-heel, as against the rising status of the ‘new land’, plays an important part in the plot. James, like Howells, is attentive to such details, and to their symbolic import. Miss Birdseye lives in the now-unfashionable South End, a sign both of her poverty and integrity; Mrs Tarrant, anxious to ascertain Henry Burrage’s social position, and guessing that it is high, asks him ‘whether he visited much on the new land’ (16: 113); it is a sign of Mrs Farrinder’s ‘provincial’ outlook that she thinks Olive part of Boston’s social elite, and exhorts her to ‘stir up some of her friends down there on the Mill-dam’ (5: 31).

(3) New York

Fifteen of the forty-two chapters of *The Bostonians* are set in New York, James’s birthplace and the ‘other city’ of his fictional America. By the 1880s, and indeed the 1870s, assuming the action of the novel takes place in that decade, New York was America’s largest, wealthiest, most powerful city.⁹² In

⁹⁰ Letter of 31 July 1884 (*LFL* 244).

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 246.

⁹² On the dating of the action of the novel, see below, pp. xcvi–xcvii.

INTRODUCTION

size of population it had been predominant almost from the beginning of the Republic: it had overtaken Philadelphia as the largest city in the United States by the time of the first census in 1790. At that time its population numbered 33,131. In 1880 it was 1,202,299, the first city in the US to surpass one million.⁹³ New York is where Basil Ransom naturally migrates from the ‘blighted’ South to try to make a career as a lawyer or (eventually) a writer. It is where the fashion-conscious Mrs Luna lives after her return from Europe. And it is where one of Olive’s most potent adversaries in the contest for Verena, Mrs Burrage, lives with her son Henry. Mrs Burrage is seriously rich, and has a social prestige far exceeding Olive’s. She really *is* what Mrs Farrinder, in Boston, mistakenly assumes Olive to be – a member of the social elite of her city. Olive realizes that if Verena marries Henry Burrage, she will not only have luxury but, if she wishes, a cushioned platform for her political views. Olive may suspect that Verena’s feminism would be neutered in Mrs Burrage’s grasp, converted into a simulacrum of radical fervour for the entertainment of the ruling class, but the offer is nonetheless seductive, in part because it is infused with the amplitude of New York, its ease, its polish, its *urbanity*. Verena likes going to the opera (and to Delmonico’s Restaurant afterwards), to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, to Central Park; she responds to the ‘vastness and variety, the infinite possibilities of a great city’ (30: 254).

The differences between Boston and New York had been a standing joke for many years. Boston’s affectation of superiority, in particular, was much mocked – had been mocked by James himself. In ‘An International Episode’ (1878), an English visitor asks his New York host whether Boston is “‘the most—a—intellectual town?’” Mr Westgate’s reply is curt. “‘I believe it is very intellectual. I don’t go there much?’” And he adds, for good measure, that the hot weather is not propitious. “‘Boston in this weather would be very trying; it’s not the temperature for intellectual exertion. At Boston, you know, you have to pass an examination at the city limits; and when you come away they give you a kind of degree.’” The reviewer of *The Bostonians* in the *Nation*, a New York magazine for which James had himself written

⁹³ US Bureau of the Census data, as abstracted on Wikipedia at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_largest_cities_in_the_United_States_by_population_by_decade.

INTRODUCTION

a good deal, clearly knows that James was a New Yorker by birth, and, he suspects, disposition:

Everybody has heard the story of the New York wag who approved his tedious friend's determination to lecture in Boston, on the ground that "he always hated the Bostonians." Something of this feeling is prevalent in many places outside of New England, and while we are not willing to say that Mr. James panders to it, it must be admitted that the reader gets the impression that, were the novelist to permit himself such emotions, he would confess to a dislike of many of the things which, in New York, are thought to be particularly Bostonian.⁹⁴

Boston is provincial, earnest, dull; New York is America's brash metropolis, devoted to making, and spending, money. Boston is a 'city of culture', New York a city of consumption – one of the things it consumes being, precisely, culture. Verena absorbs from Olive the very Bostonian notion that New Yorkers are lightweights: 'people didn't seem to have such a grip of the movement as they had in Boston'; she understands that what New York really offers is not the successful prosecution of a political campaign, but celebrity: 'they could easily have quite a vogue, if they only chose to stay and work that vein' (30: 254). The economic metaphor in that last phrase is also significant; it is confirmed by the fact that Mrs Burrage sends Verena 'the largest cheque this young woman had ever received for an address' (32: 266).⁹⁵

New York as a place of intellectual frivolity, worldliness and conspicuous consumption belongs to the so-called 'Gilded Age' of American society in the decades following the end of the Civil War. Yet *The Bostonians* has very little to say about the money-making side of American life, the obsession with 'business' that was to preoccupy James in *The American Scene* (1905)

⁹⁴ *The Nation* 42 (May 1886), 407–8.

⁹⁵ James returned to the contrast between New York and Boston in *The Wings of the Dove* (1902). When we are introduced to Milly Theale and her friend and travelling companion Susan Stringham, we learn that the two women had met in Boston, where Milly had come from New York on a visit to friends – a visit which 'had been undertaken, after a series of bereavements, in the interest of the particular peace that New York could not give' (Bk. III, Ch. 1). The passage that follows (too long to quote here) revisits not just the difference between the two cities, but some of the physical and psychological aspects of Olive's relationship with Verena. For one of the most striking of these connections, Milly Theale's red hair, see 4: 32 and note.

 INTRODUCTION

and that strongly marks his description of New York in that book. Nor does the novel make any mention of other ‘Gilded Age’ phenomena: industrial expansion, labour unrest, racial conflict or the corruption of political and financial institutions. The weight of the novel’s satire and social criticism lies elsewhere, in the decay of an older New England idealism, which I discuss above.

Besides the New York of Fifth Avenue and Central Park, another city appears in *The Bostonians*, but only in one chapter – Chapter 21, the opening of the second book. This is the New York of Basil Ransom’s lodgings, located ‘rather far to the eastward, and in the upper reaches of the town’ (p. 165). It is reached by an ‘abominable road’, with ‘holes and ruts a foot deep, and immemorial accumulations of stagnant mud’. The neighbourhood is infused with ‘a strong odour of smoked fish’ – but also with Henry James’s general childhood memories of the raw sights, sounds and smells of his native city. Basil himself, we are told, ‘came and went every day, with rather an indifferent and *unperceiving* step’ (ibid., emphasis added); it is the narrator who, ‘for old acquaintance sake’, lingers over the details of this cityscape. Although James himself had never been as down on his luck as Basil finds himself at the beginning of Chapter 21, he, too, had been a young man on the make in New York, and knew what it was to struggle to make a living at a time when the literary marketplace was so unfavourable to American-born writers. Like Basil, he had inhabited a New York less of Mrs Burrage than of Balzac.

Literary Sources and Influences

(1) ‘*Daudet’s Évangéliste has given me the idea of this thing*’⁹⁶

Alphonse Daudet’s *L’Évangéliste* [The Evangelist], published in 1883, tells the story of how a young girl, Éline Ebsen, is converted to an extreme form of Protestantism by the rich, charismatic, domineering Mme Autheman. The sect that Mme Autheman leads, ‘L’Oeuvre des Dames Évangélistes’ [Movement of Evangelical Women], has, as the name suggests, a radical female, if not feminist programme; its motto is ‘Une femme a perdu le

⁹⁶ Entry in James’s notebook, 8 April 1883 (CN 19–20); see Appendix C.

INTRODUCTION

monde, une femme le sauvera!’ [A woman lost the world, a woman will save it], and Mme Autheman advocates what Daudet calls ‘l’apostolat de la femme’ [the apostledom of woman], based on women’s superior spiritual strength and zeal. But the sect also resembles what we would now call a cult, and Mme Autheman herself has the manipulative and ruthless traits of a cult leader. The upright, humane Protestant pastor Aussandon calls her ‘cette morte vivante [...] cette mangeuse d’âmes, froide comme la goule des cimetières’ [this living dead (woman), this devourer of souls, cold as a graveyard ghoul] (Ch. 9). Daudet traces her religious mania, and her hunger for power over others, to a traumatic episode in her adolescence, involving sexual disappointment and social humiliation, but does not palliate her monstrous behaviour. The process by which the tender, susceptible Éline is gradually sucked in and devoured by Mme Autheman, like an insect by a carnivorous plant, is powerfully depicted (though as we shall see, James thought it lacked psychological conviction). By the end of the novel Éline has abandoned her ties to her own family, as well as the prospect of a loving marriage, and has become one of Mme Autheman’s fanatical followers, purged, denatured, sterile.

The relationship between Mme Autheman and Éline clearly gave James the idea for the relationship between Olive Chancellor and Verena Tarrant. Like Mme Autheman, Olive is passionately and single-mindedly devoted to a cause; like Éline, Verena is young, attractive and impressionable. In both novels, the older, stronger-minded woman takes physical and emotional possession of the younger. Éline, hearing Mme Autheman’s preaching, ‘reconnaissait au profond de son être cette voix qui l’avait tant remuée, froide pourtant, mais pénétrant en aiguilles de glace’ [acknowledged in the depths of her being this voice which had so stirred her, cold however, but penetrating in needles of ice] (Ch. 8; compare the process by which Olive inculcates into Verena her gospel of revenge in 20: 161). But while Daudet may have given James the idea for *The Bostonians*, the novel transforms the gift almost beyond recognition. All the elements of Mme Autheman’s character are present in Olive, but they are differently configured and steeped in her New England heritage, giving her a depth and seriousness inaccessible to Daudet. Olive’s thwarted sexual nature, unlike that of Mme Autheman, is not facily transposed into a craving for power; James presents us with a more complex and

 INTRODUCTION

unstable personality, swayed by contradictory impulses and, crucially, capable of suffering. Mme Autheman has cauterized this faculty in herself; she has no self-doubt, and her cold rage is both a shield and a weapon against others.

In James's novel the play of 'influence' is more complex than in Daudet's. If Olive influences Verena, Verena influences Olive, giving her a motive for direct action on the world. But this motive, in turn, causes Olive to abandon scruple, conscience, integrity. In a novel haunted by the ghosts of Abolitionism, it is Olive who effectively purchases a human being and separates her from her parents; it is Olive who compromises with 'society' and with the market, bringing Verena to Mrs Burrage's drawing-room, negotiating with the vulgar newspaperman Matthias Pardon, whose offers of aid she had previously scorned. Nothing of this is found in *L'Évangéliste*, where Mme Autheman remains aloof, invulnerable, untouched by Éline as by all those on whom she casts her spell. She is not a lover but a predator.

Moreover, influence in *The Bostonians* is plural. Basil, like Olive, wants to take possession of Verena, and to take her away from her father, and he uses the same arts of persuasion, including his voice: in their encounter in New York, Verena 'listened [...] to his deep, sweet, distinct voice, expressing monstrous opinions with exotic cadences and mild, familiar laughs, which, as he leaned towards her, almost tickled her cheek and ear' (33: 287). Later we are told that one particular speech of his 'had sunk into her soul and worked and fermented there' (38: 336), and in the same passage Verena is described as 'the object of Basil Ransom's merciless devotion'. So Basil, as well as Olive, has a claim to derive from Mme Autheman; he too separates Verena from her family and associates, and does so indeed more comprehensively and successfully than Olive. Verena's future as his wife – 'poor, withdrawn from view, a partner of his struggle' (38: 337) – has something of the bleakness of Éline's fate as a missionary in Mme Autheman's sect.

James's acknowledgement of Daudet's influence, we should remember, came before he actually wrote *The Bostonians*. His handling of Daudet's theme showed where he thought Daudet had fallen short. This critique is implicit within the novel, but explicit in the article he wrote on Daudet for the *Century* in 1883, and which belongs to the cluster of texts that precede and

INTRODUCTION

accompany *The Bostonians*.⁹⁷ While expressing great admiration for Daudet (whom he also knew personally and liked), James singled out *L'Évangéliste* as an example of his 'perceptible tendency to the factitious':

Madame Autheman, the evil genius of poor Éline Ebsen [...] seems to me terribly, almost grotesquely, void [...] psychologically she is a blank. One does not see the operation of her character. She must have had a soul, and a very curious one. It was a great opportunity for a piece of spiritual portraiture; but we know nothing about Madame Autheman's inner springs, and I think we fail to believe in her.⁹⁸

In *The Bostonians* the 'spiritual portraiture' of Olive, at least, is finely detailed; she is far from being 'psychologically a blank'. James's greater concentration on the interiority of his characters springs from a deeper grasp of his material; he attributes Daudet's 'weakness' to 'a want of acquaintance with his subject', to his lack of 'any natural understanding of the religious passion'. That 'province of the human mind,' James added, 'cannot be *fait de chic* [done off the cuff]—experience, there, is the only explorer'.⁹⁹

(2) French 'Realism' and 'Naturalism'

Daudet belongs to a group of French writers whose work James was reading in the 1870s and 1880s, and whom he met in person during his sojourns in Paris in 1876 and 1884. Flaubert was the doyen of this group, along with Edmond de Goncourt; the most notable of the younger writers was Zola. Although his own American precursors and contemporaries mattered greatly to James, he was unequivocal about the artistic superiority of the 'French school'. He wrote to Howells from Paris in February 1884:

I have been seeing something of Daudet, Goncourt, & Zola; & there is nothing more interesting to me now than the effort & experiment of this little group, with its truly infernal intelligence of art, form, manner—its intense artistic life. They do the only kind of work, to-day, that I respect;

⁹⁷ 'Alphonse Daudet', *Century Magazine*, August 1883 (LC2 223–49).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 225–6.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 247–8. James applies the phrase '*fait de chic*' to his own portrayal of Basil Ransom: see above, p. xxxviii.

INTRODUCTION

& in spite of their ferocious pessimism & their handling of unclean things, they are at least serious and honest.¹⁰⁰

James may have wished to emulate these writers, but he had to take account of differences in literary culture, and the literary market, between France and Britain, or the United States. French novelists had a freedom in their choice of subject matter and treatment which was denied to British and American novelists. The Anglo-American market for serials and short fiction was dominated by ‘family’ magazines; the strict code of the lending libraries regulated the market for the three-volume novel, the ‘three-decker’, whose hegemony was not challenged until the late 1880s and 1890s. The ‘immorality’ of French fiction was a given for many British and American readers; Olive Chancellor, in *The Bostonians*, is one of them. ‘She hated the writing of the French, in spite of the importance they have given to women’, the narrator tells us (11: 77)– not quite succeeding in keeping a straight face with that last remark.¹⁰¹

A small example will illustrate the shifts James had to adopt when bringing ‘French’ realism to the Anglo-American market. Early in the novel, at their first meeting, Olive Chancellor asks Basil Ransom ‘a great many questions’, and Basil is a little puzzled that she should take such an interest in him:

He couldn’t believe he was one of her kind; he was conscious of much Bohemianism—he drank beer, in New York, in cellars, knew no ladies, and was familiar with a ‘variety’ actress. Certainly, as she knew him better, she would disapprove of him, though, of course, he would never mention the actress, nor even, if necessary, the beer. (3: 19).

The vocabulary here – especially ‘Bohemianism’ and ‘familiar with’ – suggests what in a French novel would be explicit and unembarrassed. But James could not state outright that Basil was having sexual relations with

¹⁰⁰ Letter of 21 Feb. 1884 (*LFL* 243).

¹⁰¹ Cf. James’s essay on Balzac: ‘His reader very soon perceives, to begin with, that he does not take that view of the sex that would commend him to the “female sympathizers” of the day. There is not a line in him that would not be received with hisses at any convention for giving women the suffrage, for introducing them into Harvard College, or for trimming the exuberances of their apparel’ (‘Honoré de Balzac’, *Galaxy*, Dec. 1875; *LC* 2 61).

 INTRODUCTION

the ‘variety actress’; even ‘familiar with’ may have seemed too transparent, for when we next hear of the actress her relations with Basil are said to have been ‘cordial’, and for good measure she has been married off (21: 170). Basil is free to court Verena without any shadow of suspicion about his conduct.

