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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/polysemes/5580>

ISSN: 2496-4212

Publisher

SAIT

Electronic reference

Marie-Odile Salati, « The Englishness of English Landscapes in the Eyes of Two American Artists: Henry James's *English Hours*, Illustrated by Joseph Pennell », *Polysèmes* [Online], 22 | 2019, Online since 20 December 2019, connection on 24 December 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/polysemes/5580>

This text was automatically generated on 24 December 2019.

Polysèmes

The Englishness of English Landscapes in the Eyes of Two American Artists: Henry James's *English Hours*, Illustrated by Joseph Pennell

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Marie-Odile Salati

- ¹ In 1905 Henry James published *English Hours*, a travel book made up of sixteen essays, which for the most part had been released in magazines at a much earlier period, before or shortly after he settled permanently in Britain (1872 and 1877). In an earlier collection comprising half of them along with pieces on Italy and America, *Portraits of Places*, released in 1884, the text stood by itself. However, for the final edition, the novelist chose to solicit the pictorial contribution of another American-born expatriate, the “illustrator, etcher, and lithographer”¹ Joseph Pennell, who lived in London from 1884 to 1917 and taught at the Slade School of Art. In his prefatory note, the writer claims that the essays “have been here once more placed together, for the great advantage they will be felt to derive from the company and support of Mr Pennell’s illustrations” (EH 3).² The relevance of the partnership is pointed out in the preface when the author refers to his essays as a gathering of “impressions and observations”, which are also the foundation of the illustrator’s art. The stress, then, is on immediacy, on a primary phase of perception mostly relying on visual capture, the “fine freshness” of which is even reinforced by the fact that they “had sprung from an early stage of acquaintance with their general subject-matter”, before being “outlived” owing to familiarity with the country (EH 3). The impressions in question are therefore of interest to our subject since they convey the outlook of two foreigners on the English landscape, supplying outside views on the matter.³ It should be noted nevertheless that,

as pointed out by Leon Edel's 1981 article with the self-explanatory title "The Three Travellers in *English Hours*", James's response evolved over time depending on his situation, from the American "sentimental tourist" in the 1872 essays, to the London-dweller "busy taking the measure of his environment and the people in it" "from 1877 into the 1880s", and finally to the "older writer, now in his prime and in full possession of his England" and "no longer an outsider" (Edel 1981, 168). Edel also stresses the discreet irony, to which the writer resorted in his extensive revisions in order to blunt the edge of critical remarks on his adopted country, that were originally meant for an American public, overemphasizing his foreign origin to account for differing views.

- 2 James's avowed purpose in *English Hours*, especially as the earlier essays were written for the enlightenment of his fellow countrymen, was to try and identify national characteristics. The piece selected to open the collection, "London", an 1888 account in retrospect of his first encounter with the capital, immediately recalls "the perception of the English character of everything" from the moment of landing in Liverpool and hammers the point home, noting the "wonder that England should be as English, as, for my entertainment, she took the trouble to be" (EH 14). The sense of national identity struck the visitor even more strongly when he toured the countryside, causing him to go into raptures about the charming scenes meeting his eye. James's quote of a rural gentleman's statement that "English life [...] is really English country life. It's the country that is the basis of English society" strangely anticipates Prime Minister Baldwin's declaration reported by David Matless in *Landscape and Englishness*: "To me, England is the country, and the country is England" (Matless 52). This study will therefore leave out London as well as markedly urban environments, which are mostly connected with issues of modernity, to concentrate on the sketches, both written and pictorial, of provincial towns or rural settings in the volume since they so eloquently express national character. The aim of the paper will not be to come up with a definition of Englishness, for in spite of his using the word "essence" on a number of occasions (EH 260), James was not in favour of enclosing reality within rigid pre-established categories, being aware of the elusive and volatile nature of identity, particularly that of a nation. The point therefore will be to identify what the representation of the English landscape by two American artists at the turn of the twentieth century reveals of their perception of Englishness, as highlighted by their respective media.
- 3 The first point is that, if James's descriptions of English landscapes lend themselves to pictorial representation, it is because the object of observation gracefully makes up a picture and meets all the requirements of composition, which the novelist insists on for the achievement of art and style. This natural pictorial arrangement along with its romantic appeal to the fancy could then only be matched by Pennell's picturesque manner, displayed in the European travel books the illustrator had co-authored with his wife in the 1880s, as well as in his London series of plates from the early 1890s.⁴ The aesthetic felicities of rural scenes result from a harmonious blend of nature and human civilization, which brings out the essential characteristic of the English nation examined in the second part of this study, that of a land steeped in traditions and history, a model of conservatism, where the felt presence of the past breeds order and stability, as epitomized by the country village and evidenced by the lasting stamp of Empire. Finally the English picturesque lies in the charm inherent in familiar sights and

in the romantic idea of quaint old monuments being peopled by obscure families or humble souls, the unmistakable sign of a truly civilized country.

