

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57089-3 - Enacting History in Henry James: Narrative, Power, and Ethics

Edited by Gert Buelens

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Many critics have seen the writing of Henry James as resistant to questions of power, history, and ethics. The Jamesian mode of writing, it has been claimed, actively works against an understanding of the way truth and history circulate in his texts. In this collection of essays, leading scholars of James analyse the strategies he used to address these crucial issues. *Enacting history in Henry James* proposes a new performative paradigm for reading James's work. It claims that because the reader can never know the truth in any verifiable sense, the type of knowledge available in his fiction is never of a cognitive kind. Rather, the Jamesian text promises an experiential type of knowledge, one that is attained by participating in the power games and moral dramas that unfold within the text. This collection argues that to read James is to enact the history that is staged by the narrative, so that, ultimately, James's texts require not just an emotional responsiveness, but also an ethical assumption of responsibility for the act of reading. By placing James's work in a fresh theoretical context, this book throws new light on this most enigmatic of writers.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57089-3 - Enacting History in Henry James: Narrative, Power, and Ethics

Edited by Gert Buelens

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ENACTING HISTORY IN HENRY JAMES

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57089-3 - Enacting History in Henry James: Narrative, Power, and Ethics

Edited by Gert Buelens

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ENACTING HISTORY IN HENRY JAMES

Narrative, power, and ethics

EDITED BY

GERT BUELENS

University of Ghent



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57089-3 - Enacting History in Henry James: Narrative, Power, and Ethics
 Edited by Gert Buelens

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, United Kingdom
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
 10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1997

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

First published 1997

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeset in Baskerville 10/12½ pt. [cE]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloging in publication data

Enacting history in Henry James: narrative, power, and ethics /
 edited by Gert Buelens.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 0 521 57089 1 (hardback)

1. James, Henry, 1843-1916 - Knowledge - History.
2. Literature and history - United States - History.
3. Power (Social sciences) in literature. 4. James, Henry, 1843-1916 - Technique.
5. Reader-response criticism. 6. Ethics in literature. 7. Narration (Rhetoric).
8. Fiction - Technique.

i. Buelens, Gert.

PS2127.H5B84 1997

813'.4-dc21 96-54615 CIP

ISBN 0 521 57089 1 hardback

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57089-3 - Enacting History in Henry James: Narrative, Power, and Ethics

Edited by Gert Buelens

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Voor mama en papa

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57089-3 - Enacting History in Henry James: Narrative, Power, and Ethics

Edited by Gert Buelens

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Contents*

Notes on contributors	xi
Acknowledgments	xiii
List of abbreviations	xiv
Introduction	I
<i>Gert Buelens</i>	
1 Power relations in the novels of James: the 'liberal' and the 'radical' version	16
<i>Winfried Fluck</i>	
2 Multiple germs, metaphorical systems, and moral fluctuation in <i>The Ambassadors</i>	40
<i>Richard A. Hocks</i>	
3 James and the ethics of control: aspiring architects and their floating creatures	61
<i>Sarah B. Daugherty</i>	
4 James and the shadow of the Roman Empire: manners and the consenting victim	75
<i>Adrian Poole</i>	
5 <i>What Maisie Knew</i> : Henry James's Bildungsroman of the artist as queer moralist	93
<i>Alfred Habegger</i>	
6 The double narrative of 'The Beast in the Jungle': ethical plot, ironical plot, and the play of power	109
<i>Michiel W. Heyns</i>	

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57089-3 - Enacting History in Henry James: Narrative, Power, and Ethics

Edited by Gert Buelens

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

CONTENTS

- | | | |
|----|---|-----|
| 7 | Homoeroticism, identity, and agency in James's late tales
<i>Hugh Stevens</i> | 126 |
| 8 | 'A provision full of responsibilities': senses of the past in
Henry James's fourth phase
<i>David McWhirter</i> | 148 |
| 9 | Possessing the American scene: race and vulgarity,
seduction and judgment
<i>Gert Buelens</i> | 166 |
| 10 | History, narrative, and responsibility: speech acts in 'The
Aspern Papers'
<i>J. Hillis Miller</i> | 193 |
| | Index | 211 |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57089-3 - Enacting History in Henry James: Narrative, Power, and Ethics

Edited by Gert Buelens

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Notes on contributors*

GERT BUELENS is a Postdoctoral Fellow of the National Fund for Scientific Research (Belgium), attached to Ghent University. He has co-edited *Deferring a Dream: Literary Sub-Versions of the American Columbiad* (1994), and is the author of *Henry James: Style, Ethics and History: A Bibliographical Essay* (1996). In 1996–7 he is a Visiting Scholar at Harvard.

SARAH B. DAUGHERTY is Professor of English at Wichita State University. She is the author of *The Literary Criticism of Henry James* (1981) and of the chapter on this subject in the *Companion to Henry James Studies*. Her current work is on the criticism of Howells and his problematic relationship with Twain.

WINFRIED FLUCK is Professor and Chair of American Culture at the Freie Universität, Berlin. He has written *Populäre Kultur* (1979), *Theorien amerikanischer Literatur* (1987), and *Declarations of Dependence: Revising Our View of American Realism* (1993).

ALFRED HABEGGER is an independent biographer and scholar living in Oregon. He has edited *The Bostonians* (1976) and written *Gender, Fantasy, and Realism in American Literature* (1982), *Henry James and the 'Woman Business'* (1989), as well as *The Father: A Life of Henry James, Sr* (1994).