Another example, on a larger scale, is the theme of lesbianism. Debates over whether James intended Olive’s feeling for Verena to be interpreted as sexual are complicated by the evasiveness which he had to practise as a matter of course. At least one American reviewer thought he had not been evasive enough: writing in the influential *Atlantic Monthly*, Horace Scudder commented on James’s tendency to ‘push his characters too near the brink of nature’: ‘For instance, the details of the first interview between Olive and Verena in Olive’s house carry these young women to dangerous lengths, and we hesitate about accepting the relation between them as either natural or reasonable.’¹⁰² James would have known Balzac’s novella *La Fille aux yeux d’or* (1835), in which a man and his half-sister struggle for possession of the girl of the title; Basil and Olive are distant cousins, not siblings, and this attenuation in itself symbolizes the limits James faced in his treatment of the subject; he could not state, he could only imply, that Olive is Basil’s sexual as well as ideological rival. Such implication is not part of the technique of French realism as James understood it.¹⁰³

¹⁰² *Atlantic Monthly* 57 (June 1886), p. 852. Scudder is referring to Olive and Verena’s meeting in Ch. 11. Other reviewers were more neutral: the Massachusetts *Springfield Republican* states: ‘Both Miss Chancellor and Ransom fall in love with the fascinating Verena’ (18 April 1886, p. 4); the *Glasgow Herald* makes a similar observation: ‘Olive and Basil both fall in love with her’ (2 June 1886, p. 10).

¹⁰³ Adeline Tintner argues that *La Fille aux yeux d’or* is the source of the main action of *The Bostonians* (*The Book World of Henry James: Appropriating the Classics* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Research Press, 1987), 259–71); but although the structural parallel is persuasive, the novels are too different in other respects for one to be a meaningful ‘source’ for the other. Zola’s *Nana* (1880), which depicts a harlot’s progress in Second Empire Paris, has been suggested by Terry Castle as a specific source for James’s treatment of lesbianism, and especially for the obliquity of such treatment. Describing *The Bostonians* as a ‘disguised and ironic transformation’ of Zola’s novel, Castle argues that James ‘was able to insinuate the idea of lesbianism into *The Bostonians* without – so to speak – openly representing it’ (‘Haunted by Olive Chancellor’, in *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 159).

INTRODUCTION

(3) *Honoré de Balzac*

‘Do like the *Bostonians*, dear Grace, it is something like Balzac!!!’¹⁰⁴ The play on *like* tells us that James expects his readers to take pleasure in a resemblance which is also a form of homage. It is not news that a novel by Henry James should have been influenced by Balzac; the question is how, precisely, *this* novel registers that influence.

James’s exclamation belongs to an exchange of views between him and Grace Norton about contemporary fiction, arising in part from articles she had written for the *Nation*, and from his own article ‘The Art of Fiction’, recently published in *Longman’s Magazine* (September 1884). He intended to write ‘another article on the subject’, he told her:

Meanwhile I am also writing a novel (to appear in the *Century* early in the ensuing year), which I think will practically answer in some degree, perhaps, some of your objections or at least illustrate some of my own artistic convictions. I congratulate you on your present intimacy with Balzac. I have a great affection, a kind of reverence for him, as for the founder and father of our modern effort, and on the whole the greatest genius in his line.¹⁰⁵

The juxtaposition here is suggestive: the ‘artistic convictions’ that James believes his novel will ‘illustrate’ derive from ‘the founder and father of our modern effort’; *The Bostonians* is both a novel and a critical statement, a statement of affiliation.

The two critical accounts of Balzac closest in time to the composition of *The Bostonians* are the article James wrote for the *Galaxy* in December 1875, and the review of an edition of his letters in the same magazine in February 1877. In these pieces James emphasizes Balzac’s supremacy as an observer of contemporary society, his ‘overmastering sense of the present world’ and his radically unassimilable status within that society (of which his crushing, inexplicably chronic indebtedness was a kind of allegory).¹⁰⁶ The particulars

¹⁰⁴ To Grace Norton, 4 March 1885; *HJL* 3:76. James’s plea was not answered; Grace Norton did not like *The Bostonians*, and her criticism elicited from James a touching fib about how he really didn’t mind (16 July 1886; *HJL* 3:127).

¹⁰⁵ 3 Nov. 1884, *HJL* 3:53.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Honoré de Balzac’, *Galaxy* (Dec. 1875), reprinted in *French Poets and Novelists* (1878; *LC2* 49).

INTRODUCTION

of James's analysis on both fronts bring us close to the method and aesthetic of *The Bostonians*. Take, for example, what he says about 'background' and 'mise en scène':

This part of his story had with Balzac an importance—his rendering of it a solidity—which it had never enjoyed before, and which the most vigorous talents in the school of which Balzac was founder have never been able to restore to it. The place in which an event occurred was in his view of equal moment with the event itself; it was part of the action; it was not a thing to take or to leave, or to be vaguely and gracefully indicated; it imposed itself; it had a part to play; it needed to be made as definite as anything else.¹⁰⁷

Passages in *The Bostonians* suggest that James was aiming at the concentration and density of Balzac's evocations of place, such as the description of Olive Chancellor's drawing-room in Charles Street (3: 16–17), or of the view from this room across the Back Bay (20: 154–5), or of Basil's journey to the dilapidated Cape Cod village, Marmion (35: 303–4). Basil Ransom's New York boarding house, in particular, is a lineal descendant of the 'Maison Vauquer' in *Le Père Goriot* (which James thought 'Balzac's masterpiece' and 'among the few greatest novels we possess'); the verbal echoes confirm a deeper affinity, for, to change James's formula, 'what is a setting without a figure'?¹⁰⁸ Basil himself represents a persistent type in Balzac,

[the] host of young men whom he takes up on the threshold of life, entangles conspicuously in the events of their time, makes the pivots of contemporaneous history. [...] The man whose career is most distinctly traced is perhaps Eugène de Rastignac, whose first steps in life we witness in "Le Père Goriot." [...] the situation of the young man, well born, clever, and proud, who comes up to Paris, equipped by his family's savings, to seek his fortune and find it at any cost, and who moves from the edge of one social abyss to the edge of another [...] until at last his nerves are steeled, his head steadied, his conscience cased in cynicism and his pockets filled—all this bears a deep imaginative stamp.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 49–50.

¹⁰⁸ The praise of *Le Père Goriot* is in the *Galaxy* article (*LC2* 58–9). On the 'Maison Vauquer' see notes to the opening of Ch. 21, pp. 467–9).

¹⁰⁹ *LC2* 59–60.

INTRODUCTION

In *The Bostonians* James refashions and relocates this Balzacian hero. It would not be credible, in post-bellum America, for Basil to be given a 'pivotal' role in 'contemporaneous history'; but James gives him the *appearance* of such a figure, from the moment he is introduced – when we are told that 'his head had a character of elevation which fairly added to his stature; it was a head to be seen above the level of a crowd, on some judicial bench or political platform' (1: 6) – to the moment near the end, when, waiting to 'rescue' Verena from the Music Hall in Boston, 'he felt as he could imagine a young man to feel who, waiting in a public place, has made up his mind, for reasons of his own, to discharge a pistol at the king or the president' (41: 373). The 'social abysses' from which he escapes may be less melodramatic than those that threaten Rastignac, but they are vividly realized – for example in the beer-cellar where he contemplates the wreck, seemingly final and irreversible, of his legal career (21: 169). At the end of the novel Basil is poised, like Rastignac, to take possession of the future, but on his own terms – the terms he offers Verena, dictated by his 'severe, hard, unique stoicism' (38: 337).

(4) *American Fiction*

The Bostonians demonstrates James's determined engagement with American fiction, both past and present. The major figure from the antebellum period is Hawthorne, and from the contemporary period Howells, each of whom is the subject of a separate section; critics have made claims for a wide range of other American authors, genres and sub-genres. Two of the latter, the 'romance of reconciliation' and the 'doctress' story, have already been mentioned; others include women's sentimental fiction and Southern literature; authors include the Southerner George W. Cable and the New Englander Constance Fenimore Woolson. These analogies have merit, but none is decisive; it seems more helpful to accept that *The Bostonians* was written with 'American fiction' more generally in mind, that it joined a conversation (or row) about what made a national literature, and that it put forward, not surprisingly, a dissenting view.

The American novelist's first problem, as James saw it, was the thinness of the country's social life: as he put it in *Hawthorne*, 'one might enumerate the items of high civilization, as it exists in other countries, which are absent

INTRODUCTION

from the texture of American life, until it should become a wonder to know what was left [...] The American knows that a good deal remains; what it is that remains—that is his secret, his joke, as one may say.¹¹⁰ Most American critics did not see the ‘joke’, and they were right at least in the sense that James was making a serious point about the ‘accumulation of history and custom’, the ‘complexity of manners and types’, which were needed ‘to form a fund of suggestion for a novelist’. Seen in this light, *The Bostonians* makes a major concession to ‘the American novel’ by the mere fact of its setting. It tacitly accepts that post-bellum America now offers the novelist enough history, enough density of social life, to work with. All the American novels cited as having an influence on James, no matter how widely they differ in other respects, take for granted that the action must be centred in America, and must deal with ‘native’ characters and social conditions. James had hitherto avoided this implicit demand made of American writers, with the exception of a short novel, *Washington Square* (1880), and a handful of stories.¹¹¹ Immediately, therefore, *The Bostonians* challenged comparison with other fictions, and other kinds of fiction, being published in America.

James’s quarrel with American fiction goes back a long way, and is not limited to the absence of ‘items of high civilization’ in American life. In November 1867, for example, he reviewed Rebecca Harding Davis’s *Waiting for the Verdict*, a Civil War novel which is of interest to *The Bostonians* because it deals with relations between North and South; James praised its ‘attempt to contrast certain phases of the distinctively Northern and Southern modes of life and feeling [...] bring[ing] two intelligent Southerners [...] into contact with Northern manners in such a way as to try their patience and their courage.’¹¹² Had Davis’s execution lived up to her idea, James went on, the novel

might have claimed, without reproach, that much-abused title, ‘A story of American life.’ As it stands, it preserves a certain American flavor. The author has evidently seen something corresponding to a portion of what she

¹¹⁰ Henry James, *Hawthorne* (1879), Ch. 2 (LC1 351–2).

¹¹¹ *The Europeans* (1878) is set in America but, as the title indicates, it belongs to the ‘international theme’ of James’s early work.

¹¹² Review of Rebecca Harding Davis, *Waiting for the Verdict* (New York, 1867 [postdated 1868] in *The Nation*, 21 Nov. 1867 (LC1 220).

INTRODUCTION

describes, and she has disengaged herself to a much greater degree than many of the female story-tellers of our native country from heterogeneous reminiscences of English novels.¹¹³

James sounds surprisingly conventional here: a ‘story of American life’ should be based on first-hand observation, and should not be derivative of European models.¹¹⁴ The basis of realism remains local knowledge, though that principle comes to be defined in more complex ways. Reviewing Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Mercy Philbrick’s Choice* (1876), James identifies ‘something typical and characteristic in its tone’:

The typical part of it is that in certain circles there is an extreme relish for histories of sternly moralistic young women, whose social horizon is bounded on one side by the vines trained round their picture-frames, on another by a system of feeble casuistry, and on another by poetical contributions to the magazines.¹¹⁵

Stories of American life, from this perspective, are determined by the market for fiction, divided and subdivided by gender and class. Many of the ‘niches’ in this market are feminine, since the bulk of novel-readers were women. Those who relish stories about moralistic young women are probably moralistic young women themselves, but other genres, such as the ‘society novel’, appeal to social aspiration or fantasy. What James thinks of as serious fiction cannot flourish in these conditions, because the author’s perspective on the world is predetermined. In Basil Ransom’s acknowledgement that Verena’s ‘fluent, pretty, third-rate palaver’ will prove irresistibly appealing to ‘the stupid, gregarious, gullible public, the enlightened democracy of his native

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

¹¹⁴ The hit at ‘female story-tellers’ was a commonplace of the period, although, to be fair, James made the same point in an unpublished review of Bayard Taylor’s *John Godfrey’s Fortunes* (New York, 1865), a novel whose subtitle really is ‘A Story of American Life’. James draws attention to this, regretting that the novel’s ‘general tone of vulgarity’ reinforces an existing prejudice: ‘We are so much misrepresented by foreigners in this respect that we are very sorry to have our case made worse by native writers.’ He also criticized the novel for ‘evoking comparisons with both Dickens and Thackeray which the author is ill able to sustain’ (*LCI* 622, 621; first published in the *Kenyon Review* in 1957).

¹¹⁵ Review of Helen Hunt Jackson, *Mercy Philbrick’s Choice* (Boston, 1876) in *The Nation*, 21 Dec. 1876 (*LCI* 512).

INTRODUCTION

land' (33: 280), there is an echo of James's gloom at the American public's appetite for inferior fiction. As he put it in a letter to Howells, lamenting the success of F. Marion Crawford's 'contemptibly bad & ignoble' novel *To Leeward* (1883), 'the idea of people reading it in such numbers makes one return upon one's self & ask what is the use of trying to write anything decent or serious for a public so absolutely idiotic'.¹¹⁶ *The Bostonians* implies an extensive knowledge of American fiction since Hawthorne, and a qualified rejection of most of its principles and practitioners. It is not a romance, or a tract, or an adventure; is not sentimental, or pious, or even (consistently) satirical; it is emulous of European models, but not derivative; despite the brilliance of its surface, its vision of America is discomfiting and makes few concessions to its readers' prejudices. James stakes his claim to the high ground of American fiction without a popular mandate, and with little critical support. He sets out, to adapt Wordsworth's phrase, to create the taste by which he is to be enjoyed.¹¹⁷

(5) Nathaniel Hawthorne

Hawthorne is James's major American precursor. This is not the place for a general survey of his influence; I will concentrate on those aspects of Hawthorne's life and work that bear directly on *The Bostonians*.

In *Hawthorne* (1879) James states the central importance of context, of locality and social conditions, to a real understanding of his subject:

Out of the soil of New England he sprang—in a crevice of that immitigable granite he sprouted and bloomed. Half of the interest that he possesses for an American reader with any turn for analysis must reside in his latent New England savour; and I think it no more than just to say that whatever entertainment he may yield to those who know him at a distance, it is an almost indispensable condition of properly appreciating him to have received a personal impression of the manners, the morals, indeed of the

¹¹⁶ Letter of 21 Feb. 1884 (*LFL* 241–2).

¹¹⁷ '[E]very author, as far as he is great and at the same time *original*, has had the task of *creating* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed' (William Wordsworth, 'Essay Supplementary to the Preface', in *Poems*, 1815). Wordsworth attributes the remark to Coleridge.

INTRODUCTION

very climate, of the great region of which the remarkable city of Boston is the metropolis.¹¹⁸

The New England where Hawthorne ‘sprouted and bloomed’ is that of the 1830s and 1840s, the ‘heroic age’ whose decline, in *The Bostonians*, is symbolized by the figure of Miss Birdseye. (Elizabeth Peabody, on whom Miss Birdseye was allegedly modelled, was Hawthorne’s sister-in-law.) But in James’s *Hawthorne* this place and time are evoked with a respect that is absent from the novel. The note of criticism is there, but it is tempered and judicious. It softens the picture James gives of New England’s ‘reforming and free-thinking class’: ‘kindness of tone’ is the appropriate response, James states, in dealing with ‘the state of Boston society forty years ago’:

It is difficult to see, indeed, how the generation of which Hawthorne has given us, in *Blithedale*, a few portraits, should not at this time of day be spoken of very tenderly and sympathetically. If irony enter into the allusion, it should be of the lightest and gentlest. [...] They appeared unstained by the world, unfamiliar with worldly desires and standards, and with those various forms of human depravity which flourish in some high phases of civilisation; inclined to simple and democratic ways, destitute of pretensions and affectations, of jealousies, of cynicism, of snobbishness.¹¹⁹

The problem with idealizing New England’s past is suggested by the fact that so many of its virtues are cast as negations: ‘unstained’, ‘unfamiliar’, ‘destitute’. Of course it is good to be ‘unfamiliar with worldly desires and standards’ – isn’t it? James is not so sure. The testing ground is the novel of Hawthorne’s that means the most to *The Bostonians*, *The Blithedale Romance*.

