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978-1-107-14015-8 - The Complete Writings of Henry James on Art and Drama: Volume 1: Art

Edited by Peter Collister

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THE COMPLETE WRITINGS OF HENRY JAMES ON ART

Henry James records in his autobiography a transformative childhood experience in the Louvre when he foresaw the ‘fun’ that art might bring him. Many of his novels and stories indeed go on to dramatize the circumstances of the artist’s life, and their allusions to art are extensive. This complete collection of essays and reviews presents the observations of a major author whose critical judgments have become central to an understanding of late nineteenth-century art. Readers will find James’s texts as they first appeared, with a wealth of editorial support, which captures the mood and values of the art scene in Britain, France and America – its interesting minor figures, as well as names still familiar. Many of these items are difficult to access and have not previously been available in a scholarly edition. The editorial apparatus includes a general Introduction, Chronology, Textual Variants section and a biographical guide to artists.

PETER COLLISTER is the author of *Writing the Self: Henry James and America* (2007) and the editor of James’s autobiographical volumes *A Small Boy and Others* (2011), and *Notes of a Son and Brother and The Middle Years* (2011). He has published a wide range of essays on nineteenth-century English writers and Anglo-French literary links in refereed British, European and American journals.

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AND DRAMA

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VOLUME 2: DRAMA

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Like most readers of James on art, I began with *The Painter's Eye: Notes and Essays on the Pictorial Arts by Henry James* (1956), edited by John L. Sweeney, foreword by Susan M. Griffin (Madison, WI: Wisconsin University Press, 1989), *Henry James: Essays on Art and Drama*, edited by Peter Rawlings (Aldershot, Hants: Scolar Press, 1996), and *Henry James: Parisian Sketches: Letters to the New York Tribune 1875–1876*, edited by Leon Edel and Ilse Duso Lind (New York University Press, 1957). All three volumes very helpfully collected texts otherwise difficult to access. The indispensable starting point was the *Bibliography of Henry James* (1982), by Leon Edel and Dan H. Laurence, revised by James Rambeau (Winchester, Hants: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1999).

For their interest and kind advice I am indebted to Adrian Poole of Cambridge University, and Linda Bree (Editorial Director, Arts and Literature, Cambridge University Press). For their more recent involvement, my thanks to Anna Bond, Christina Sarigiannidou and Emma Collison, respectively, Assistant Editor, Literature, Production Editor and Content Manager at the Press. Hilary Hammond has proved to be an exemplary copy-editor and has made many helpful suggestions. Finally I must thank John Aplin who has continued to offer support and help with many aspects of the edition, as well as remedying a number of technological problems. Any errors contained in this volume, are, of course, my own responsibility.

A NOTE ON JAMES'S TEXTS

James's essays, reviews and letters on art were first published in a variety of American and British newspapers and magazines, and for this edition I have returned to these original sources. To maintain consistency, I have made certain minor amendments in matters of presentation. These changes relate principally to minor 'accidental' features reflecting a particular publisher's house style; however, where it seemed to me a change might affect meaning, I have followed the original format. Such judgments cannot avoid, of course, a degree of subjectivity, but I explain my choices below.

In this edition phrases or words quoted in the body of the text are contained within double quotation marks. Punctuation is placed outside quotation marks (e.g. 'others either sketch, or "play", or sing'). When including longer quotations which are blocked or displayed, HJ often also includes quotation marks: these have been deleted. Italics are here used to indicate large-scale works (paintings, plays, novels) where the original versions may use double, single or no quotation marks, or capital letters or capital italicized letters throughout. Shorter works (sketches, poems, short stories) are given in double quotation marks. Though James sometimes places the names of people, both real and fictional, in quotation marks or italics, these have been omitted. Occasionally contracted words are separated in the original text (e.g. 'do n't', 'is n't') and these have been normalized (e.g. 'don't', 'isn't').