The Perfect Picture

- 4 It was clearly with a view to indulging in aesthetic enjoyment that James set off on his tour of England. He represented himself in the 1872 essay “Chester” as “the sentimental tourist” with an “appetite for the picturesque”, who was immediately gratified since “the first impressions [...] of an observant American in England stir up within him such a cloud of sensibility” (EH 52). While valuing above all else the Classical balance and monumentality of the Grand Style, the novelist, in Viola Winner’s words, “keenly enjoyed the picturesque in art and scenery” (Winner 31). In his article on James’s travel writing, Peter Rawlings supplies an extensive review of the manifold definition of the picturesque as well as of the historical development of the genre.⁵ Among the “four aspects of ‘picturesque theory’” that he cites from Martin Price are pictoriality—“the ‘appeal to the principles of composition to be found in landscape painting’”—and the aesthetic compromise between sublimity and beauty, “the ‘recognition of the value of roughness and complexity’” (Rawlings 172). These two aspects were the dominant ones in James’s practice of travel writing. Viola Winner notes his delight in the latter form, which she characterizes as “shifting color, light and tone; the crooked and irregular; spectacle and movement; views and perspectives” (Winner 32). The author’s description of old town Chester provides a perfect illustration of this definition: “It is full of the crooked, the accidental, the unforeseen”, “of infinite accident and infinite effect”, “amid all this cunning chiaroscuro of its *mise en scène*” (EH 56). Pennell conveyed this very impression by accompanying the novelist’s comments with charcoal drawings of Shrewsbury and of Chester High Street, in which dark lines and shadows enhance the irregularities and excrescences of the quaint old houses. The essays teem with pictorial terms: “pure picture” and “delightful arrangement” in the Isle of Wight (EH 200, 204), the “ornamental purposes” of the Cam and “all the pictorial accidents of a great English university” in Cambridge (EH 212), the “majestic frame” produced by “the great trees” around a “sombre, soft, romantic mass” in Warwickshire (EH 164), the “soft, thick light” in Old Suffolk (EH 256).
- 5 The English landscape therefore meets all the requirements of composition, framing, lighting and beauty needed to make a perfect picture.⁶ The aesthetic rapture of the visitor is moreover ceaselessly emphasized by a profusion of adjectives conveying artistic appreciation such as “pretty”, “lovely” and “charming”. James had already conveyed his sense of the English landscape as a pre-eminently picturesque object in his 1872 review of French historian and philosopher Hippolyte Taine’s *Notes sur l’Angleterre*, stressing the unique lighting effect produced by the ever-changing climate of the island: “their climate, if not the most cheerful, is surely the most picturesque and, so to speak, the most pictorial in Europe” while the climate of “the whole vast world of English ruralism [...] fairly swarms with aesthetic suggestions” (James 1984, 833).
- 6 It thus seemed fitting to the novelist that Pennell’s sketches should be placed side by side with his essays in the final edition of *English Hours* in spite of the author’s long professed aversion to illustration of literary works. In the preface to *The Golden Bowl* (1904), where he more specifically expatiated on his reservations, he argued that the

written text should be allowed to stand by itself and should be suggestive enough to dispense with the aid of visual complements, each medium being well-advised to keep to its own province.⁷ Yet, in a letter dated June 23, 1904, James confirmed his earlier oral request to Pennell, who had already illustrated the piece “London” published in *The Century* in 1888.⁸ The engraver’s contribution to the essays, which are disparaged as “slim stuff” by the author for being unelaborated impressions (Horne 401), was then no longer viewed in the light of prejudicial rivalry. It should rather be understood as material proof of the outstanding capacity of the English landscape to compose into a picture for the purpose of representation.

- 7 In those days Pennell was widely known for his picturesque manner. Commenting on his art in 1903, a contemporary critic, Edward Howard Moore, besides mentioning the artist’s collaboration with Henry James “in illustrating the picturesque streets and buildings of London”, emphasized his “fondness for picturesque scenes artistically treated”, his “power of just arranging his objects so that they together make a good composition”, statements strikingly attuned to the novelist’s own aesthetic beliefs (Moore 85, 89). Interestingly, a recent on-line article by Margaret Schmitz highlights the decisive role played in the illustrator’s later representation of Manhattan cityscapes by his picturesque sensibility, which was stimulated by exposure to English scenery and cultural patrimony during his London days. According to her he adapted “a nineteenth-century idea of the Romantic picturesque” to the new needs of the 20th century machine age (Schmitz 29).⁹ Pennell is also widely held to have been indebted to Whistler, particularly to the painter’s London nocturnes, and Margaret Schmitz further points out a similar quest for dramatic effect and “picturesque contrasts of old and new” in their representation of the English capital (Schmitz 8).
- 8 Indeed most of the drawings interspersed in *English Hours* aim at dramatic effect in the picturesque vein. Dark masses, whether of buildings or trees, starkly enhanced by charcoal, stand in dramatic contrast to lighter zones, with a concern for perspective, framing and the arrangement of volumes. Movement incessantly sweeps across the pictures owing to everpresent puffy or stormy clouds, or to swaying foliage underscored by rough parallel strokes of various inclinations around gnarled trunks and limbs. An emblematic example is found in the vignette “Chatsworth” at the top of the list of illustrations, its situation in this specific place being undoubtedly meant to signal its paradigmatic value (EH 7).