The Blithedale Romance (1852) is set in a utopian community which Hawthorne acknowledged was based on Brook Farm, in West Roxbury (now part of Boston, but at the time a small town about nine miles southwest of the city), where he lived from April to November 1841. It evokes the atmosphere of New England at the time, the atmosphere of social reform and experiment, and the fashion for occult and pseudo-scientific ‘phenomena’.

¹¹⁸ (Ch. 1; LC2 320).

¹¹⁹ (Ch. 4; LC2 381–2).

INTRODUCTION

James's view of this period is (he claims) more sceptical than Hawthorne's: commenting on the complaints of some of Hawthorne's associates at Brook Farm that they had been harshly treated, he remarked: 'when one thinks of the queer specimens of the reforming genius with which he must have been surrounded, one almost wishes that, for our entertainment, he had given his old companions something to complain of in earnest'.¹²⁰ The revisionist thrust of *The Bostonians* is not, however, directed primarily at the setting of *The Blithedale Romance*, but at its characters and plot.

Three of these characters are members of the Blithedale community: Hollingsworth, the rough, masculine 'philanthropist'; Zenobia, the beautiful, wealthy advocate of women's rights; and Priscilla, the pale young girl who arrives under Hollingsworth's protection. A fourth character is an outsider, the sinister mesmerist 'Professor' Westervelt.¹²¹ Zenobia and Priscilla, it turns out, are half-sisters who have been raised apart, one brought up in luxury, the other in poverty; Zenobia does not know their relationship when Priscilla arrives at Blithedale, but Priscilla does. Hollingsworth has brought her there at the request of her father, to take her away from the controlling influence of Westervelt, who has been exhibiting her as the 'Veiled Lady' in his mesmeric show. Westervelt and Zenobia were once in a sexual relationship (it is not made clear whether they were married). It is generally believed at Blithedale that Hollingsworth and Zenobia will marry, especially since Zenobia has the money to finance Hollingsworth's grand plan to turn the Blithedale estate into a reformatory. Priscilla, though devoted to Zenobia, falls in love with Hollingsworth. Meanwhile Westervelt is angling to get Priscilla back. Zenobia, jealous of Priscilla, delivers her to Westervelt, who renews his exploitation of her as the 'Veiled Lady'. Hollingsworth intervenes during one of her performances and carries her off. Zenobia suffers financial losses which mean she would no longer be able to fund Hollingsworth's scheme. Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla confront each other in a climactic scene: Hollingsworth declares his love for Priscilla, and

¹²⁰ Ibid., 384–5.

¹²¹ The narrator of the story, Miles Coverdale, though crucial to any reading of *The Blithedale Romance* itself, is of less importance to the relation between Hawthorne's novel and *The Bostonians*. James says of him in *Hawthorne*: 'his chief identity lies in his success in looking at things objectively and in spinning uncommunicated fancies about them' (Ch. 4; LC2 384).

 INTRODUCTION

Zenobia bitterly reproaches him for his betrayal of her. She acknowledges Priscilla as her sister and attempts to detach her from Hollingsworth, but in vain. They separate, and that night Zenobia commits suicide by drowning. Hollingsworth and Priscilla marry and at the end of the novel are seen living in retirement, with Hollingsworth, haunted by Zenobia's memory, leaning on Priscilla's unswerving love.

The Bostonians reflects *The Blithedale Romance* in a distorted mirror. Priscilla, the pale young girl from a humble background, controlled by a fraudulent mesmerist and rescued from the public stage by her lover, is, and is not, Verena Tarrant; Hollingsworth, the masculine man who treats women's rights with scorn, and who successfully takes Priscilla from both Westervelt and Zenobia, is, and is not, Basil Ransom; Westervelt, the handsome charlatan, is, and is not, Selah Tarrant; Zenobia, the wealthy, passionate, strong-minded woman, is, and is not, Olive Chancellor. The last of these identifications is the most problematic, to the point where it might be argued that James constructed Olive not by imitation of Zenobia but by inversion. Hawthorne insists on Zenobia's physical beauty and sensuality, on her compelling presence and on the power of her voice; it is she, not Priscilla, who is supremely gifted as a speaker. Hollingsworth resembles Basil in his rage against modernity, his masculine severity and his attitude to women as completely secondary to men, but he is also an intemperate New England reformer, who is eventually brought low by his selfish and excessive zeal.¹²² Priscilla – frail, drooping, intellectually null – is utterly unlike Verena in character: her 'performance' as the Veiled Lady is silent and passive; nor does Zenobia fall in love with her, or desire to possess her, as Olive desires Verena. When we first meet Verena she is being exploited by her father, but his Westervelt-like control of her fades after her performance at Miss Birdseye's, and his vampiric threat is evoked only to be deflated. Basil is not required to leap onto the stage to rescue Verena from her father's 'grotesque manipulations' (8: 54); his heroism in taking her away from Olive is a more ambivalent affair.

Juxtaposing *The Blithedale Romance* with *The Bostonians* reveals the extent to which James re-shaped the material of the earlier book, but its

¹²² He resembles in this respect the character of Paul Muniment in the novel James was working on alongside *The Bostonians*, *The Princess Casamassima* (1886).

INTRODUCTION

influence is not confined to these structural elements of plot and character. In Chapter 14, for example, Hollingsworth and Zenobia argue about the relations between the sexes, and Zenobia makes a specific point about speech itself: ‘she declaimed with great earnestness and passion, nothing short of anger, on the injustice which the world did to women, and equally to itself, by not allowing them, in freedom and honor, and with the fullest welcome, their natural utterance in public’. Seeing Miles Coverdale smile, and thinking that he is mocking her, she bursts out:

‘That smile, permit me to say, makes me suspicious of a low tone of feeling and shallow thought. It is my belief [...] that when my sex shall achieve its rights there will be ten eloquent women where there is now one eloquent man. Thus far, no woman in the world has ever once spoken out her whole heart and her whole mind. The mistrust and disapproval of the vast bulk of society throttle us, as with two gigantic hands at our throats. [...] You let us write a little, it is true, on a limited range of subjects. But the pen is not for woman. Her power is too natural and immediate. It is with the living voice alone that she can compel the world to recognize the light of her intellect and the depth of her heart.’

The hope that is placed in *The Bostonians* on Verena’s vocal power – especially by Olive – reflects this contention that women’s ‘natural utterance in public’ can be the vehicle of their redemption. James also recognized Hawthorne’s allusion in this passage to Margaret Fuller (who, like Zenobia, died by drowning, though not by suicide; the ship in which she was returning to America from Italy in July 1850 was wrecked off Fire Island, New York). In *Hawthorne* James alludes to the idea that Zenobia was based in part on Fuller, ‘this brilliant, restless, and unhappy woman—this ardent New Englander, this impassioned Yankee’, who ‘left behind her nothing but the memory of a memory’, because ‘she was a talker, she was *the* talker, she was the genius of talk’.¹²³ This ‘genius’ resembles Verena’s, but only up to a point. Where Hawthorne gave Fuller’s intellectual *and* vocal power to Zenobia, James divided them between Olive and Verena. It is Olive who is ‘brilliant, restless, and unhappy’, but whose self-tormenting shyness prevents her from uttering her thoughts in public; it is Verena who has what Zenobia calls the

¹²³ Ch. 4 (*LCI* 377–8).

 INTRODUCTION

‘natural and immediate’ gift of speech, but who lacks zeal, who is the reverse of an ‘impassioned Yankee’, and who has a very un-Puritan-like disposition to be happy. This division is what makes the question of whether Verena’s gift is to be exercised in public or in private so contentious. If Olive had her gift there would be no such question.

(6) *William Dean Howells*

The friendship and professional association between James and W. D. Howells (1837–1920) has been intensively documented and studied by Michael Anesko. As with James’s relation to Hawthorne, I am going to concentrate on what matters specifically to *The Bostonians*. James first met Howells in 1866, when Howells moved to Cambridge as assistant editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*. He had been American consul in Venice during the Civil War, and James admired his two travel books, *Venetian Life* (1866) and *Italian Journeys* (1867). Howells’s first work of fiction was a novella, *Their Wedding Journey* (1871); he published eight further novels up to 1885, several of which may have influenced *The Bostonians* (see below). During this period he also published poems, short stories, plays (mostly light comedies and farces) and numerous articles and reviews. He was already what James was never to be, an American ‘man of letters’ – *the* man of letters for nearly half a century, until his death in 1920.

As their friendship grew and matured, the two writers read (and reviewed) each other’s work, and engaged in a dialogue about fiction in which their agreements and disagreements were equally fruitful. Howells furthered James’s career by publishing his early fiction in the *Atlantic*, and in 1882 wrote the first critical essay to make the case for James as a major writer.¹²⁴ James’s attitude to Howells was more equivocal, and he never quite lost the sense that Howells had sacrificed more in order to forge his career at the heart of the American cultural establishment than he himself had sacrificed in order to maintain his artistic independence. These things are relative – Howells was not a craven conformist, nor was James indifferent to the market – but the difference occasionally surfaces, as when James tells Howells that he ‘insist[s] more upon the restrictions & limitations, the *a*

¹²⁴ For the trouble this caused both writers, see the section on ‘Publicity’ above (pp. LIV–LV).

INTRODUCTION

priori formulas & interdictions, of our common art, than upon that priceless freedom which is to me *the* thing that makes it worth practising'.¹²⁵

James delighted in Howells's success as an *American* realist, and his delight was mingled with envy and emulation; when he says that one of his aims in *The Bostonians* is 'to show that I *can* write an American story', he probably has Howells in his mind as someone who *could*. 'Continue to Americanize & to *realize*', he wrote to Howells; 'that is your mission;—& if you stick to it you will become the Zola of the U.S.A.'¹²⁶ In his 1886 article he praised Howells's 'unerring sentiment of the American character. [...] Other persons have considered and discoursed upon American life, but no one, surely, has felt it so completely as he.'¹²⁷

Michael Anesko links this emphasis on Howells as a pre-eminent American writer with James's numerous borrowings from him; Howells almost always has the priority in any exchange of subjects, plots and characters. But James's borrowings from Howells are no more straightforward than those from Hawthorne. Take, for example, two works by Howells that have links with *The Bostonians*, *The Undiscovered Country* (1880) and *Doctor Breen's Practice* (1881). The first, a novel about spiritualism, is founded on the relationship between Dr Boynton and his daughter Egeria, a gifted medium. Dr Boynton, a sincere and unworldly believer in spiritualism, is also a genuine physician, and, as he tells the two young men who visit him in the opening chapter: 'In former years I looked quite deeply into mesmerism, and I have never quite disused the practice of it, as a branch of my profession.' He is able to send Egeria into a mesmeric trance, and rejoices in the opportunity to 'present in her to-day the united action of those strange forces, equally occult, the mesmeric and the spiritistic'.¹²⁸ There is an analogy with the relationship between Verena Tarrant and her father in *The Bostonians*, but what James does with Howells's material has a kind of playfulness. Selah Tarrant is not a real physician; his practice as a 'mesmeric healer' is evidently fraudulent, like his

¹²⁵ Letter of 2 Jan. 1888 (LFL 266).

¹²⁶ Letter of 22 July 1879 (LFL 137).

¹²⁷ 'William Dean Howells', *Harper's Weekly* 30 (19 June 1886), 394–5 (LFL 249–55; this passage p. 251).

¹²⁸ W. D. Howells, *The Undiscovered Country* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1880), Ch. 1, pp. 15, 16.

INTRODUCTION

erstwhile career as a medium; he exploits his daughter for money; he is not an imitation of Dr Boynton but a travesty.¹²⁹

James took elements from *Doctor Breen's Practice* in the same spirit. Grace Breen is a graduate of the 'New York homœopathic school', and is 'rich enough to have no need of her profession as a means of support'; when we meet her she is in the company of her mother, does not yet have a 'practice' of her own and is looking after a single patient at a hotel on Cape Cod.¹³⁰ The novel's plot negotiates a compromise between romantic marriage, social conscience and professional ambition by having Grace reject the misogynist Dr Mulbridge in favour of the factory owner Mr Libby. To state the obvious contrasts: Mary Prance is not the central character of *The Bostonians*, is without family, has an urban practice in a poor neighbourhood, works hard for her living and is interested in medical science for its own sake. Grace Breen, we are told, began studying medicine in the aftermath of being jilted by a man who betrayed her with her best friend. Mary Prance has no such 'back-story', and her personal fate is not an issue in the novel.

The novel by Howells which seems, at first sight, closest to *The Bostonians* is *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, which began its serialization in the *Century Magazine* in November 1884, three months before James's. As soon as James began reading it, he saw that it was a masterpiece and incomparably Howells's greatest achievement, and it is theoretically possible that he responded to it in some of the later chapters of his own book. However, such influence is hard to prove and the points of connection are fewer than might be expected. Two have already been mentioned: the similarity between Matthias Pardon and Howells's unscrupulous reporter Bartley Hubbard; and the topographical theme of the 'new land' of the Back Bay. But Boston society in *The Rise of Silas Lapham* is devoid of the 'witches and wizards, mediums, and spirit-rappers, and roaring radicals' who in Mrs Luna's colourful phrase make up Olive Chancellor's social circle (1: 7); equally, James has nothing to say about the two social groups whose interaction drives Howells's plot, one comprising Boston's 'aristocracy', its old-established, cultured, cosmopolitan families, and the other its rising business class.

¹²⁹ For the parallel between Tarrant's 'soothing' of Verena and Dr Boynton's words to Egeria, see 8: 53 and note.

¹³⁰ W. D. Howells, *Doctor Breen's Practice* (Boston, MA: James R. Osgood, 1881), Ch. 1, pp. 11, 12.

INTRODUCTION

The Date of the Action of the Novel

James gives only one indication of the decade in which the novel is set, ‘the winter of 187–’ (19: 140); and he gives only one exact date, Wednesday 26 March, the day of Mrs Burrage’s evening party (26: 217). R. D. Gooder claims that ‘[t]he dramatic date of *The Bostonians* can be fixed with some exactness on internal evidence’ (*Oxford* 440). His pivotal date, from which he works backward and forward, is the completion of Harvard’s Memorial Hall in spring 1874; when Basil and Verena visit this building, it is of recent date, but not so recent that Basil has not heard something about it (25: 212). The following time-scheme is derived from Gooder’s calculations:

October 1873	Basil’s visit to Olive.
Winter 1873–4	Verena comes to live with Olive in Charles Street.
June 1874	Female Convention in Boston at which Verena speaks.
July 1874–December 1874	Olive and Verena travel to Europe.
January/February 1875	Basil’s visit to Mrs Luna in New York.
February/March 1875	Basil’s visit to Verena in Cambridge.
Wednesday 26 March 1875	Mrs Burrage’s evening party.
Summer 1875	Olive and Verena at Marmion with Miss Birdseye and Dr Prance.
August 1875	Basil travels to Marmion; death of Miss Birdseye; Olive sends Verena away.
November 1875	Verena’s scheduled address at Boston Music Hall; Basil persuades her to elope with him.

The likely ages of most of the main characters support Gooder’s case. Basil Ransom fought in the Civil War, which ended in 1865. He would then, in all likelihood, have been in his mid-twenties. A decade later he would be in his mid-thirties, about the same age as Mrs Luna, who has been married and widowed and has a young son (we are never told Newton’s age, but seven to eight is plausible). Olive is Mrs Luna’s younger sister; again, her exact age is not given, but 25 at the time the story begins is a fair estimate; this would make her older than Verena, though not by much. Verena is the youngest of

INTRODUCTION

the main characters; she is in her late teens or early twenties. All this fits the mid-1870s; the only problem (a slight one) concerns the oldest character, Miss Birdseye.¹³¹

As with many ‘realist’ novels, there are occasional difficulties in adjusting references to current events or social practices to a strict historical timeline. Some details fit the 1870s – for example, the fact that New York and Boston are still in different time zones (see 41: 378). The most obvious discrepancy, as Gooder acknowledges, is that 26 March 1875, the date he ascribes to Mrs Burrage’s reception, was not a Wednesday (as it was in 1873, 1879 and 1884). Again, Basil refers to ‘the horrible period of reconstruction’ (8: 52) as though it were in the past, although this phase of post-Civil War politics did not come to an end until the presidential election of 1876. The narrator tells us that Basil ‘was an immense admirer of the late Thomas Carlyle’ (21: 169), who died in 1881; we can reconcile this with the action of the novel taking place in the 1870s only by taking ‘the late’ as a kind of ‘editorial’ interpolation. Probably only an editor *does* notice, or care about such details, which include the exact location of Delmonico’s restaurant in New York, (it changed in 1876: see 30: 258), or the fact that Olive is said to do volunteer work for Boston’s ‘Associated Charities’, an organization only founded in 1879 (20: 153). Gooder is right, after all, to emphasize that ‘the book is a *fiction*’, in which ‘real’ time can be stretched, or compressed, at will.