James published his work in both Britain and America and I have retained both British and American spelling as it occurs since it relates to the audience for which he was writing and may thus influence one's reading of the piece. Obvious printing errors have been corrected with a note, and, indeed, on a number of occasions, especially earlier in his career, James laments the mistakes which have crept into his published journalistic work. Occasionally an alternative for a choice of word has been offered since slips arising from reading difficult handwriting during a process where there was no opportunity for an author to proof-read the final

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text certainly occurred. Such speculations have been noted but not incorporated in the text.

Some of the earlier pieces (for instance, those in the *Nation*) are prefaced by a reference to the writer and a placing of the text within quotation marks, e.g., 'Since I was last in London,' writes a correspondent, 'the new rooms of the National Gallery have been thrown open to the public . . .' I have retained this format since it helps preserve the historical moment and contextualize the piece effectively.

James's essays, letters and reviews were signed unless otherwise indicated in the relevant headnote.

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CHRONOLOGY: HENRY JAMES'S LIFE AND WRITINGS

15 April 1843, birth of HJ, second of five children, at Washington Place, New York City, into the wealthy family of Henry James Sr (student of theological and social issues) and Mary Walsh James. The family spends extended periods in Europe and live briefly in Albany, New York, and later New York City until 1855. They attend numerous theatrical productions, circuses and spectacles as well as galleries in these New York years. HJ is especially impressed by Leutze's 'epoch-making masterpiece', *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (SBO, p. 207).

1855–8, the James family live in Geneva, London, Paris and Boulogne-sur-Mer (part of a 'sensuous education' planned by HJ Sr). HJ visits European galleries and museums, and has an overwhelming experience in the Louvre's Galerie d'Apollon, recently decorated by Delacroix. He recognizes 'a general sense of *glory* . . . not only beauty and art and supreme design, but history and fame and power' (SBO, p. 275). At the Collège Impériale, Boulogne-sur-Mer, HJ meets Benoît-Constant Coquelin, son of a local baker, who would become an eminent actor.

Summer 1858, having returned to the US, the family settles at Newport, Rhode Island. HJ forms important friendships with Thomas Sergeant Perry (scholar and writer) and John La Farge (artist), whom he would accompany on painting expeditions, placing himself 'at a respectful distance' (NSB, p. 83).

October 1859–July 1860, the Jameses return to Europe (Geneva and Bonn).

October 1860, the family returns to Newport. William James becomes a pupil of the artist, William Morris Hunt, joined briefly by HJ. However, he rapidly pockets his pencil at seeing the 'perfect gymnastic figure' of his cousin Gus Barker, 'divested of every garment' (NSB, p. 76). HJ is encouraged to read French literature by La Farge, 'intensely among us but somehow not withal of us' (*ibid.*, p. 73).

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April 1861, HJ suffers an ‘obscure hurt’, possibly a back injury when helping to fight a fire in Newport. Neither HJ nor William enlist for the American Civil War, though their younger brothers, Bob (Robertson) and Wilky (Garth Wilkinson), are encouraged to join the Union Army.

September 1862, HJ enters Harvard Law School, but abandons course in summer 1863.

February 1864, anonymous publication of HJ’s first tale, ‘A Tragedy of Error’, in *Continental Monthly*.

May 1864, the family leaves Newport for Beacon Hill, Boston. At this time HJ is encouraged in his writing by Charles Eliot Norton, and, in 1865, begins reviewing for the recently established *Nation*, edited by E. L. Godkin.

Summer 1866, HJ becomes friendly with W. D. Howells, novelist, critic and assistant editor of *Atlantic Monthly*.

November 1866, the James family moves to 20 Quincy Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

February 1869, HJ leaves for Europe, staying in London and visiting Malvern to treat chronic digestive disorders. He meets, amongst others, Leslie Stephen, William Morris, George Eliot, Ruskin, Rossetti and Burne-Jones.

Late summer 1869, HJ arrives for the first time in Italy and is enchanted; he travels from Venice south to Naples before turning back to Florence.

March 1870, beloved cousin Minny Temple (who would inspire some of HJ’s greatest heroines) dies, age 24, of tuberculosis.

April 1870, HJ leaves Europe, having had his first experience of Paris’s Comédie-Française, and returns to the family home at Cambridge. Though nostalgic for Europe, he continues to write prolifically.

1871, publication of *Watch and Ward*.