MICHIEL HEYNS was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, where he is at present Professor of English. His *Expulsion and the Nineteenth-Century Novel: The Scapgoat in English Realist Fiction* appeared in 1994.

RICHARD HOCKS is Professor of English at the University of Missouri. Among his publications are *Henry James and Pragmatic Thought* (1974), *Henry James: A Study of the Short Fiction* (1990), and *The*

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57089-3 - Enacting History in Henry James: Narrative, Power, and Ethics

Edited by Gert Buelens

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Wings of the Dove: A Norton Critical Edition (with J. Donald Crowley) (1978). He was President of the Henry James Society in 1993, and has written James chapters for *American Literary Scholarship*.

DAVID MCWHIRTER, the 1995 President of the Henry James Society, is Associate Professor of English at Texas A&M University at College Station. He has written *Desire and Love in Henry James: A Study of the Late Novels* (1989), and edited *Henry James's New York Edition: The Construction of Authorship* (1995). His work in progress is on tragicomic modes in literary modernism.

J. HILLIS MILLER is Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of California at Irvine. Before coming to the University of California, he taught at The Johns Hopkins University and Yale University. His most recent books include *Versions of Pygmalion*, *Theory Now and Then*, *Ariadne's Thread*, *Illustration* and *Topographies*. He is at work on a book on 'Speech Acts in Henry James'.

ADRIAN POOLE is Reader in English and Comparative Literature and a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. His publications include books on Henry James, George Gissing, and Greek tragedy, and articles on George Eliot, Hardy, James, and Kipling. He is also the co-editor of *The Oxford Book of Classical Verse in Translation* (1995).

HUGH STEVENS is a lecturer in the Department of English and Related Literature, University of York. He received his PhD from Cambridge in 1994, with a thesis on 'Sexuality and Desire in the Writing of Henry James', and is currently working on a study of constructions of masculinity in modernism.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57089-3 - Enacting History in Henry James: Narrative, Power, and Ethics

Edited by Gert Buelens

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgments

The editor would like to acknowledge the advice, help, and support received at various stages of this project from Ian F. A. Bell, William Boelhower, Lieve Bracke, Nicola Bradbury, Ortwin de Graef, Bart Eeckhout, Evelyne Ender, Alfred Habegger, Richard A. Hocks, David McWhirter, Christelle Méplon, Adrian Poole, John Carlos Rowe, Werner Sollors, Tony Tanner, and Kristiaan Versluys, as well as from the anonymous readers appointed by Cambridge University Press. At the Press itself, Josie Dixon, Ray Ryan, and Kevin Taylor played an invaluable part.

Quotation from unpublished letters in Alfred Habegger's essay is by the kind permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University. An earlier version of J. Hillis Miller's essay was delivered as the Routledge lecture and first appeared in *Textual Practice*, 9 (1995), 243–67 (© J. Hillis Miller).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57089-3 - Enacting History in Henry James: Narrative, Power, and Ethics

Edited by Gert Buelens

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Abbreviations*

- AB* *The Ambassadors*, New York Edition, 24 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1907–9), vols. XXI, XXII.
- AD* *The Altar of the Dead, The Beast in the Jungle, The Birthplace, and Other Tales*, New York Edition, 24 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1907–9), vol. XVII.
- AM* *The American*, New York Edition, 24 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1907–9), vol. II.
- AN* *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*, ed. Richard P. Blackmur (New York: Scribner's, 1934).
- AP* *The Aspern Papers, The Turn of the Screw, The Liar, The Two Faces*, New York Edition, 24 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1907–9), vol. XXII.
- AU* *Henry James, Autobiography*, ed. Frederick W. Dupee (Princeton University Press, 1983).
- CN* *The Complete Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. Leon Edel and Lyall H. Powers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- CT* *The Complete Tales of Henry James*, ed. Leon Edel, 12 vols. (Philadelphia: Lippincott; London: Hart-Davis, 1962–4).
- CTW-I* *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America*, ed. Richard Howard (New York: Library of America, 1993).
- CTW-II* *Collected Travel Writings: The Continent*, ed. Richard Howard (New York: Library of America, 1993).
- DM* *Daisy Miller, Pandora, The Patagonia, and Other Tales*, New York Edition, 24 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1907–9), vol. XVIII.
- GB* *The Golden Bowl*, New York Edition, 24 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1907–9), vols. XXIII, XXIV.
- HJL* *Henry James Letters*, ed. Leon Edel, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap-Harvard University Press, 1974–84).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-57089-3 - Enacting History in Henry James: Narrative, Power, and Ethics

Edited by Gert Buelens

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Abbreviations*

xv

- LC-I* *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, ed. Leon Edel with the assistance of Mark Wilson (New York: Library of America, 1984).
- LC-II* *Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, the Prefaces to the New York Edition*, ed. Leon Edel with the assistance of Mark Wilson (New York: Library of America, 1984).
- MTD* 'Mr. Tennyson's Drama', *Galaxy*, 20 (1875), 393–402.
- NS* *Notes of a Son and Brother* (New York: Scribner's, 1914).
- PL* *The Portrait of a Lady*, New York Edition, 24 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1907–9), vols. III, IV.
- RH* *Roderick Hudson*, New York Edition, 24 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1907–9), vol. I.
- SB* *A Small Boy and Others* (New York: Scribner's, 1913).
- T* *The Tales of Henry James*, ed. Maqbool Aziz, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973–84).
- WD* *The Wings of the Dove*, New York Edition, 24 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1907–9), vols. XIX, XX.
- WWS* *William Wetmore Story and His Friends: From Letters, Diaries and Recollections*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1903).