Contemporary Reception

(1) *The Serial, and the ‘Peabody Affair’*

The first instalment of *The Bostonians* appeared in the issue of *The Century Magazine* dated February 1885, although, as was usual, it was on sale from late January. It contained the first six chapters, so that readers were left in the

¹³¹ She is an ‘octogenarian’ (38: 345); if the novel is set in the 1870s, she must have been born in the mid-1790s; she has been an agitator in the antebellum South, and the likeliest period for such activity would be the 1850s; we are therefore required to think of her engaging in strenuous activism, and being put in jail in Georgia, in her sixties. This seems unlikely; but the narrator does comment that at this period Miss Birdseye ‘was already an old woman’ (38: 347). Elizabeth Peabody, on whom James is alleged to have based Miss Birdseye, was born in 1804, and was therefore an octogenarian at the time the novel was published.

INTRODUCTION

midst of the gathering at Miss Birdseye's house, but had not yet been fully introduced to Verena. Reaction in Boston focused on the issue of whether James had based his characters on real people and places.¹³² In particular it was alleged that Miss Birdseye was a travesty of the aged Elizabeth Palmer Peabody (1804–94), one of Boston's most eminent reformers, and a survivor of the great days of Transcendentalism. As one newspaper put it, 'Henry James's new novel is said to caricature a well-known Boston lady so clearly that it is likely to raise a rumpus in Hub society. If James has made her as tiresome as most of his women characters are she will have good foundation for a libel suit.'¹³³ Looking back at the controversy when the novel appeared in volume form, another paper commented:

It was read—when read at all—in the course of its progress in the Century, amid such a tumult of indignation, remonstrance, disgust and exasperation as, perhaps, never before disturbed the serene atmosphere of this city of gods and muses. Its localities were pointed out even [to] the exact number and ownership of the Charles-street house where Mr. James located his heroine; its characters were identified with the unerring certainty of historical truth; and the name of the author was visited with such contumely that it seemed to be in the nature of a special Providence that no less a barrier than the Atlantic ocean rolled between Mr. James and his readers.¹³⁴

The Atlantic Ocean did not deter James's brother William, who wrote to him almost immediately; his letter of 2 February 1885 is not extant, but James's reply gives the gist: 'you assault me on the subject of my having painted a "portrait from life" of Miss Peabody!'¹³⁵ William's assault did not take James quite by surprise: 'I was in some measure prepared for it by [James Russell] Lowell's (as I found the other day) taking for granted that she had been my model, & an allusion to the same effect in a note from Aunt Kate.'¹³⁶ He then

¹³² I have not come across any contemporary speculation about Verena's 'original'.

¹³³ *Boston Daily Globe*, 28 Jan. 1885, reprinting a report from the *Lowell Courier* of 26 Jan.

¹³⁴ *Boston Evening Traveler*, 19 Mar. 1886, p. 2. Olive Chancellor's house in Charles Street was instantly (and correctly) identified as the residence of Annie Fields, widow of the Boston publisher James T. Fields, who lived at no. 148 with her close friend, the writer Sarah Orne Jewett. On this relationship see above, pp. xxxi–xxxii.

¹³⁵ Letter of 14 Feb. 1885 (LL 169); reproduced in full in Appendix D.

¹³⁶ 'Aunt Kate' is Catharine Walsh, James's mother's sister.

INTRODUCTION

launched into a long, strenuous and (it must be said) unconvincing denial that he had had Miss Peabody in mind: ‘I absolutely had no shadow of such an intention. I have not seen Miss Peabody for 20 years, I never had but the most casual observation of her, I didn’t know whether she was alive or dead, & she was not in the smallest degree my starting point or example.’ The fact that ‘[a]n old survivor of the New England Reform period was an indispensable personage in [his] story’ did not mean that he had modelled her on anyone in particular. However, he admitted that in developing the character of ‘an old, weary battered & simple-minded woman’ who embodied ‘humanitary’ and ‘transcendental tendencies’, he *had* thought that this character ‘would perhaps be identified with Miss Peabody’, and that he had even had ‘a scruple’ about borrowing one of Miss Peabody’s known mannerisms, her continual mislaying of her spectacles. Nevertheless, James insists that if his portrait of Miss Birdseye ‘is at the same time a vivid rendering of Miss Peabody I am absolutely irresponsible—& extremely sorry for the accident’.¹³⁷ He offered to write to Miss Peabody denying, ‘in the most respectful manner’, that he had ‘undertaken to reproduce her in a novel’. ‘You may think I protest too much’, James went on, ‘but I am alarmed by the sentence in your letter “—It is really a pretty bad business”’. He was horrified at the thought that Miss Peabody might actually have been wounded by the rumour. He assured William that Miss Birdseye was, in any case, ‘a subordinate figure in *The Bostonians*’ and that she was ‘treated with respect throughout’. He ended on a note of personal reproach: ‘The story is, I think, the best fiction I have written, & I expected you, if you said anything about it, would intimate that you thought as much—so that I find this charge on the subject of Miss P. a very cold douche indeed.’¹³⁸

James may indeed be thought to ‘protest too much’. To begin with he exaggerates his ignorance of Miss Peabody. On 9 June 1883 – shortly after conceiving the plan of *The Bostonians* – he wrote to her on behalf of his sister Alice, who was being treated at an asylum:

¹³⁷ ‘Irresponsible’ in this context means ‘not answerable for conduct or actions’, as opposed to ‘Acting [...] without a sense of responsibility’ (*OED* A 1).

¹³⁸ Letter of 14 Feb. 1885; *LL* 169–71. There is no evidence that James did in fact write to Miss Peabody. He repeated his denials to the publisher Benjamin Ticknor: ‘the charge in regard to this serial’s containing “personalities” is idiotic & baseless: there is not the smallest, faintest portrait in the book’ (letter of 1885, *LFL* 210 n.17).

INTRODUCTION

I shall give her your letter, when she is restored to the world, & she will much appreciate your benevolent thought of her [...] Let me thank you as well for your continued interest in the family of your old friend my father, & add my own very good wishes for your health & happiness.¹³⁹

It would be a stretch to claim that being reminded of Miss Peabody in June 1883 gave James the idea of putting her into his novel; on the other hand, the courteous tone of the letter is not incompatible with his thinking her ‘an old, weary battered & simple-minded woman’. It is misleading to suggest that Miss Birdseye ‘is treated with respect throughout’; on the contrary, the initial description of her in Chapter 4 is an unsparing satire. The detail about the spectacles casts some doubt on James’s claim to have had ‘only the most casual observation’ of Miss Peabody. His own attitude to the character shifts during the course of the letter: she is first ‘indispensable’, then ‘subordinate’. Yet the ending of the letter indicates that James was upset mainly because the row had deflected attention from what really mattered to him. In focusing on the alleged travesty of Miss Peabody, William had ignored ‘the best fiction I have written’. It was ‘a very cold douche indeed’, and by the time William came round to the book’s merits, it was too late.¹⁴⁰

Ironically enough, when the novel appeared in book form, much of the praise, in both Britain and America, clustered around the figure of Miss Birdseye. M. W. Hazeltine, in the *Sun*, declared:

The delineation of Miss Birdseye seems to us one of the most veracious, impressive, and memorable in contemporary fiction. She is alive; we feel that we have seen her and we know that we shall not forget her. And when we reflect upon the art by which the moral beauty and benediction of her life are made to shine through the meanness of her surroundings and the

¹³⁹ Unpublished letter at University of Virginia Library (Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature, Special Collections); transcription kindly provided by editors of *CLHJ*.

¹⁴⁰ Either James or (more likely) William must have mentioned this exchange of letters to their younger brother Robertson, then living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin: on 15 May 1885 the *Madison Wisconsin State Journal* reported that ‘Mr. Henry James has written to his brother in America that he is altogether grieved and cut up that any one should think his “Miss Birdseye” in *The Bostonians* is a portrait of Miss Peabody, as that lady is one of his oldest and dearest friends.’ The insinuating journalist who extracted this juicy item of gossip from Robertson (and then garbled it) was the *Madison Wisconsin State Journal*’s very own version of Matthias Pardon.

INTRODUCTION

fussy weakness of her intellect, we recognize the presence of a master's handiwork.¹⁴¹

The *Pall Mall Gazette* stated that Miss Birdseye was the novel's 'happiest effort':

The ludicrous side of her character is the one that we first see [...] But we come to see that she was more than this, that there was something quite heroic in her absolute abnegation of self [...] Mr. James makes handsome amends for what may be taken as ridicule of causes popular in some quarters in making this old woman, a life-long devotee of causes, the only really loveable character in the book.¹⁴²

The most charming of such tributes is reported by Alice James in a letter to her and James's Aunt Kate (Catharine Walsh):

[Henry] told me of dining somewhere the other night where Lord Derby introduced himself in order to compliment him upon the Bostonians which he had been reading with great delight [...] H. tried modestly to divert his attention from "The Bostonians" by discoursing on other matters to wh. he listened very politely but made no other reply than to say with the utmost gravity "Miss Birdseye is Shakespearian".¹⁴³

Such responses confirm that, although the row about Miss Peabody was painful and exasperating for James at the time, it is unlikely to have caused, or even significantly contributed to, the commercial failure of the novel.¹⁴⁴ The novel's fate was decided more by what was seen as its long-windedness and over-elaborate psychological analysis. Mark Twain's reaction was perhaps only to be expected; writing to W. D. Howells in July 1885, he bracketed James with 'George Eliot, & Hawthorne & those people' who 'just tire me to death': 'And as for the *Bostonians*, I would rather be damned to John Bunyan's heaven than read that.'¹⁴⁵ But the view from the office of the *Century* itself was in its own way just as dismissive. The editor, R. W. Gilder,

¹⁴¹ *The Sun*, 4 April 1886, p. 4; CR 164.

¹⁴² *Pall Mall Gazette*, 15 March 1886, p. 5; CR 156.

¹⁴³ Letter of 23 April [?1886], AJ 114.

¹⁴⁴ James himself thought the 'rumpus' might actually benefit the book (letter to Ticknor; see above, p. xcix, n. 138).

¹⁴⁵ CH 156; as CH notes, the seventh instalment of the serial had just appeared.

INTRODUCTION

was initially enthusiastic when he received the first batch of typescript: ‘It is so *human*,’ he wrote to James, ‘with all the penetration, humor of situation developed so charmingly. The style is so alert, the tone is a delight and refreshment. Be careful or you will find yourself writing your best story.’¹⁴⁶ But this was before the serial began appearing, and before Gilder found himself publishing a novel over twice the length he had been led to expect. In May 1885 he wrote to James in very different terms:

The movement of ‘The Bostonians’ is so slow that people seem to be dropping off from it. To me it is extremely enjoyable, but I can see reasons for impatience on the part of the readers. [...] I would not speak in this way were it not for a sense that a great many people were losing the pleasure of the story who would naturally like it, having made up their minds with the May number to the length to which it was being drawn out. If this feeling is so strong by the May number, I am afraid that when it comes to subsequent numbers it will be rather increased than diminished.¹⁴⁷

Gilder’s fears were realized. L. Frank Tooker, one of the associate editors of the *Century*, recalled the following exchange between his colleagues as the serial was drawing to a close:

“Carey! Oh, Carey, does ‘The Bostonians’ end in February?” “Yes,” replied Carey, not looking up from his own work. “James says it does, and so does Tooker, and they ought to know; they are the only ones who have read it.”¹⁴⁸

Early reviews in the British press were more favourable than those in America. News of the novel had circulated with positive ‘spin’ in the winter of 1884–5: the *Belfast News-Letter* of 27 December 1884, for example, cited a notice in the London *St James’s Gazette*: ‘The name of Mr. James’s new novel to be begun in the February number of *The Century* is “The Bostonians.”

¹⁴⁶ Letter of 14 Nov. 1884; cited Smith and Peinovich (see above, n. 35), p. 300.

¹⁴⁷ Letter of 18 May 1885; cited Smith and Peinovich, *ibid.*, p. 302. The memory of Gilder’s words stayed with James to the end of his life; he wrote to Edmund Gosse in 1915 that *The Bostonians* ‘was no success whatever on publication in the *Century* (when it came out,) & the late R. W. Gilder, of that periodical, wrote me at the time that they had never published anything that appeared so little to interest their readers’ (25 Aug. 1915, *LL* 559).

¹⁴⁸ L. Frank Tooker, *The Joys and Tribulations of an Editor* (New York: The Century Co., 1924); cited Smith and Peinovich, *ibid.*, p. 301.

INTRODUCTION

The story, it is said, is written from a new point of view. Mr. Henry James will introduce his readers to some strange people—women’s rights advocates, women healing mediums, trance speakers, &c.—whom he is said to treat with delightful irony’ (p. 6). The major American journals were regularly reviewed in Britain, and the novel featured in many of these ‘round-ups’. *The Country Gentleman: A Sporting Gazette and Agricultural Journal* (7 February 1885) noted that ‘some of the most famous names in current American literature’ were appearing in the current issue of the *Century*, and placed James at the head of the list: ‘Mr. Henry James begins his novel of “The Bostonians” in which we have of course a super-subtle analysis of moods of mind and states of feeling, as well as a very minute presentation of outward traits [...] Mr. James has not failed in his knack—or art?—of at once laying hold of the reader’s interest’ (p. 185). The next issue (7 March) compared the novel favourably with Howells’s *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, where, the reviewer felt, ‘There is abundance of clever talk, but [...] we cannot help confessing that the story hangs. Mr. Henry James is much more satisfactory in “The Bostonians.” We have here those minute and metaphysical character studies in which the author delights and excels, but they are related to a fresh and interesting incident. The improvisation of Verena Tarrant among the Women’s Rights Women is a charming piece of girl nature’ (p. 306). The *Liverpool Mercury* was more even-handed: in May it pronounced that ‘The two serial novels, Mr. Howells’s “The Rise of Silas Lapham,” and Mr. Henry James’s “The Bostonians,” are two of the best stories that have hitherto appeared in this magazine’ (13 May 1885, p. 7). Favourable mentions continued well after the American notices had either ceased or become universally hostile; as late as January 1886 the *Country Gentleman* commented: ‘The *Century*’s two leading serials are full of interest this month, Mr. James (in “The Bostonians”) and Mrs. Foote (in “John Bodewin’s Testimony”) being seen at their best alike in the emotion in their narratives, their studies of character, and the local setting of their incidents’ (2 Jan. 1886, p. 15).

The case of the *Northern Echo* deserves special mention because there seem to have been two reviewers at odds with each other. When the novel began its serialization it was warmly greeted: ‘Mr. Henry James’s contribution, “The Bostonians,” promises great things. In this first instalment we are introduced to three ladies all more or less peculiar, and given to the advocacy of women’s rights [i.e. Olive Chancellor, Miss Birdseye and Mrs

 INTRODUCTION

Farrinder; Verena Tarrant had not yet appeared]. With three such remarkable characters, what may we not expect?' (5 February 1885, p. 4). In March, by contrast, the second critic picked up the term 'peculiar' but gave it a negative twist: 'Mr. Henry James continues his sketches of "The Bostonians," who become more and more peculiar and unintelligible both to each other and, I should imagine, to the public also' (9 March 1885, p. 4). In May the first critic resumed his praise of James's 'power of word pictures and analysis' (p. 4), and in June the same reviewer was still positive: 'Mr Henry James waxes eloquent on the rights and wrongs of women, as Olive Chancellor in "The Bostonians"' (1 June 1885, p. 4).¹⁴⁹ But in July the second critic returned with a vengeance: 'Mr. Henry James's reputation will not gain much by his "Bostonians" which drags along wearily and seems likely to go on forever' (4 July 1885, p. 4).