January–March 1872, provides reviews of art exhibitions for the *Atlantic Monthly*.

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May 1872, leaves for Europe, accompanying semi-invalid sister, Alice, and Aunt Kate. They tour England (visiting the Royal Academy, the National Gallery and the British Museum in London), Switzerland and northern Italy; sister and aunt return to America in October 1872; HJ returns to Rome via Paris and mixes in American expatriate society; he meets Fanny Kemble in December 1872, becomes friendly with sculptor William Wetmore Story, meets Matthew Arnold in March 1873, and again sees Francis Boott and his daughter Lizzie (who later becomes the wife of the artist, Frank Duveneck).

September 1874, HJ, after further travels in Europe, leaves England and returns to Cambridge.

January 1875, *Roderick Hudson* begins a twelve-month serialization in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

November 1875, HJ arrives once again in London to ‘take possession of the old world’, and, on 10 November, moves on to Paris for a year, where he meets Ivan Turgenev and a literary circle including Flaubert, Edmond de Goncourt, Zola, Maupassant, Daudet and Renan. Till August 1876 he writes Paris letters for the *New York Tribune*, an uncomfortable journalistic experience, as expressed by the heroine of ‘Broken Wings’: ‘I can’t do them – I don’t know how, and don’t want to. I do them wrong, and the people want such trash. Of course they’ll sack me’ (quoted in *Henry James, Parisian Sketches: Letters to the New York Tribune 1875–1876*, ed. Leon Edel and Ilse Duso Lind (New York University Press, 1957), p. x).

December 1876, HJ returns permanently to London, though he will make frequent trips to mainland Europe.

1877, publication of *The American*. Meets Browning and the artist and illustrator George Du Maurier, among many others. Visits Paris and Italy in the autumn.

1878, essay collection *French Poets and Novelists* published in England. ‘Daisy Miller’ proves to be a great popular success. Now a part of London society, HJ becomes acquainted with Tennyson, Meredith, Whistler and Gladstone. *The Europeans* published in September.

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CHRONOLOGY

1879, much dining out in London; meets Edmund Gosse and Robert Louis Stevenson; publishes *Hawthorne*.

1880, meets writer Constance Fenimore Woolson; *Washington Square* published.

1881, publication of *The Portrait of a Lady*.

November 1881, revisits America after six years.

January 1882, mother dies; in May, HJ returns to London; in December, father dies as HJ journeys to the US.

September 1883, HJ returns to London.

February 1884, visits Paris, meets John Singer Sargent and persuades him to move to London; in November, sister Alice arrives in England, chronically ill.

1884, in May, develops friendship with Stevenson.

1886, publication of *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima*.

December 1886–July 1887, HJ in Italy, spending time with Woolson.

1890, publication of *The Tragic Muse*.

1891, sees Elizabeth Robins performing in Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*. HJ's dramatization of *The American* is successful on tour and in London; Robins has taken the role of Madame de Cintré. Attempts unsuccessfully to offer stage comedies to theatrical managers.

March 1892, death, from breast cancer, of sister. She leaves a brilliant, trenchant diary.

January 1893, death of old friend, Fanny Kemble; HJ continually fails to get his plays produced commercially.

January 1894, probable suicide of Constance Fenimore Woolson in Venice; in December, death of Stevenson in Samoa.

January 1895, failure of play *Guy Domville*, produced by George Alexander, and HJ abandons the theatre.

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CHRONOLOGY

October 1896, death of Du Maurier. *Spoils of Poynton* serialized.

1897, *What Maisie Knew* published. HJ begins dictating his work because of wrist pain. Friendship with Joseph Conrad; takes Lamb House in Rye, Sussex, and many American friends visit.

1898, 'The Turn of the Screw' highly successful.

1899, publication of *The Awkward Age*. Meets sculptor Hendrick C. Andersen in Rome and embarks on a passionate friendship, one of a number with younger men.

1900, shaves off beard.

1901, *The Sacred Fount* published.

1902, *The Wings of the Dove* published.

1903, publication of *The Ambassadors* and *William Wetmore Story and his Friends*; meets novelist Edith Wharton, who much admires his work.

1904, *The Golden Bowl* published. Tours America extensively, returning to England in 1905.

1907, *The American Scene* published.

1907–9, 24 volumes of the New York edition of HJ's novels (extensively revised) published with elaborate prefaces. The reception is disappointing, both critically and commercially.

1909, meets members of the Bloomsbury Group. *Italian Hours* essays published.

1910, suffers depression; brother William, having suffered a chronic cardiac condition, dies. HJ, having accompanied him back to America after a stay in Europe, returns to England in August 1911.

1912, takes London flat and is ill for four months.

1913, autobiographical *A Small Boy and Others* published.

1914, autobiographical *Notes of a Son and Brother* published. Horrified at World War, visits wounded soldiers in London.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1915, becomes British national; continues with charitable work.
- 1916, honoured with the British Order of Merit. Dies February 28, attended by William’s wife, Alice. After cremation, his ashes are buried with other family members in Cambridge Cemetery, Massachusetts.
- 1917, unfinished novels, *The Ivory Tower* and *The Sense of the Past*, and incomplete autobiographical volume, *The Middle Years*, published posthumously, supervised by Percy Lubbock.

ABBREVIATIONS

AS	Henry James, <i>The American Scene</i> , ed. Leon Edel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968).
CN	<i>The Complete Notebooks of Henry James</i> , ed. Leon Edel and Lyall H. Powers (Oxford University Press, 1987).
CLHJ	<i>The Complete Letters of Henry James</i> , ed. Pierre A. Walker and Greg W. Zacharias (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, ongoing): 1855–1872, 2 volumes (2006); 1872–1876, 3 volumes (2008); 1876–1878, 2 volumes (2012–13); 1878–1880, 1 volume (2014).
HJL	<i>Henry James: Letters</i> , ed. Leon Edel, 4 volumes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974–84), vol. 1, 1843–75; vol. 2, 1875–83; vol. 3, 1883–95; vol. 4, 1895–1916.
LC 1	Henry James, <i>Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers</i> , ed. Leon Edel and Mark Wilson (New York and Cambridge: Library of America, 1984).
LC 2	Henry James, <i>Literary Criticism: French Writers, other European Writers, the Prefaces to the New York Edition</i> , ed. Leon Edel and Mark Wilson (New York and Cambridge: Library of America, 1984).
NSB	Henry James, <i>Notes of a Son and Brother and The Middle Years: A Critical Edition</i> (1914, 1917), ed. Peter Collister (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011).
PE	<i>The Painter's Eye: Notes and Essays on the Pictorial Arts by Henry James</i> (1956), ed. John L. Sweeney, foreword by Susan M. Griffin (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1989).
SBO	Henry James, <i>A Small Boy and Others: A Critical Edition</i> (1913), ed. Peter Collister (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SIRIS	Smithsonian Institution Research Information System, www.siris.si.edu/ Pre-1877 Art Exhibition Catalogue Index
TMY	Henry James, <i>Notes of a Son and Brother and The Middle Years: A Critical Edition</i> (1914, 1917), ed. Peter Collister (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011).

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When he arrived in France in the winter of 1875–6, Henry James was 32 years old and, though he had met with some literary success (having published short stories and reviews since the mid sixties) had still to establish himself professionally. *Roderick Hudson*, the narrative of an American talent exposed to complexities often of European origin, of an aspiring artistic gift destroyed by the complications of emotional involvement, dramatizes some of the national and cultural issues which interested James, and it was just completing its serial run in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Rather like his brother William, he had been slow in asserting his independence and indeed, in leaving the James family. That family life, however idiosyncratic, had nevertheless exposed him at an early age to the artistic heritage of Europe: his first volume of recollections, *A Small Boy and Others*, records the ever-present promise of Europe to the New York family, and James even recalls the scent of that continent ‘known to us as the English smell’, as he opened fresh copies of books recently imported.¹ The Jameses’ extended trips of the 1850s transformed his life, and some of the most powerful experiences, often involving an awakening aesthetic responsiveness, are recalled as occurring in the museums and galleries of London and Paris. Nevertheless, his apprentice years as a writer were lived out in an American, specifically New England, context. Early literary opportunities arose in Boston and Cambridge, where the family finally settled. James Russell Lowell and James T. Fields were fellow Bostonians, and the young Henry James was soon reviewing for their journals, the *North American Review* and the *Atlantic Monthly*. In 1865 he contributed to the opening number of the *Nation*, a weekly of some intellectual rigour founded by E. L. Godkin in New York; it was co-edited by Charles Eliot Norton, who crucially brought about the young James’s ‘consecration to letters’.² In older age he would, with some nostalgia,