(2) *The Volume*

The British reviews of the volume publication of the novel which appeared in the spring and summer of 1886 were mixed. As is usual in such cases, the amount (and quality) of attention given to the novel varied widely, but most reviewers complained about the length of the book and several allied this to a disparagement of its subject matter. The *Morning Post* is typical:

Mr James's latest novel, "The Bostonians", would be a convincing proof, if proof were wanted, that even the union of faultless writing, descriptive power, and subtle character delineation may result in the production of a wearisome work. His plot turns on the craze of some of his personages on the question of "female emancipation". This is in itself a cause of weakness, since the theme has been ventilated from every point of view, serious and the contrary [...] this is a slight foundation on which to construct three long volumes, so slight that Mr. James has not been able to render them readable.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ 'as Olive Chancellor' is *sic*, perhaps meaning that James is eloquent in the persona of his character.

¹⁵⁰ *Morning Post*, 10 May 1886, p. 2.

 INTRODUCTION

The review in the *Glasgow Herald* frames a similar judgment of the book within a critique of its structure:

The effect produced by Mr. James's novels is not, as a rule, inspiriting, but the regret that it should be so is in his present work heightened by the feeling that, had he not limited himself to the necessities of a three-volume novel, had he written fifty pages more or less, "The Bostonians" would have been incomparably better than it is. Most readers will complain that the first part is too long, that his characters are analysed not once, but many times. But each analysis is so good—each brings out some fresh trait which is needful for the better understanding of the individual in his or her relation to the other personage in the novelist's mimic world—that it is difficult to say which analysis could have been omitted without obscuring the reader's perceptions. The *denouement* [*sic*] is not successful. Not so much because it is hurried, as this very sense of hurry may be Mr. James's plan for making the reader share the excitement, the unexpectedness, the confusion in which the several characters work out their several destinies. Its failure lies rather in this, that had the book ended sooner it would have left a pleasanter impression; had it been fifty pages longer the reader would have closed it with the impression that the author did not quite know how to dispose of his characters.¹⁵¹

The *Catholic World* dismissed the novel as one which was 'never mentioned by the enthusiastic friends of its author [...] a dismal failure' (1 April 1886, p. 186), and in a later issue reported 'the general impression that nobody has read this colossal and long-drawn-out analysis of minute emotions, except the author himself'; it bore a special grudge against the ending: 'On the four hundred and forty-ninth [page] the marriage of Verena and Ransom is merely predicted, and the author's last sentence is very inconclusive [...] The constant reader is thus scantily rewarded for having followed Mr. James through nearly five hundred pages' (1 July 1886, pp. 560–1). Prejudice against highbrow fiction in general, and James in particular, is evident in the opening sentences of the review in the *Graphic*:

¹⁵¹ *Glasgow Herald*, 2 June 1886, p. 10.

INTRODUCTION

It need not detract from the claims to popularity of “The Bostonians,” [...] if we describe it at once as portentously long, tedious, and dull. For its author appeals to a special public, whom he has contrived to impress with the fact that these qualities constitute notes of excellence in fiction. The reader who has no ambition to pose as “superior” is not likely to be attracted by a novel by Mr. Henry James; it is enough for him to know that “The Bostonians” resembles its predecessors in treatment and in design.¹⁵²

An eloquent and acute defence of the book, by R. H. Hutton in *The Spectator*, stated that it was a ‘truly wonderful sketch of the depth of passion which has been embodied in the agitation of woman’s wrongs and woman’s rights’; yet even Hutton remarked with exasperation that ‘though we can truly say that we have never read any work of Mr. Henry James which had in it so much that was new and original, we must also say that we have never read any tale of his that had in it so much of long-winded reiteration and long-drawn-out disquisition’. Hutton speculated that this quality might itself be ‘a reflection of the thin, long-drawn elaborateness of Bostonian modes of thought’.¹⁵³

None of the British reviews commented on Basil Ransom’s Southern origins. This aspect of the book, in fact, attracted little comment in the American press either; Horace Scudder, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, wrote: ‘we cannot resist the conviction that Mr. James has never been in Mississippi, as the phrase goes, and trusts to luck that his readers have not been there either’.¹⁵⁴ Most British and American reviewers (Hutton is an exception) agreed that James was satirizing feminism (and approved of his doing so), though Scudder, again, commented: ‘[T]he book is not in the least a contribution to the study of the woman question, so called. It is rather a study of the particular woman question in this book.’¹⁵⁵ A strong feminist response was made by Celia B. Whitehead, writing as ‘Henrietta James’, in *Another*

¹⁵² *The Graphic*, 3 April 1886, p. 378.

¹⁵³ *The Spectator* lix (March 1886), 388–9; *CH* 162–3.

¹⁵⁴ *Atlantic Monthly* 57 (June 1886), 851–53; *CR* 169.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* For Scudder’s comment on the ‘dangerous lengths’ to which James goes in depicting the relationship between Olive and Verena, see above, p. lxxxii.

INTRODUCTION

Chapter of "The Bostonians".¹⁵⁶ Whitehead seized on the opening provided by James at the end of the book, by having Olive Chancellor take Verena's place in front of the audience at the Music Hall and deliver the speech, 'A Woman's Reason', that Verena was to have made – doing so, indeed, 'with an earnestness and pathos never felt by Verena Tarrant', and to 'long and loud applause'.¹⁵⁷ She realizes that 'in trying to prepare Verena for this work she had been preparing herself'. Whitehead then turns to the marriage between Basil and Verena, taking full advantage of the allusion to Verena's likely unhappiness in the novel's final sentence. Basil loses interest in Verena once he has succeeded in mastering her, fails to make a living as a writer by 'rehashing and refining stale barbarisms', and eventually abandons her and their baby daughter for none other than Mrs Luna, with whom he travels to Europe. Verena, in turn, goes back to Olive, whom she finds 'with a desire to take her friend in her arms on any terms—and the baby too'. Verena's gift is re-kindled, and she is 'ready to take up her old work'. But Whitehead does not envisage a 'Boston marriage' between Olive and Verena. Instead, the wealthy New York aesthete Mr Burrage – free of his mother, who has died – is brought back on the scene. He has devoted his life to his love of music and has become a music teacher. He renews his courtship of Verena, with Olive's blessing, and 'this time', Whitehead concludes, 'we leave her in smiles and not in tears'.

American reviewers were naturally more interested than British reviewers in following up the novel's 'Bostonian' theme. The *Literary World* drew attention to this contrast as a way of criticizing the book: 'Mr. James is probably thought by the English fairly to represent some phases of American life in his careful and highly elaborated novels; but we protest that the advanced women and their men associates, as typified by the Tarrants and others, have an atrociously exaggerated importance attached to them.'¹⁵⁸ Horace Scudder in the *Atlantic*, with more subtlety but in a similar vein, attributed James's

¹⁵⁶ 'Henrietta James' [Celia B. Whitehead], *Another Chapter of "The Bostonians"* (Bloomfield, NJ: S. Morris Hulin, 1887; excerpts repr. in Mary Chapman and Angela Mills (ed.), *Treacherous Texts: U. S. Suffrage Literature, 1846–1946* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 100–7.

¹⁵⁷ This revisionist fantasy forms the ending of the Merchant-Ivory film of *The Bostonians* (1984), with Vanessa Redgrave as Olive.

¹⁵⁸ *Literary World* xvii (June 1886), 198; *CH* 165.

 INTRODUCTION

fascination with ‘a phase of Boston life which is usually taken too seriously for purposes of fiction’ to his ‘self-expatriation’, contrasting his treatment of Boston with that of W. D. Howells in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*:

He comes back, as it were, to scenes once familiar to him, bringing with him habits of thought and observation which make him seize upon just those features of life which would arrest the attention of an Englishman or a Frenchman. The subtle distinctions between the Laphams and Coreys are nothing to him, but he is caught by the queer variety of humanitarianism which with many people outside of Boston is the peculiar attribute of that much suffering city.¹⁵⁹

Despite criticism of the novel’s defects, there was praise, sometimes grudging, for its intellectual power, summed up in the conclusion of the review in the *Nation*:

The story drags in places, and the conversations betray that want of naturalness into which the author’s passion for a sort of dramatic repartee leads him. Nevertheless, the criticism and analysis and observation are so good that we cannot refrain from admiration even when we do not always enjoy it. We cannot help feeling that we are in the hands of one of the first of American novelists.¹⁶⁰

(3) *James’s Reaction; William’s Recantation*

As we have seen, James reacted with chagrin to the initial reception of the serial, especially in America. By the autumn of 1885 he was anticipating the novel’s failure as a book, too. He wrote to William on 9 October 1885:

I fear the *Bostonians* will be, as a finished book, a fiasco, as not a word, echo or comment on the serial (save your remarks,) have come to me (since the row about the 1st 2 numbers) from any quarter whatever. This deathly silence seems to indicate that it has fallen flat. I hoped much of it, & shall be disappointed—having got no money for it I hoped for a little glory.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ *Atlantic Monthly* 57 (June 1886), 851–3; CR 168; CH 166.

¹⁶⁰ *The Nation* 42 (13 May), 408; CH 164.

¹⁶¹ LL 181.

INTRODUCTION

William himself, however, when he read the book ‘in the full flamingness of its bulk’, told James that he ‘consider[ed] it an exquisite production’.¹⁶² His earlier ‘growling letter’ had been influenced by reading the narrative in instalments, ‘so that it seemed to me so slow a thing had ne’er been writ’. William now praises ‘the two last books’ as ‘simply sweet’, especially the portrait of Verena:

you’ve made her neither too little nor too much—but absolutely *lieb-enswürdig* [lovable]. It would have been so easy to spoil her picture by some little excess or false note. Her moral situation,—between Woman’s rights and Ransom,—is of course deep and her discovery of the truth on the Central Park day etc inimitably given.

He also concedes that ‘Ransom’s character, which at first did not become alive to me, does so, handsomely, at last’. But William did not quite let go of his earlier critique:

One can easily imagine the story cut out and made into a bright short sparkling thing of a hundred pages, which would have been an absolute success. But you have worked it up by dint of descriptions and psychologic commentaries into near 500,—charmingly done for those who have the leisure and the peculiar mood to enjoy that amount of miniature work,—but perilously near to turning away the great majority of readers who crave more matter & less art.¹⁶³

William’s (partial) recantation may have been welcome, but it did not mitigate what James felt to be a general and widespread neglect of his work, attributable to the failure of *The Bostonians* (and, for good measure, *The Princess Casamassima*). He wrote to Howells in October 1886:

I won’t speak of my own work, as it appears to interest no man or woman to-day. I have lately published 2 long-winded serials—lasting between them far [?for] more than 2 years—of which in all that time no audible echo or

¹⁶² Ignas K. Skrupskelis and Elizabeth M. Berkeley (ed.), *The Correspondence of William James*, 12 vols (Charlottesville, VA and London: University Press of Virginia, 1993), Vol. II, pp. 38–9. ‘Flamingness’ refers to the book’s red-orange covers.

¹⁶³ Comparing James to Polonius, rebuked by Gertrude in *Hamlet* 2.2.95: ‘More matter with less art.’

INTRODUCTION

reverberation of any kind, either in America or here, has come back to me. If I had not my bread & butter to earn I should lay down my pen tomorrow—hard as it is, at my age, to confess one's self a rather offensive fiasco.¹⁶⁴

Over a year later, in another letter to Howells, James was even more despondent:

I have entered upon evil days—but this is for your most private ear. It sounds portentous, but it only means that I am still staggering a good deal under the mysterious & (to me) inexplicable injury wrought—apparently—upon my situation by my last 2 novels, the *Bostonians* & the *Princess*, from which I expected so much & derived so little. They have reduced the desire, & the demand, for my productions to zero—as I judge from the fact that though I have for a good while past been writing a number of good short things, I remain irremediably unpublished. Editors keep them back, for months & years, as if they were ashamed of them, & I am condemned apparently to eternal silence.¹⁶⁵

James's embarrassment at sounding 'portentous' comes from the allusion to Milton, who describes himself as 'fallen on evil days' in the invocation to book 7 of *Paradise Lost* (l. 25). But the implied comparison has weight, when we remember James's declaration to William, on the novel's first appearance, that he thought *The Bostonians* 'the best fiction I have written'. If his estimate of the damage done to his reputation was exaggerated, that exaggeration in itself measures the depth of his disappointment.

(4) *W. D. Howells*

W. D. Howells was James's friend, admirer and supporter; yet he was virtually silent about *The Bostonians* when it appeared. It is doubtful that he read more than a few instalments of the serial, and by his own admission he did not read it in volume form.¹⁶⁶ He knew the trouble *The Bostonians*

¹⁶⁴ Letter of 19 Oct. 1886, *LFL* 257. The second 'long-winded serial' is *The Princess Casamassima*. On the use of 'fiasco' in the novel see 3: 17.

¹⁶⁵ 2 Jan. 1888 (*LFL* 266).

¹⁶⁶ On 25 Dec. 1886 (*LFL* 260) he wrote to James: 'I feel myself a recreant in not yet having read your two last books' (i.e. *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima*).

INTRODUCTION

had caused his friend, both literary and financial, and that James had been hurt by the adverse criticism of the book, yet he seems to have offered him no comfort. Michael Anesko suggests that Howells had a guilty conscience about *The Bostonians*, because he had cannily extricated himself from the failure of Osgood's publishing business while doing nothing to help James; as Anesko points out, he behaved less well than his own hero, Silas Lapham, who accepts ruin rather than take advantage of his inside knowledge of a business transaction.¹⁶⁷ Howells had other reasons to look askance at *The Bostonians*. In December 1886 he mentioned to James that he had heard that his forthcoming story ('Louisa Pallant') was to be on 'international ground'. Howells emphatically approved: 'It is pre-eminently and indefeasibly your ground; you made it, as if it were a bit of the Back Bay.'¹⁶⁸ *The Bostonians*, of course, deals with the real, not the metaphorical 'Back Bay' – in other words, trenches on Howells's American preserve. Is Howells in effect telling James not to trespass? It seems unlikely that he would behave with conscious ill will; but it remains the case that James gave *The Rise of Silas Lapham* a generous portion of his time and critical attention, and had to wait nearly twenty-five years for a return.

The return, when it came, was spectacular. 'I can't resist writing to you about *The Bostonians*, which I've been reading out to my family,' Howells told James in a letter of 1 Feb. 1910:

I'm still reading it, for there are a hundred pages left, and I wish there were a thousand. I've the impression, the fear that you're not going to put it into your collection, and I think that would be the greatest blunder and the greatest pity. Do be persuaded that it's not only one of the greatest books you've written, but one of the masterpieces of all fiction. Closely woven, deep, subtle, reaching out into worlds that I did not imagine you knew, and avouching you citizen of the American Cosmos, it is such a novel as the like of has n't been done in our time. Every character is managed with masterly clearness and power. Verena is something absolute in her tenderness and sweetness and loveliness, and Olive in her truth and precision; your New Yorkers are as good as your Bostonians; and I couldn't go beyond that.

¹⁶⁷ LFL 183–4.

¹⁶⁸ LFL 260.

 INTRODUCTION

Both towns are wonderfully suggested; you go to the bottom of the half frozen Cambridge mud. A dear yet terrible time comes back to me in it all. I believe I have not been wanting in a sense of you from the first, but really I seem only now to be realizing you now.¹⁶⁹

James's reply to this long-delayed tribute is not extant.