¹ *A Small Boy and Others*, ed. Peter Collister (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), p. 69. Hereafter referred to as *SBO*.

² Leon Edel, *Henry James: The Untried Years, 1843–70* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953), p. 210.

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recollect a young man in his early twenties sitting in his Boston bedroom, with its ‘rich . . . many-hued light’, counting out twelve dollars’ worth of greenbacks, ‘into which I had changed the cheque representing my first earned wage’.³

When he took up residence in Paris late in 1875, James had already reviewed a number of exhibitions and commercial shows which had been staged in Boston and New York; the galleries and settings were of the New World, though the artists exhibited belonged principally to Europe. The stay in Paris would mark a decisive change in his life: he would never live permanently with his family again, nor would he have permanent residence in America. He had arranged with the *New York Tribune* to provide a regular letter from the French capital; years earlier his father had also sent letters from Europe for the paper which had seemed to the young James on a visit paid to their offices to be ‘big . . . with the breath of great vague connections’.⁴ The quasi-autobiographical voice which emerges from the pages of the *New York Tribune* where he introduces himself as a seasoned traveller (as indeed he was), implies a consciousness of national identity, a role as intermediary, embodying an American sensibility responding to European culture and tradition. He nominates a working title for the kinds of observations he will offer within whose reference he will serve to develop a clear ‘international’ perspective: ‘I have often thought that some very entertaining remarks might be made under the title of “Paris Revisited” – remarks that would find an echo in many an American heart. The American who comes to Paris for the first time . . . takes to the French capital, generally speaking, as a duck to water . . . [T]here are certain matters that she understands to perfection . . . So far as a man lives in his senses and his tastes, he certainly lives as well here as he can imagine doing; and so far as he lives by the short run . . . rather than by the long, he is equally well off’.⁵ In these confident opening lines of his first report, having

³ *Notes of a Son and Brother and The Middle Years*, ed. Peter Collister (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), p. 318, hereafter referred to as *NSB*.

⁴ *SBO*, p. 63.

⁵ *New York Tribune*, 11 December 1875; rpt. in *Henry James, Parisian Sketches: Letters to the New York Tribune 1875–1876*, ed. with an introduction by Leon Edel and Ilse Duso Lind (New York University Press, 1957), pp. 3–4.

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introduced both visitor and city in familiar gendered terms, the journalistic James treats as commonplace the far from commonplace experiences of his own life. It is possible he was aiming at a reassuring inclusiveness, but for many of his *Tribune* readers, a first visit to Europe had not yet been made, let alone a ‘revisit’. With only faint irony, he goes on to generalize upon the tourist’s ideal European experience – ‘eating good dinners, rolling over smooth roads, served by sympathetic domestics, staring at picturesque scenery, listening to superior music, watching accomplished acting’ – as an unexceptional expectation, though he has not lost that Anglo-Saxon anxiety which hesitates at a routine based on certain specifically French values. Living according to the ‘senses’ and the ‘tastes’, being governed by ‘the short run . . . rather than by the long’, raised potential choices sufficiently disturbing to demand some acknowledgment from this expatriate who had recently departed New England.⁶

The perspective assumes a definably European standpoint, though the letters written for the *New York Tribune* are also significant in demonstrating a new stage in James’s own professional development – an experiment within a little known and exclusively journalistic medium in which he seeks through his ‘very entertaining remarks’ to speak to a broad audience, exploiting his own unusually wide knowledge of Europe while remaining accessible to a home readership. James’s fiction tirelessly explores the themes and behaviours which link and separate the two continents most characteristically within a private, subjective (and sometimes melodramatic) sphere, but the essays on art extend into the cut-and-thrust of the marketplace, considering values in monetary as well as aesthetic terms without entirely disconnecting from what might be regarded as the purer, silent centre of artistic enterprise detached from finance or fashion. A dual-prospect vantage point which dates back to a childhood which had been divided between the two continents allows him to register cultural and national difference with some confidence. The essays and reviews which he wrote in the last three decades of the nineteenth century recognize in their

⁶ For a retrospective view of what James calls ‘my “America”’, and ‘my “Europe”’, in relation to his fiction, see his preface to the New York edition of *Lady Barbarina, The Siege of London . . . The Point of View* (1908) (*Henry James: Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, The Prefaces to the New York Edition*, ed. Leon Edel and Mark Wilson (New York: Library of America, 1984), pp. 1210–11), hereafter *LC* 2.

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discursive detail and range of allusion a mediating role, a position which most frequently demands that he present European achievement to America in a specific historical moment. The exchange is predominantly and essentially one-way, with Europe embodying the values of tradition and the highest artistic enterprise, and America (reflecting the migration of many of her artists towards France or Germany for training) regarded as well advised to benefit from this uneven relationship.⁷

Correspondingly, the direction of travel of art objects, too, was generally westwards from Europe. At the time of James's permanent departure, the great cities of America were in the process of acquiring works to furnish galleries and museums as part of their civic development. One of his earliest essays, for instance, reviews the opening of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1872, an event whose reporting (or perhaps endorsement) as the 'Musée de New York' by a journal as revered as the *Revue des Deux Mondes* gave the author especial pleasure.⁸ Public institutions as well as private individuals continued to regard Europe with deference, despite a growing recognition of America's financial potential. James's review of the Duke of Montpensier's collection of paintings, which arrived in Boston in 1874, raises some of the contemporary tensions, both national and cultural: 'We are vast, rich, and mighty, but where certain ideas are concerned we sit as helpless in the presence of Old-World tradition'. The collection, principally of Spanish and Italian works which had been destined initially for London for safe-keeping during difficult political conditions, would later prove to be of mixed value in aesthetic as well as monetary terms, but James is saddened by a native lack of confidence, indeed a naïve gratitude for the honour bestowed by such a visit: 'Immaturity and provincialism are incontestable facts, but people should never freely assent to being treated as children and provincials.'⁹

⁷ Margaret C. Conrads nominates 1875 as the year when 'foreign training' and 'foreign influence' became visible and critically approved in New York art exhibitions ('"In the Midst of an Era of Revolution": The New York Art Press and the Annual Exhibitions of the National Academy of Design in the 1870s', *Rave Reviews: American Art and its Critics, 1826–1925*, ed.

David Dearing (New York: National Academy of Design, 2000), p. 97).

⁸ No. 5, 'Art: the Dutch and Flemish Pictures in New York', p. 38.

⁹ No. 8 [Boston exhibition of Montpensier collection], p. 93. James's point reflects more generally held views. The *Scribner's Monthly* reviewer is more direct, implying that the British could have exhibited the collection if they had thought it worthwhile: 'is it not painfully evident that in

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Elsewhere, too, James was concerned to point out difference and distinction in the broadest terms: ‘Americans in Europe are *outsiders*: that is the great point . . . We are not only out of the European circle politically and geographically; we are out of it socially, and for excellent reasons. We are the only great people of the civilized world that is a pure democracy, and we are the only great people that is exclusively commercial’.¹⁰ The virtue which embodies the country’s freedom from the perceived entrenched social inequalities of traditionalist Europe is extended into a domain, the ‘commercial’, which in most contexts could signify conflict or at least uneasy relations with the aesthetic or artistic. With his deployment of first-person plurals and emphatic absolutes, James seems intent on avoiding nuance or qualification, never retreating from this declarative simplicity. He would go on to consider the processes of art, and the disparate strands of connoisseurship and money, in a range of fictional contexts (most notably perhaps in *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Golden Bowl*).