(5) Checklist of Reviews and Other Coverage

(i) Serial

Belfast News-Letter, 27 Dec. 1884, p. 6 (in 'Literary Notes, from the St James's Gazette')

Lowell Courier, 26 Jan. 1885; repr. *Boston Daily Globe*, 28 Jan. 1885

Northern Echo, 5 Feb. 1885, p. 4; 9 March 1885, p. 4; 11 May 1885, p. 4; 1 June 1885, p. 4; 4 July 1885, p. 4; 2 Jan. 1886, p. 4.

The Country Gentleman: A Sporting Gazette and Agricultural Journal, 7 Feb. 1885, p. 185; 7 March 1885, p. 306; 2 Jan. 1886, p. 15

Liverpool Mercury, 13 May 1885, p. 7; 11 July 1885, p. 7; 5 Aug. 1885, p. 7; 20 Nov. 1885, p. 7.

Madison Wisconsin State Journal, 15 May 1885

Boston Post, 23 Dec. 1885, p. 1

(ii) Volume

The year of publication for all items in this section is 1886. Items marked * are reprinted, in whole or in part, in Kevin J. Hayes (ed.), *Henry James: The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge University Press, 1996); items marked # are reprinted, in whole or in part, in Roger Gard (ed.), *Henry James: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968); items marked \$ are reprinted, in whole or in part, in James W. Gargano (ed.), *Critical Essays on Henry James: The Early Novels* (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1987). Reviews were anonymous; where the author is known the name is given in square brackets.

¹⁶⁹ LFL 438. The repetition of 'now' is *sic*. The 'collection' is the *New York Edition*; by the date of this letter the novel's omission was irrevocable (see Textual Introduction, pp. CXXII–CXXIII).

INTRODUCTION

- * *Daily News* [London], 25 Feb., p. 3
 * *Academy*, 6 March, p. 162 [G. Barnett Smith]
 * *Athenaeum*, no. 3045 (6 March), p. 323
 * *Pall Mall Gazette*, 15 March, p. 5
St. James's Gazette, 18 March, p. 7
 * *Boston Evening Traveler*, 19 March, p. 2
Literary World [London] 33 (19 March), pp. 267–8
Missouri Republican [St. Louis], 20 March, p. 7
 # *Spectator* 59 (20 March), p. 386
Cleveland Daily Plain Dealer, 21 March, p. 4
Detroit Evening News, 21 March, p. 2
 * *Boston Beacon*, 27 March, p. 3
Indianapolis Journal, 28 March, p. 9
 § *New York Daily Tribune*, 28 Mar., p. 6
New York Times, 28 March, p. 12
New York World, 28 March, p. 12 ['Nym Crinkle', *alias* Andrew C. Wheeler]
Indianapolis Journal, 29 March, p. 5
St. Paul Daily Pioneer Press, 29 March, p. 4
Catholic World 43 (April), p. 130 [also July issue: see below]
 * *Quarterly Review* 83 (April), pp. 480–1
Chicago Inter-Ocean, 3 April, p. 10
 * *Chicago Tribune*, 3 April, p. 13
Cincinnati Commercial Gazette, 3 April, p. 13
 * *Detroit Free Press*, 3 April, p. 8
Graphic 33 (3 April), p. 378
New York Daily Graphic, 3 April, p. 311
 * *New York Sun*, 4 April, p. 4 [Mayo Williamson Hazeltine]
Chicago Times, 10 April, p. 13
New Orleans Daily Picayune, 11 April, p. 14
San Francisco Chronicle, 11 April, p. 11
Louisville Courier-Journal, 16 April, p. 4
 * *The Critic* [New York] 8 (17 April), pp. 191–2
 * *Springfield* [MA] *Republican*, 18 April, p. 4
 * *Independent* 38 (22 April), p. 495
 * *The Times* [London], 30 April, p. 3
Dial 7 (May), pp. 14–15 [William Morton Payne]

INTRODUCTION

Lippincott's Magazine 37 (May), pp. 554–6 [W. H. Babcock]
Morning Post, 10 May, p. 2
#*Nation* 42 (13 May), pp. 407–8
Albany Evening Journal, 28 May, p. 3
**Atlantic Monthly* 57 (June), pp. 851–3 [Horace E. Scudder]
Glasgow Herald, 2 June, p. 10
Saturday Review 61 (5 June), pp. 791–2
#*Literary World* [Boston] 17 (12 June), p. 198
Catholic World 43 (July), pp. 560–1
Contemporary Review 50 (Aug.), pp. 300–1 [Julia Wedgwood]

TEXTUAL INTRODUCTION

The Bostonians was first published in *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* between February 1885 and February 1886. Shortly after the final instalment appeared, the novel was published by Macmillan in a three-volume edition for the British market, followed by a one-volume edition for the American market (which also served as a ‘second edition’ in Britain). No manuscript of the novel is extant, nor are there any proofs of the serial or volume edition. There was no second edition and the novel was not included in the New York Edition of James’s fiction (1907–9).

The text of this edition is that of the first edition in volume form (1886), slightly emended. I have followed the one-volume as opposed to the three-volume edition because it incorporates a significant structural variant, the ending of Book First at Chapter 20 instead of Chapter 18 (see below, p. CXVIII). The phrase ‘THE END’ appears at the end of the one-volume edition but not at the end of volume 3 of the three-volume edition; it is retained in this edition.

The Serial

The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine began in 1881, succeeding *Scribner’s Monthly Magazine*, which had published fiction and non-fiction by James from 1873, including one novel, *Confidence*, serialized in 1879. The instalments of *The Bostonians* appeared as follows:

TEXTUAL INTRODUCTION

February 1885	Vol. 29 [n.s. 8], no. 4, pp. 530–543 ¹	Chs. 1–5
March 1885	“ ”, no. 5, pp. 686–700	Chs. 6–10 [in part] ²
April 1885	“ ”, no. 6, pp. 893–908	Chs. 10 [cont ^d] ³ –14
May 1885	Vol. 30 [n.s. 9], no. 1, pp. 58–66	Chs. 15–16
June 1885	“ ”, no. 2, pp. 256–264	Chs. 17–18
July 1885	“ ”, no. 3, pp. 423–437	Chs. 19–21
August 1885	“ ”, no. 4, pp. 553–568	Chs. 22–24
September 1885	“ ”, no. 5, pp. 692–708	Chs. 25–28
October 1885	“ ”, no. 6, pp. 861–881	Chs. 29–33
November 1885	Vol. 31 [n.s. 9], no. 1, pp. 85–98	Chs. 34–36 [in part] ³
December 1885	“ ”, no. 2, pp. 205–214	Chs. 36 [cont ^d] ⁴ –38 [in part] ⁴
January 1886	“ ”, no. 3, pp. 337–351	Chs. 38 [cont ^d] ⁴ –40
February 1886	“ ”, no. 4, pp. 591–600	Chs. 41–42

Each instalment was headed ‘THE BOSTONIANS.* | by HENRY JAMES, | Author of “Portrait of a Lady,” “Daisy Miller,” “Lady Barberina,” etc.’ The asterisk refers to a footnote at the bottom of the page: ‘Copyright, 1884, by Henry James.’ ‘Lady Barberina’ had appeared in the *Century* in May–July 1884, but was not the most recent story by James to do so; ‘A New England Winter’ appeared in August–September 1884 (and is set in Boston).

The instalments vary in length between 8 pages (May and June 1885) and 20 pages (October 1885), but this does not correspond to chapter divisions; the chapters which break off in the middle come in instalments of average length. The decision would not have been made by James, who did not see proofs of the magazine instalments.

¹ Up to 1878, *Scribner’s* numbered its volumes every six months (November–April and May–September). In 1878 it changed to annual volumes, with ‘new style’ numbering. The *Century* began by following *Scribner’s* old system, with vol. 23 covering November–April 1881. The issues in which *The Bostonians* appeared are still numbered in the old style, and the page numbers correspond to this system.

² Chapter 10 breaks off at the sentence ending ‘and Mrs. Tarrant began to feel as if they really had “struck” something.’

³ Chapter 36 breaks off at the sentence ‘I want you to come out with me, away from here.’

⁴ Chapter 38 breaks off at the sentence ending ‘the most charming woman in America.’

 TEXTUAL INTRODUCTION

The text of the serial was set from typescript sent by James from London. Neither the typescript nor the manuscript from which the typist worked is extant. The typist was Mme Lisé Monblachon (not, as in *HJL* 3:79, ‘Moublachon’), who had established the first commercial typewriting agency in London in 1882, with offices at 26 Austin Friars. Based on an example of Mme Monblachon’s work at this period (George Romanes’s ‘Memorial Poem’ to Charles Darwin), it is likely that James’s MS was typed on a Remington No. 2 model, introduced in 1878, the first typewriter to use both upper and lower case. This model had a 6½" line, so the pages would have been quite small; the Remington No. 3, which could take larger-format paper, was not introduced until 1886.⁵

The Volume

The Bostonians was to have been published in volume form by J. R. Osgood, the Boston publisher with whom James entered into an agreement covering this novel and some of his shorter fiction in April 1883. However, Osgood’s firm failed in May 1885, and the novel was taken over by the British publisher Macmillan (see Chronology of Composition, pp. CXXVIII–CXXIV). Macmillan issued the novel in both Britain and the United States. The first (British) edition, in three volumes (still the customary format for British fiction) appeared on 16 February 1886. Five hundred copies were printed; this edition sold out by mid-March, and a further 100 copies were printed.⁶ Volume 1 of this edition contained Chapters 1 to 18, comprising 244 pages; volume 2, Chapters 19 to 34, 225 pages; volume 3, Chapters 35 to 42, 232 pages. The novel was also divided into three parts (‘Book First’, ‘Book Second’, ‘Book Third’, each of which corresponds to its respective volume.

Simultaneously with the three-volume edition, Macmillan printed 5,000 copies of a one-volume edition, of which 3,000 copies were shipped to America and 2,000 retained in London; these were destined for a cheaper

⁵ See Lena Wänggren, *New Women, New Technologies: The Interrelation between Gender and Technology at the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (University of Edinburgh PhD, 2012), pp. 70–1 and J. David Pleins, *In Praise of Darwin: George Romanes and the Evolution of a Darwinian Believer* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 15, 353, n.3.

⁶ *HJ* & *HM* 122.

 TEXTUAL INTRODUCTION

British edition to follow the one in three volumes. The first American edition, in one volume, appeared on 19 March 1886. What is technically the second British edition, in one volume, appeared in May.

Apart from a few trivial printer's errors, the three-volume text and the one-volume text are identical. There is, however, one major difference, related not to the text but the division of the novel into 'books'. In the three-volume edition the three 'books' correspond to the three volumes; in the one-volume edition, Book First ends with Chapter 20, not Chapter 18, so that Book Second now comprises Chapters 21 to 34. This makes the 'books' of uneven length, but the structure is more rational, since the first 'book' now corresponds to a complete phase of the plot. Chapters 1 to 20 take place in Boston and cover Olive and Basil's first meeting, Verena's *début* at Miss Birdseye's and the progress of Olive and Verena's relationship up to their projected trip to Europe. Chapter 21 shifts the scene to New York, where we see Basil Ransom entangled in, and escaping from, Mrs Luna's clutches, and travelling to Boston and Cambridge in search of Verena; their outing to Harvard is followed by Olive and Verena's visit to the Burrages in New York, and ends with the two women's flight from that city in fear of Basil's growing influence. The third 'book', in both the three-volume and one-volume editions, begins at the seaside resort of Marmion and concludes with Basil's 'rescue' of Verena from the Boston Music Hall.

Modern editions, including this one, usually follow the one-volume structure.⁷ It would be standard practice for the three volumes of a British novel to be of roughly equal length, and it may have seemed better, or at least neater – to pragmatic and tidy-minded publishers and printers – to make the three 'books' correspond to the physical division into three volumes than to leave Book First unfinished at the end of volume 1, with Book Second starting over 30 pages into volume 2. But without evidence from manuscript, proofs or other documentary sources, it remains uncertain whether, or to what extent, James had any say in this decision, or in the change subsequently made in the one-volume text.

⁷ A case can be made for the three-volume division, on the grounds that Chapter 19, which begins Book Second, 'usher[s] in the most momentous period of Miss Chancellor's life', the point at which Verena comes to reside permanently with her in Charles Street. But only two chapters later another climax occurs (Verena's rejection of Henry Burrage's marriage proposal, followed by the trip to Europe), after which we turn abruptly to Basil's life in New York.

 TEXTUAL INTRODUCTION

Revision

(1) *Revision of the Serial for Volume Publication*

The period in which James was revising the serial text for volume publication has a surprisingly early starting point: in a letter of 30 January 1885 to J. R. Osgood's partner, Benjamin Ticknor, James enclosed 'a revise of the 1st instalment of the "Bostonians," out of the *Century*. As I have seen no proof of this, it is full of errors & things I wish altered in the volume. Please print the latter from these sheets which I will send you punctually every month, amended like those that go herewith.'⁸ This arrangement held until Osgood's failure, as James told Macmillan in a letter of 25 August 1885: 'Osgood was stereotyping the book as the successive parts came out, & sending proof to me; but when he stopped payment, & other operations, but 2 or 3 chapters had been done.'⁹ It is not clear whether Osgood's failure caused an interruption in James's revision schedule. He may have continued to revise each instalment as it appeared in the *Century*, even though he would no longer have been sending the revised copy to Boston; or he may have waited until the late summer of 1885, resuming work once the arrangement with Macmillan had been finalised. He may have begun by marking up the relatively small amount of proofs (the '2 or 3 chapters') that he had received from Osgood; but here a separate question arose of whether Macmillan would buy the remaining stereotype plates from Ticknor and Co. (the firm which had taken over Osgood's business), and make these the basis of the volume edition. James was at first in favour of this; he wrote to Macmillan, in the same letter of 25 August: 'I hope you will be disposed to buy [the plates]—they can be continued & will serve for the American edition of the book'. He enclosed with this letter '[t]he last page of proof [he had] received', remarking that 'The actual stereotype may continue beyond it'.¹⁰ But two days later, to Macmillan's relief, James changed his mind. He had realized that if Macmillan bought the existing plates, the make-up of the

⁸ Unpublished letter, Berg Collection, New York Public Library; transcription kindly supplied by editors of *CLHJ*.

⁹ *HJ* & *HM* 110.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 110–11.

 TEXTUAL INTRODUCTION

page would effectively have been decided in America: ‘It will be much better for you to have fresh [plates] made for the book & not have to conform to the first few pages established by Ticknor.’¹¹

Macmillan, therefore, began making stereotype plates of his own; what was the source of this text? James, we have seen, gave Macmillan what he had in hand – the stereotype proofs of the first ‘2 or 3 chapters’ received from Osgood. Subsequent plates (produced by Macmillan’s own printers) would have been based on the text of actual issues of the *Century*, meaning that production of the book would have to keep pace with the month-by-month appearance of the magazine. But in late November 1885 Macmillan’s agent in New York, George E. Brett, persuaded the *Century* to let him have proofs of the serial in advance of publication. Macmillan sent these proofs to James, remarking that ‘They do not seem to go to the end of the book but I think they go further than the corrected sheets you sent me the other day. I am not sure about this because the latter are in the printers’ hands.’ I assume that Macmillan had already produced proofs from the November issue of the *Century*, and that these were the ‘corrected sheets’ James had returned. If the advance proofs supplied by the *Century* went further than this, but not to the end of the book, it is a reasonable guess that they were the proofs of the December 1885 and January 1886 instalments, leaving only the final instalment of February 1886 (Chapters 41–42). The *Century* may have supplied advance proofs of this, too, but we have no record of them doing so; since the February issue would have been available from late January, it would have been possible for the printers in London to produce the final plates from the magazine itself, send proofs to James, receive his corrections and be in time to publish on 16 February.¹²

One specific question about the revision of the serial text concerns the character of Miss Birdseye: did James alter the novel while it was in progress in response to its adverse reception in America – in particular the accusation that the character of Miss Birdseye was a travesty of the venerable

¹¹ 27 August 1885; *ibid.*, 112.

¹² For an overview of the kinds of variant between the serial and volume text, see headnote to Textual Variants, p. 515.