In an early letter for the *New York Tribune* James recounts in what he attempts to make, at the editor’s behest, a ‘gossipy’ piece, the prices currently paid for artworks by American purchasers – a growing market. Doubtless he is attempting to engage with the assumed interests and values of his readers. The painting for sale is Ernest Meissonier’s 1807, *Friedland*, and the buyer the Irish-American Alexander T. Stewart who founded the famous New York dry goods palace. The painter was at the height of his popularity – especially in America – but it is difficult not to see James’s terms as partially ironic in relation to the work’s merit and, especially, to its subject matter. Napoleon is depicted taking the salute from his troops before one of his Prussian victories: ‘The picture represents an immense amount of labor, and of acquired science and skill, and one takes, moreover, an acute satisfaction in seeing America stretch out her long arm and

republican Boston the charm of the Duke’s title, the prospect of having a Duke lend us his pictures, the new sensation of being taken an interest in by a royal personage, have made us all too happy for our own good?’ (‘Culture and Progress. The Montpensier Pictures in Boston’, 9, no. 2 (December 1874), 257).

¹⁰ ‘Americans Abroad’, *Nation* (1878); rpt. in *Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America: English Hours, The American Scene, Other Travels* (New York: Library of America, 1993), p. 787.

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rake in, across the green cloth of the wide Atlantic, the highest prizes of the game of civilization.’ Even in this designedly journalistic piece James’s prose deftly undermines the painting’s worth, in referring exclusively to its technical accomplishment, before imagining the changing ‘games’ of ‘civilization’ – whether in the guise of the prizes of war (the painting’s subject) or competition in the saleroom, the picture of a triumphant nation figuratively gathering up its gains at the gaming table. The detail of the piece’s dimensions finally introduces an appropriately utilitarian economic note: at ‘a yard and a half long’ and ‘three quarters of a yard high’, the picture, costing \$76,000, seemed to James ‘dear’¹¹ – quite an understatement.

One of the sources of such wealth, Stewart’s celebrated store, was familiar to James from childhood: through that ‘vast, marmorean, plate-glassy’ shop, ‘fatal to the female nerve’, he had trailed, according to his autobiography, ‘hanging on the skirts, very literally, of indecision’.¹² A grand public space dedicated not to art but to retail and the growing fashion for shopping, is identified as a place for female connoisseurship. James had also, however, ‘hung’ on the arm of the emphatically masculine, ‘black-whiskered’ and ‘brave’ family courier, Jean Nadali, as he was escorted, ‘appalled but uplifted’, through the rooms of the Louvre, part of his unusually privileged childhood.¹³ A strand of autobiography runs easily and naturally through James’s essays on art, as if they are continuing an experience, or conversation, which began long ago. In those childhood days he had admired, for instance, the painter Hippolyte-Paul Delaroche, but the ‘see-saw’ or ‘pendulum’¹⁴ of critical and public favour was about to turn. When James comes to review the collection of Sir Richard Wallace exhibited at Bethnal Green (later the Wallace Collection in London’s Manchester Square), he is compelled to confess that this artist, whose *Children of Edward IV* (the Princes in the Tower) had represented for him advanced psychological insight and a ‘subtle reconstitution of far-off

¹¹ No. 17 [Meissonier’s *Battle of Friedland*], pp. 157–8. Such transactions would later come to be regarded in *The Outcry* (published in 1911, based on an earlier play) as an invasion staged by those ‘armed now with huge cheque-books instead of with spears and battle-axes’, part of the ‘trafficking’ of European art with American money (ed. Jean Strouse (New York: New York Review of Books, 2002), p. 99).