 TEXTUAL INTRODUCTION

Transcendentalist reformer Elizabeth Peabody?¹³ Was there a window of opportunity for him to change anything relative to Miss Birdseye while the book was still being serialized?

On 18 April 1885 James wrote to Osgood: ‘I have sent to the *Century* all the copy for the *Bostonians* save a small fraction, which I am only waiting to receive from the type-writer who recopies it for me’; this ‘small fraction’ probably consisted of the last three chapters of the book.¹⁴ When James says he has sent ‘all the copy’ he means all the *remaining* copy; the novel had begun its serialization in the February issue of the *Century*, and James is writing in mid-April, so copy for February–April had already been supplied; it is inconceivable that James would not already have sent copy for the May instalment, at least, and probably for June as well. The remaining copy (minus the portion still in the hands of the typist) would therefore comprise Chapters 22 to 39. If this is correct, the window of opportunity opens a crack. Chapter 23, which formed part of the August instalment, relates Basil Ransom’s visit to Boston in search of Verena Tarrant. In the course of the chapter he encounters Miss Birdseye, whom he persuades to give him Verena’s address in Cambridge and, moreover, to keep this a secret from Olive Chancellor. Miss Birdseye appears in this episode in a much more positive light than in the early chapters where her appearance and mentality are satirized without compunction. Basil warms to her, and she shows both shrewdness and independent-mindedness in her conversation with him. We may at least speculate that James changed his depiction of Miss Birdseye in response to the furore he had aroused. Indeed it is possible that he had not at first intended Miss Birdseye to feature in this chapter at all, and that her appearance in itself represents a running revision in the plot. In his long letter of self-justification to his brother William, James had declared: ‘Miss Birdseye is a subordinate figure in the *Bostonians*, & after appearing in the 1st and 2d numbers, vanishes till toward the end, where she re-enters, briefly, & pathetically & honourably dies.’¹⁵ But this does not correspond to the novel we have, where Miss Birdseye does not ‘vanish’; not only does she ap-

¹³ For the ‘Peabody affair’ see above, p. xcvi.

¹⁴ See Chronology of Composition, p. cxxvii.

¹⁵ 14 Feb. 1885, *LL* 170–1. For the full text of this letter, see Appendix C.

 TEXTUAL INTRODUCTION

pear in person in Chapter 23, but a long passage in Chapter 20 speaks of her being tended and cherished by Olive and Verena. Her role in bringing Basil and Verena together makes her more than a ‘subordinate figure’, and she is crucial to the episode at Marmion, where her death is one of the novel’s set pieces. Between February and April James would have had either the manuscript or, more likely, the typescript of these middle chapters in his hands, and it is therefore possible – though it remains no more than a hypothesis – that before he despatched them to the *Century* he not only softened his depiction of Miss Birdseye but enhanced her importance in the plot.

(2) *The Omission of the Novel from The New York Edition*

The Bostonians is the only long novel by James to be omitted from the 24-volume collected edition of his novels and tales, comprehensively revised and accompanied by critical Prefaces, known as the ‘New York Edition’, published in 1907–9 by Scribner’s in America and Macmillan in Britain. Two shorter works – *The Europeans* (1878) and *Washington Square* (1880) – were also omitted, and since these three are the only novels by James to be set wholly within America, the suspicion arises that their omission was deliberate. However that may be, in August 1908, in the midst of finishing the prefaces for the Edition, James wrote to Howells of his regret at having had to omit some works for ‘want of space’, and postulating ‘a couple of supplementary volumes for certain too marked omissions’:

And I have even, in addition, a dim vague view of re-introducing, with a good deal of titivation and cancellation, the too-diffuse but, I somehow feel, tolerably full and good “Bostonians” of nearly a quarter of a century ago; that production never having, even to my much-disciplined patience, received any sort of justice. But it will take, doubtless, a great deal of artful re-doing—and I haven’t, now, had the courage or time for anything so formidable as touching and re-touching it. I feel at the same time how the Series suffers commercially from its having been dropped so completely out.¹⁶

¹⁶ 17 Aug. 1908; *LFL* 426.

 TEXTUAL INTRODUCTION

The word ‘formidable’ recurs in a letter written seven years later to Edmund Gosse, who had written to James either to ask why the novel had not been included, or to plead for it to be added to the series (Gosse’s letter is not extant). In his reply James stated that he had always meant to include it, and the reason this had not happened was circumstantial:

Revision of it loomed peculiarly formidable & time-consuming (for intrinsic reasons,) & as other things were more pressing & more promptly feasible I allowed it to stand over—with the best intentions, & also in company with a small number more of provisional omissions. But by the time it *had* stood over disappointment had set in; the undertaking had begun to announce itself as a virtual failure & we stopped short where we were—that is when a couple of dozen volumes were out. [...] All the same I *should* have liked to review it for the Edition—it would have come out a much truer and more curious thing (it was meant to be curious from the first;) but there can be no question of that, or of the proportionate Preface to have been written with it, at present—or probably ever within my span of life.¹⁷

James does not specify the ‘intrinsic reasons’ that made revision of the novel seem ‘peculiarly formidable’. Some of the ‘titivation and cancellation’ might be to do with the novel’s being ‘too-diffuse’; the ‘artful re-doing’, ‘touching and re-touching’ might have addressed the question of point-of-view in the novel, where the boundaries between the narrator’s views and those of his characters are sometimes hard to distinguish. The loss of the ‘proportionate Preface’ is greatly to be regretted.

¹⁷ Letter of 25 August 1915, LL 559.

CHRONOLOGY OF COMPOSITION AND PRODUCTION

1883

‘Daudet’s *Évangéliste* has given me the idea of this thing.’ James’s statement, made in a notebook entry for 8 April 1883, three months after the publication of Daudet’s novel, gives us the earliest starting-point for the genesis of *The Bostonians*. *L’Évangéliste* was serialized in *Le Figaro* from 6 December 1882 to 9 January 1883, and published in volume form on the day of the final instalment (Alphonse Daudet, *Oeuvres*, vol. 3, ed. Roger Ripoll (Paris: Gallimard, 1994; Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), p. 1124). It is unlikely that James read the serial; he left London to return to America on 18 December, after receiving news of his father’s last illness. The date at which he obtained the book is not documented.

26 February: Publication of a leading article in the *Boston Daily Globe* which has a number of parallels with James’s thinking. The article is entitled ‘The Solidarity of the Sex’, a quotation from James himself, as the (anonymous) writer points out. For the text of this article, see Appendix B. Together with his reading of *L’Évangéliste*, this article may indicate the period in which James conceived the idea of *The Bostonians*.

8 April: James writes to James R. Osgood, who had taken over as his American publisher in 1882 from Houghton, Mifflin & Co., and had recently brought out the American edition of *The Siege of London* (three short stories: the title story, ‘The Pension Beaurepas’, and ‘The Point of View’) in February 1883. In this letter James outlines his plan for the novel; he later transcribes the letter into his notebook, with minor variants, and adds further comments. For the text of this letter, and the additional comments made in the notebook entry, see Appendix C. There are differences between the preliminary sketch of the plot and the completed book; however, it is evident that this is not an impromptu account; the basic premise of the novel was already fixed in James’s mind.

CHRONOLOGY OF COMPOSITION AND PRODUCTION

13 April: James enters into an agreement with Osgood which gave the publisher ownership of the foreign rights to *The Bostonians* and to three shorter fictions, with the American rights being leased for five years. Michael Anesko comments that ‘James’s preference to lease the domestic copyright in these works and sell the foreign rights altogether [...] reveals the influence of his publishing experience in England. Such practices were alien to the American trade’ (FM 83–4). The arrangement proved disastrous for James, but at the time promised a higher return on both serial and volume publication, particularly the former: Osgood, with his local knowledge and connections, would be able to secure better terms from American magazines than James could do from London. The ploy seemed to work immediately: the *Century*, which had previously turned down an approach from James himself, agreed to publish *The Bostonians*, and paid Osgood directly for the rights. James’s share was to be \$4,000. He never saw a cent of the money.

The agreement with Osgood stipulated that the novel and the three short stories ‘shall take precedence of any other works of fiction to be written by said James, and shall be furnished as rapidly as possible, the shorter stories first and the novel soon after and while no time is definitely agreed on it is generally understood that the stories will be furnished during the summer and autumn of the present year [i.e. 1883], and a substantial part of the novel during the first two months of the year 1884’. These dates were based on estimates given by James in his letter to Osgood of 8 April. In fact James did not begin writing the novel until the late summer of 1884.

May–September: James writes a series of travel pieces, published in the *Atlantic Monthly* under the title ‘En Provence’, and in volume form in 1884 as *A Little Tour in France*.

Late autumn: James delivers the first of the three short fictions to be serialized in the *Century*: ‘The Impressions of a Cousin’ (Nov.–Dec. 1883), followed by ‘Lady Barberina’ (May–July 1884) and ‘A New England Winter’ (Aug.–Sept. 1884). These three stories were collected in *Tales of Three Cities* (1884).

1884

January: Charles Dana, editor of the New York *Sun*, offers to publish some of James’s short stories; these would not only pay well but reach the paper’s large readership and, through syndication, an even wider public.

CHRONOLOGY OF COMPOSITION AND PRODUCTION

Feeling that he could not pass up the opportunity, even though it meant pandering to the popular taste for sensationalism and melodrama, James asks Osgood to be let off from the clause in their contract that stipulated priority of production for the works he was placing with Osgood's firm. He was short of money, he told Osgood, and in any case the *Century* was not advertising his novel for 'the present year' and did not seem 'in a *particular* hurry for the MS' (letter of 29 Jan. 1884, *FM* 86). Osgood was agreeable, and James went ahead with the stories. (He mentioned 'three or four' in a letter to Thomas Sergeant Perry of 6 March 1884 (*FM* 86), but only two appeared: 'Pandora' in the issues of 1 and 8 June 1884, and 'Georgina's Reasons' in the issues of 20 and 27 July and 3 Aug. 1884.) He was a little embarrassed about taking the *Sun*'s money, assuring Perry that it was 'a case of gold pure & simple', though to his sister Alice he wrote that he '[saw] no shame in offering [his] productions to the widest public, & in their being "brought home," as it were, to the great American people' (5 Feb. 1884, *FM* 87).

6 August: James writes in his notebook: 'Infinitely oppressed and depressed by the sense of being behindhand with the novel – that is, with the *start* of it, that I have engaged, through Osgood, to write for the *Century*' (*CN* 30). He recorded various social engagements which would take up his time until the middle of the month, when he looked forward to 'a clear stretch of work'. At this stage the novel did not yet have a title, as the same notebook entry laments:

I haven't even a name for my novel, & fear I shall have to call it simply—*Verena*: the heroine. I should like something more descriptive—but everything that is justly descriptive won't do—"The Newness"—"The Reformers"—"The Precursors," "The Revealer"—&c—all very bad, & with the additional fault that people will say they are taken from Daudet's *Évangéliste*.

The names of most of the major characters had, however, been settled, though some were still in flux: Verena Tarrant's father is not yet Selah but Amariah, the name eventually given to Mrs Farrinder's husband; Matthias Pardon is 'Mathias Pinder'. We learn that Verena had been given her name because 'her mother had seen [it] in a book and liked it' – a detail missing from the novel itself. Basil Ransom is named but nothing is said about his having become a Southerner (see Introduction, p. XLIV).

CHRONOLOGY OF COMPOSITION AND PRODUCTION

26 August: James writes to his British publisher, Frederick Macmillan, that he was ‘working very diligently at a much-delayed novel, which is presently to appear in the *Century*’ (*HJ* & *HM* 92–3). The start of composition of the book may therefore be dated to mid-August 1884.

1885

Once he began writing, James worked steadily through the autumn and winter of 1884–5, delivering manuscript to his typist Mme Monblachon, revising the typescript, and sending it in batches to the *Century*. The novel grew longer as he wrote it. The original agreement with Osgood was for a book ‘substantially of the length of one hundred and fifty “*Atlantic Monthly*” pages’, or in other words six monthly parts; in the end the novel ran to thirteen instalments.

18 April: James writes to Osgood: ‘You will probably have already perceived that the *Bostonians*, like most of my things, transcends considerably the length to which I had originally intended to confine it.’ But it was now all but done:

I have sent to the *Century* all the copy for the *Bostonians* save a small fraction, which I am only waiting to receive from the type-writer who recopies it for me, and who, being the only operator of the sort in this whole big city, is over-burdened with work and delays interminably. At any rate, by the time you receive this the whole book will have gone to New York with the exception of 70 or 80 pages in the total ms. of 950 (*HJL* 3:77–8).

This suggests that the portion James refers to runs from Chapter 40, which initiates the final phase of the plot (returning to Boston after the interlude at Marmion), to the end of the novel (Chapter 42); three chapters would make a reasonable batch to be delivered to the typist. This calculation is based on James’s figures being roughly accurate: ‘70 or 80 pages’ represent about 7.5 per cent of the novel; if we apply this percentage to the 449 pages of the first edition, and round down to the nearest chapter, we find ourselves at the start of Chapter 40, on page 415. Assuming that this batch had been delayed by several weeks at least, it seems that James finished the novel around February–March 1885; he was writing the final portion of the book, in other words, as the first instalments were being published.

CHRONOLOGY OF COMPOSITION AND PRODUCTION

James writes to Osgood on 18 April not simply to report progress on *The Bostonians*, but because he is ‘in pressing need of money’. Given that he has so nearly fulfilled his side of the bargain, he thinks it reasonable to ask for \$2,000, half the price he is owed for the serial, with the remainder to be paid when ‘the last sheet is in Gilder’s hands’. He also mentions that he has not had a half-yearly account from Osgood, or any reply to his request for one, and that he has been ‘much inconvenienced by this delay’.

5 May: James writes ‘a letter of somewhat bewildered inquiry’ to his British publisher Frederick Macmillan, ‘having culled from the *Times* this a.m. (in the American telegrams) the sweet flower of information that J. R. Osgood & Co., my dear Boston publishers, have failed’ (*HJ* & *HM* 99). He asks Macmillan for advice on whether he would be able to recover any of the money he was owed for the serial, though without much hope: Osgood ‘made terms of his own with the *Century* [...] If they have paid him, I suppose I must go unrewarded, as the money will have been swallowed up’. This is indeed what had happened. The *Century* had already paid Osgood and there was no chance of the magazine paying twice for the same rights. James later confirmed to his brother William that he had received ‘not a stiver’ for the serial (9 October 1885; *LL* 181). The volume publication, however, is another matter. ‘Wouldn’t the book become mine, as a book, to do what I please with, on the failure of J. R. O. & Co. to pay me \$4000 on receipt of the whole?’ James asks.

6 May: Macmillan replies to James’s letter. He already knew something of Osgood’s precarious position: ‘from what I have heard of him and his affairs I doubt whether his estate can be worth anything to speak of’ (*HJ* & *HM* 100). He advises James to hang on to the final instalment (which had still not come back from the typist):

If you send him [Osgood] this final instalment you will be a creditor for £1000 and entitled to whatever composition he may be able to pay. This however may only be 10 or 15 cents on the dollar.

If on the other hand you decline to deliver the final instalment except upon payment of the money, it seems to me that the whole agreement falls to the ground and the book becomes once more your property (*ibid.* 100–1).

CHRONOLOGY OF COMPOSITION AND PRODUCTION

That being the case, Macmillan adds, ‘you will have no difficulty in getting it published by someone else. We, for instance, should be very glad to publish it, paying you whatever royalty you have been in the habit of receiving from Osgood’ (ibid. 101).

7 May: Having consulted the firm’s solicitor, Macmillan writes again with detailed legal advice as to the procedure James should follow in order to recover his copyright in the novel (ibid. 102–3).

13 May: Macmillan makes a formal offer to publish the book in Britain and America, with an advance of £500 on royalties of 15 per cent. James wanted more, but Macmillan would not budge and James eventually accepted these terms. There were complications regarding the cancellation of his contract with Osgood, but by late August the situation was resolved: the *Century* would complete its serialization of the novel, and when the last instalment had appeared Macmillan would publish the book in Britain and America. It is not known when James sent the last portion of typescript to the *Century*, but it may well have been around this time. He was already engaged in writing his next novel, *The Princess Casamassima*, which began its serialization in the *Atlantic Monthly* in September 1885.