¹² SBO, p. 57. ¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 220, 278. ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

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history', has suffered a decline. It is a matter of regret, however inevitable: 'He was the idol of our youth, and we wonder we can judge him so coldly.'¹⁵

Whatever the unfolding ironies of changing taste in general and of a developing personal discrimination, other artists in this collection are represented as occupying an unassailably secure place in James's esteem and, indeed, affection. The illustrators John Leech and George Du Maurier belong so inextricably to his childhood that they almost bypass judgment. The pages of *Punch* in which their work appeared offered a vivid depiction of London's urban landscape and of British customs and colourful eccentricities: 'the people riding in the Row ... the cabmen and the costermongers ... the little pages in buttons ... the bathing-machines at the sea-side ... the small boys in tall hats and Eton jackets ... the gentlemen hunting the fox ... the pretty girls in striped petticoats and coiffures of the shape of the mushroom'.¹⁶ And his arrival as the 'small American child' in the metropolis, aged 12, provided reassuring confirmation of the detail he had earlier enjoyed at second hand, as the mature James, shifting, with distance, into a self-referential third person discourse, notes in the preamble to his essay on Du Maurier: 'He remembers to-day vividly his impression of the London streets in the summer of 1855; they had an extraordinary look of familiarity, and every figure, every object he encountered, appeared to have been drawn by Leech.' And, in a completion of that circle of recollection and the emotions it entails, the perusal of *Punch*'s pages now returns him to the lost securities and absorbed moments of childhood in the setting of an impossibly 'mediæval New York': 'he recalls the fading light of the winter dusk, with the red fire and the red curtains in the background, in which more than once he was bidden to put down the last numbers of the humorous sheet and come to his tea'.¹⁷

Such intimate disclosures obliquely reflect James's friendship with Du Maurier in the 1880s, though his admiration for the artist's work goes well beyond personal loyalty. Du Maurier 'holds up a singularly polished and lucid mirror to the drama of English society'¹⁸ and his illustrations assume, for James, an authority and a documentary status which replace a more mundane historical reality: 'he has interpreted for us for so many years the

¹⁵ No. 6, 'The Bethnal Green Museum', p. 64.

¹⁶ No. 48, 'Du Maurier and London Society', p. 359. ¹⁷ *Ibid.* ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 366–7

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social life of England that the interpretation has become the text itself. We have accepted his types, his categories, his conclusions, his sympathies, and his ironies'.¹⁹ James values the insights of the illustrator and caricaturist in a tradition which, in England, reaches back via Cruikshank, to the eighteenth century and the satirical power of 'the great pictorial chronicler', William Hogarth.²⁰ Once more, he asserts that what is revealed of the curiosities of social and physical diversity (most dramatically, 'the perfection . . . of certain forms of facial queerness') has no American equivalent: 'No one has rendered like du Maurier the ridiculous little people who crop up in the interstices of that huge and complicated London world. We have no such finished types as these in America.'²¹ In his autobiography, written so many years later, James records how, as he made his way along London's Baker Street, it seemed to be 'extraordinarily the picture and the scene'²² of Dickens and Thackeray, suggesting that this vision of the Old World, mediated through such imaginative intuitiveness, never entirely left him.

Du Maurier's illustrations are most strongly associated with *Punch*, but he also worked for the American group of *Harper's* magazines. James devotes an essay, titled 'Our Artists in Europe',²³ to considering the documentary and representational strengths of a whole team of distinguished illustrators – some American, some British – including Edwin Abbey, Frank Millet, Frederick Barnard, Charles S. Reinhart, Alfred Parsons and George Boughton. The inspiration for some of their work in 'black and white' is the Cotswold village of Broadway, an unspoilt historic street of houses and cottages, built from the local honey-coloured stone. It could not be less like its New York equivalent ('an incongruous association', as James acknowledges),²⁴ yet it was the summer meeting place for a group of

¹⁹ No. 52, 'Our Artists in Europe', p. 448.

²⁰ *SBO*, p. 241. James most admired the French caricaturist, Paul Gavarni, 'the wittiest, the most literary and most acutely profane of all mockers with the pencil' (No. 53, 'Daumier, Caricaturist', p. 459). When it came to illustrations for his own fiction, James expressed misgivings, fearing that the writing which makes 'illustrative claims' might find it has been 'elbowed . . . by another and a competitive process' (Preface to *The Golden Bowl*, New York Edition (1909), rpt. in *LC* 2: 1326).

²¹ No. 48, 'Du Maurier and London Society', p. 371. ²² *SBO*, p. 236.

²³ Renamed 'Black and White' in its later 1893 book publication.

²⁴ No. 52, 'Our Artists in Europe', p. 435.