1886

Late January: The final instalment of the serial appears in the *Century* (the issue dated February 1886).

16 February: Publication of the first English edition in three volumes.

19 March: Publication of the first American edition in one volume.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

This Bibliography serves the editorial materials in the volume as a whole. It does not aim for comprehensive coverage of everything that has been written about *The Bostonians*, but is limited to works that are explicitly cited in the editorial matter or, if not cited, works that contribute information and evidence directly relevant to the history of the text's genesis, composition, reception and afterlife. Contemporary reviews are not included; a list of these will be found at the end of the Introduction (pp. cxii–cxiv).

The Bostonians

The Bostonians, *Century Magazine*, February 1885–February 1886. For details of instalments, see Textual Introduction, p. cxvi.

The Bostonians, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1886).

The Bostonians, 1 vol. (London and New York: Macmillan, 1886).

The Bostonians, with an Introduction by Lionel Trilling (London: John Lehmann, 1952).

Les Bostoniennes, transl. Jeanne Collin-Lemercier (Paris: Denoël, 1955).

The Bostonians, with an Introduction by Irving Howe (New York: The Modern Library, 1956).

The Bostonians, ed. Richard Gooder (Oxford University Press, 1986 [Oxford World's Classics]).

The Bostonians, ed. Richard Lansdown (London: Penguin Books, 2000 [Penguin Classics]).

The Bostonians, ed. Pierre A. Walker with an Introduction by A. S. Byatt (New York: The Modern Library, 2003).

Other Works by Henry James

'Alphonse Daudet', *Century Magazine* 26 (Aug. 1883), 498–509.

The American Scene (London: Chapman and Hall, 1907).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ‘The Art of Fiction’, *Longman’s Magazine* 4 (Sept. 1884), 502–21; repr. *Partial Portraits*.
- Autobiographies: A Small Boy and Others* [1913]; *Notes of a Son and Brother* [1914]; *The Middle Years; Other Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Philip Horne (New York: Library of America, 2016).
- Collected Letters of Henry James*, ed. Michael Anesko, Pierre A. Walker, and Greg. W. Zacharias (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006–).
- The Complete Notebooks of Henry James*, eds. Leon Edel and Lyall H. Powers (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- Complete Stories*, 5 vols. (New York: Library of America): Vol. I: 1864–1874, ed. Jean Strouse (1999); Vol. II: 1874–1884, ed. William L. Vance (1999); Vol. III: 1884–1891, ed. Edward Said (1999); Vol. IV: 1892–1898, eds. David Bromwich and John Hollander (1996); Vol. V: 1898–1910, ed. Denis Donoghue (1996).
- ‘The Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson’, *Century Magazine* 26 (June 1883), 265–72.
- The Correspondence of Henry James and the House of Macmillan, 1877–1914*, ed. Rayburn S. Moore (London: Macmillan, 1993).
- The Europeans*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1878).
- French Poets and Novelists* (London: Macmillan, 1878).
- Hawthorne* (London: Macmillan, 1879).
- Henry James: A Life in Letters*, ed. Philip Horne (London: Allen Lane, 1999).
- Henry James Letters*, ed. Leon Edel, 4 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press; London: Macmillan, 1974–84).
- ‘Honoré de Balzac’, *Galaxy* 20 (Dec. 1875), 814–36; repr. *French Poets and Novelists*.
- ‘The Impressions of a Cousin’, *Century Magazine* 27 (Nov.–Dec.), 116–29, 257–75; repr. *Tales of Three Cities*.
- ‘Lady Barberina’, *Century Magazine* 28 (May–July 1884), 18–31, 222–34, 336–50; repr. *Tales of Three Cities*.
- The Letters of Henry James*, ed. Percy Lubbock, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1920).
- ‘The Letters of Honoré de Balzac’, *Galaxy* 23 (Feb. 1877), 183–95; repr. with title ‘Balzac’s Letters’, *French Poets and Novelists*.
- ‘The Life of Emerson’, *Macmillan’s Magazine* 57 (Dec. 1887), 86–98; repr. with title ‘Emerson’ in *Partial Portraits*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, eds. Leon Edel and Mark Wilson (New York: The Library of America, 1984).
- Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, The Prefaces to the New York Edition*, eds. Leon Edel and Mark Wilson (New York: The Library of America, 1984).
- 'A Most Extraordinary Case', *Atlantic Monthly* 21 (April 1868), 461–85; repr. *Stories Revived*.
- 'Mr. and Mrs. James T. Fields', *Atlantic Monthly* 116 (July 1915), 21–31.
- 'A New England Winter', *Century Magazine* 28 (Aug.–Sept. 1884), 573–87, 733–43; repr. *Tales of Three Cities*.
- 'Nordhoff's Communistic Societies', *The Nation* 20 (14 Jan. 1875), 26–8.
- Partial Portraits* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1888).
- 'Poor Richard', *Atlantic Monthly* 19 (June 1867), 694–706; 20 (July–August 1867), 32–42, 166–78; repr. *Stories Revived*.
- The Portrait of a Lady*, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1881).
- The Princess Casamassima*, 3 vols. (London and New York: Macmillan, 1886).
- 'Professor Fargo', *The Galaxy* 18 (Aug. 1874), 233–53.
- The Question of Our Speech* [and] *The Lesson of Balzac* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1905).
- The Reverberator*, 2 vols. (London and New York: Macmillan, 1888).
- Roderick Hudson* (Boston, MA: James R. Osgood, 1875).
- 'The Story of a Year', *Atlantic Monthly* 15 (March 1865), 257–81.
- Stories Revived* (London: Macmillan, 1885).
- Tales of Three Cities* (Boston, MA: James R. Osgood, 1884).
- Washington Square* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1880).
- 'William Dean Howells', *Harper's Weekly* 30 (19 June 1886), 394–5.
- William Wetmore Story and his Friends*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1903).
- The Wings of the Dove*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902).

Secondary Works

- Anderson, Charles R., 'James's Portrait of the Southerner', *American Literature* 27 (1955), 309–31.
- Anesko, Michael, "Friction with the Market": *Henry James and the Profession of Authorship* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- (ed.), *Letters, Fictions, Lives: Henry James and William Dean Howells* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- Balzac, Honoré de, *Le Père Goriot* [1835], ed. Pierre-Geroges Castex (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1963).
- Basch, Françoise, 'Women's Rights and the Wrongs of Marriage in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America,' *History Workshop Journal* 22.1 (October 1986), 18–40.
- Beer, Janet, Anne-Marie Ford and Katherine Joslin (eds.), *American Feminism: Key Source Documents 1848–1920*, 4 vols. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004).
- Bell, Ian F. A., 'Language, Setting and Self in *The Bostonians*,' *Modern Language Quarterly* 49.3 (Sept. 1988), 211–38.
- Bell, Millicent, *Meaning in Henry James* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).
- Bewley, Marius, *The Complex Fate: Hawthorne, Henry James and Some Other American Writers* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1952).
- Blair, Sara, 'Realism, Culture, and the Place of the Literary: Henry James and *The Bostonians*,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James*, ed. Jonathan Freedman (Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- Blight, David W., *Race and Reunion: the Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001).
- Braude, Ann, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1989).
- Brigham, Ann, 'Touring Memorial Hall: The State of the Union in *The Bostonians*,' *Arizona Quarterly* 62.3 (Autumn 2006), 5–29.
- Brodhead, Richard H., *The School of Hawthorne* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).
- Buitenhuis, Peter, *The Grasping Imagination: The American Writings of Henry James* (University of Toronto Press, 1970).
- Caron, Timothy P., "'How Changeable Are the Events of War': National Reconciliation in the *Century Magazine's* 'Battles and Leaders of the Civil War'", *American Periodicals* 16.2 (2006), 151–71.
- Castle, Terry, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
- Chapman, Mary and Angela Mills (eds.), *Treacherous Texts: U. S. Suffrage Literature, 1846–1946* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Collister, Peter, *Writing the Self: Henry James and America* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007).
- Daudet, Alphonse, *L'Évangéliste* [1883], in *Oeuvres*, vol. III, ed. Roger Ripoll (Paris: Gallimard, 1994; Bibliothèque de la Pléiade).
- Daugherty, Sarah, 'The Bostonians and the Crisis of Vocation', in *A Companion to Henry James*, ed. Greg W. Zacharias (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008).
- Davis, Sara de Saussure, 'Feminist Sources in *The Bostonians*', *American Literature* 50.4 (Jan. 1979), pp. 570–87.
- Dimaggio, Paul, 'Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America', *Media, Culture and Society* 4 (1982), 33–50 and 303–22.
- Edel, Leon and Dan H. Laurence, *A Bibliography of Henry James*, 3rd edn, revised with the assistance of James Rambeau (Oxford University Press, 1982).
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo, "'New England Reformers'", *Essays*, Second Series (1844)', in *Essays and Lectures* (New York: Library of America, 1983), 591–609.
- Fuller, Margaret, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* [1845], in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century and Other Writings*, ed. Donna Dickenson (Oxford University Press, 1994).
- Furst, Lilian R., *Women Healers and Physicians: Climbing a Long Hill* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1997).
- Gabler-Hover, Janet, 'The North–South Reconciliation Theme and the "Shadow of the Negro" in *Century Illustrated Magazine*', in *Periodical Literature in Nineteenth-Century America*, eds. Kenneth M. Price and Susan Belasco Smith (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1995), pp. 239–56.
- Gard, Roger (ed.), *Henry James: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968).
- Graham, Wendy, *Henry James's Thwarted Love* (Stanford University Press, 1999).
- Habegger, Alfred, *Henry James and the 'Woman Business'* (Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- Halperin, John, 'Henry James's Civil War', *Henry James Review* 17.1 (1996), 22–9.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Harrold, Stanley, *The Abolitionists and the South 1831–1861* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1995).
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel, *The Blithedale Romance* [1852], in *Collected Novels*, ed. Millicent Bell (New York: Library of America, 2014).
- Septimius Felton, or The Elixir of Life* (Boston, MA: James R. Osgood, 1872).
- Hayes, Kevin J. (ed.), *Henry James: The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- Hoffman, Charles and Tess Hoffman, 'Henry James and the Civil War', *New England Quarterly* 62.4 (Dec. 1989), 529–52.
- Howard, David, 'The Bostonians', in *The Air of Reality: New Essays on Henry James*, eds. John Goode (London: Methuen, 1972).
- Howells, William Dean, *Doctor Breen's Practice* (Boston, MA: James R. Osgood, 1881).
- Literary Friends and Acquaintance: A Personal Retrospect of American Authorship* [1900], eds. David F. Hiatt and Edwin H. Cady (Bloomington, IN and London: Indiana University Press, 1968) [Vol. 32 of *A Selected Edition of W. D. Howells*].
- A Modern Instance* [1882], eds. David J. Nordloh, David Kleinman and George N. Bennett (Bloomington, IN and London: Indiana University Press, 1968) [Vol. 10 of *A Selected Edition of W. D. Howells*].
- The Rise of Silas Lapham* [1885], eds. Walter J. Meserve and David J. Nordloh (Bloomington, IN and London: Indiana University Press, 1968) [Vol. 12 of *A Selected Edition of W. D. Howells*].
- The Undiscovered Country* (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin, 1880).
- Jacobson, Marcia, *Henry James and the Mass Market* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1983).
- 'Popular Fiction and Henry James's Unpopular *Bostonians*', *Modern Philology* 73.3 (Feb. 1976), 264–75.
- James, Elizabeth, 'Letters from America: The Bretts and the Macmillan Company of New York', in *Macmillan: A Publishing Tradition*, ed. Elizabeth James (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 170–89.
- James, Henry, S^r, 'Emerson', *Atlantic Monthly* 44 (Dec. 1904), 740–5.
- James, William, *The Correspondence of William James Volume 2. William and Henry 1885–1896*, eds. Ignas K. Skrupskelis and Elizabeth M. Berkeley (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1993).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Jex-Blake, Sophia, 'Medical Women in Fiction', *Nineteenth Century* 33 (Feb. 1893), 261–72.
- Johnson, Robert Underwood and Clarence Clough Buell (eds.), *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, 4 vols. (New York: Century Company, 1887).
- Lewis, R. W. B., *The Jameses: A Family Narrative* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991).
- Long, Robert Emmett, 'A Source for Dr Mary Prance in *The Bostonians*', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 19.1 (June 1964), 87–8.
- McClymer, John, 'Who Is Mrs. Ada T.P. Foat? And Why Should Historians Care?: An Historical Reading of Henry James' "The Bostonians"', *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 2.2 (April 2003), 191–217.
- Morris, R. A., 'Classical Vision and the American City: Henry James's *The Bostonians*', *New England Quarterly* 46.4 (Dec. 1973), 543–57.
- Newman, William A. and Wilfred E. Holton, *Boston's Back Bay: The Story of America's Greatest Nineteenth-Century Landfill Project* (Lebanon, NH: Northeastern University Press, 2005).
- Noonan, Mark J., *Reading The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine: American Literature and Culture, 1870–1893* (Kent State University Press, 2010).
- Nordhoff, Charles, *The Communistic Societies of the United States* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1875).
- Ofek, Galia, 'Sensational Hair: Gender, Genre, and Fetishism in the Sensational Decade', in *Victorian Sensations: Essays on a Scandalous Genre*, eds. Kimberley Harrison and Richard Fantina (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2006).
- Okker, Patricia, *Social Stories: The Magazine Novel in Nineteenth-Century America* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2003).
- Petronella, Mary Melvin (ed.), *Victorian Boston Today: Twelve Walking Tours* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2004).
- Pigeon, Elaine (eds.), *How One City's Cultural Tradition Shaped American Identity in the Nineteenth Century: Essays on Henry James's The Bostonians (1886)* (Lewiston, ME: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008).
- Powers, Lyall H., *Henry James and the Naturalist Movement* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1971).
- Rexford, Nancy E., *Women's Shoes in America, 1795–1930* (Kent State University Press, 2000).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Salmon, Richard, *Henry James and the Culture of Publicity* (Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- ‘A Scorching for Henry James’, *Boston Globe* (18 Jan. 1885), 13.
- Silber, Nina, *Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865–1900* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
- Smith, Herbert F. and Michael Peinovich, ‘The Bostonians: Creation and Revision’, *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 73 (May 1969), 298–308.
- Stafford, William T., ‘Emerson and the James Family’, *American Literature* 24.4 (Jan. 1953), 433–61.
- Staël, Mme de [Anne Louise Germaine de Staël-Holstein], *Corinne; ou l’Italie* [1807] in *Oeuvres*, ed. Catriona Seth with Valérie Cossy (Paris: Gallimard, 2017 [Bibliothèque de la Pléiade]).
- Swenson, Kristine, *Medical Women and Victorian Fiction* (Columbia, MO and London: University of Missouri Press, 2004).
- Tintner, Adeline, *The Book World of Henry James: Appropriating the Classics* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Research Press, 1987).
- Wånggren, Lena, *New Women, New Technologies: The Interrelation between Gender and Technology at the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (University of Edinburgh PhD, 2012).
- Wegener, Frederick, “A Line of Her Own”: Henry James’s “Sturdy Little Doctress” and the Medical Woman as Literary Type in Gilded-Age America, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 39.2 (Summer 1997), 139–80.
- Whitehead, Celia B. [writing as ‘Henrietta James’], *Another Chapter of “The Bostonians”* (Bloomfield, NJ: S. Morris Hulin, 1887); excerpts repr. in Chapman and Mills.
- Whitehill, Walter Muir, *Boston: A Topographical History*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968).
- Woodhull, Victoria C., *The Elixir of Life; or, Why Do We Die?* (New York: Woodhull & Claflin, 1873).
- Yeazell, Ruth Bernard (ed.), *The Death and Letters of Alice James* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981).
- Zenari, Vivian, ‘Henry James’s Civil War Stories: The Homefront Experience and War Romance’, *War, Literature & the Arts* 27 (2015).

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00398-9 — The Bostonians
Henry James , Edited by Daniel Karlin
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)