Joseph Pennell, "Chatsworth", *English Hours*, Library of America, 7

- 9 The pale-hued palace looms like an encased jewel in a central circle of light made by the white clouds above and their reflection in the canal at the bottom of the walls. It is the focal point of the perspective, enhanced by the framing effect of the monumental arching trees on either side and the dark expanse of meadow in the foreground.
- 10 Gigantic trees are prominent features in Pennell's drawings, a means of creating dramatic intensity, the way his Gothic-like gloomy buildings do in cities. His use of trees finds an echo in James's depiction of Dunwich in "Old Suffolk": "the gray square tower of the church [...] peeps out of trees that remind me exactly of those which, in the frontispieces of Birket Foster, offered to my childish credulity the very essence of England"¹⁰ (EH 260). Significantly, Birket Foster, an engraver from the Victorian era, who produced idealized pictures of the English countryside of his time, was distinguished by Pennell in his survey of modern illustrators. The latter hailed Foster's "exquisite drawings", reproducing a number of his wood engravings, particularly illustrations of Longfellow's and Goldsmith's poems, and he singled him out when referring to Dalziel's Illustrated Editions: "The first important book of this series that I have seen is Birket Foster's 'Pictures of English Landscape,' 1863 (Routledge), printed by Dalziel" (Pennell 26-29, 91).
- 11 The dramatic intensity of Pennell's picturesque manner, with its powerful effect on imagination, may be viewed as a pictorial expression of the romantic appeal, which the novelist repeatedly attributes to the English landscape. The peaceful scenery "takes the fancy of the sympathetic stranger" to the point of offering "the prettiest possible adventure"¹¹ and understandably fills natives and visitors alike with "romantic passion" (EH 168, 183). More importantly it puts him again in touch with the pastoral tradition of mankind, having as it does "an indefinable harmony with an ancient, pastoral landscape" (EH 168). Warwickshire in this respect comes as a revelation to him: "The place has taught me a great many English secrets; I have been interviewing the genius of pastoral Britain" (EH 164). The illustration of this statement, as he then proceeds to portray the castle of Kenilworth, is highly reminiscent of Pennell's opening

picture of Chatsworth analyzed above, besides being mirrored by the charcoal drawing which precedes the essay: “I looked without obstruction at a sombre, soft, romantic mass whose outline was blurred by mantling ivy. It made a perfect picture, and in the foreground the great trees overarched their boughs, from right and left, so as to give it a majestic frame” (EH 164). Significantly, “the richest corner of England”, imaginatively speaking of course, is declared to be the banks of the Avon, graced with the presence of sheep, which “were by no means mere edible mutton; they were poetic, historic, romantic sheep” (EH 178).

- 12 However the novelist’s appeal to the genre in his narrative as well as in the pictorial illustrations of his essays raises a question. As pointed out by Peter Rawlings, the picturesque was in its heyday between 1730 and 1830, or even 1810 according to some specialists, and had long gone out of fashion by the time the two artists were producing their works, being even disparaged as superficial by literary critics (Rawlings 171, 173-174). James’s puzzling reliance on the picturesque then, given his inclination for complexity and his initial dismissal of French Impressionists deemed superficial precisely, has been variously explained by scholars as a class attitude (John Sears XIX) or as a subtle means of engaging with racial issues (Blair 166) or transgressive desires (Rawlings 171). Sara Blair refers to “the reigning conventions and cognitive habits of the picturesque”. Therefore, the genre provided the foreign observers that James and Pennell were with an operative framework for tackling the cultural Other and effectively overcoming “anxieties of representational management” (Blair 166). For Kendall Johnson, “the picturesque formalizes the visual field into a scene that can be discussed as if it were a discrete, unified piece of art” and “it also facilitates the energy of exploration” (68, 69). Andrews, quoted by Rawlings, endows it with the power of “domestication and containment”, which consequently turns the landscape into a controllable scene (Rawlings 172). In this respect the English situation can be contrasted to the 20th century American scene, which would challenge both artists later on, since it “refused or controverted mastery”, being “too much, too many” like the emblematic Jewish district (Blair 189). Reliance on the picturesque style was facilitated by the fact that, unlike their native country given over to change and the temporary, England was a land of tradition, and its countryside everywhere bespoke the stability propitious to artistic composition.

The Picture of Conservatism

- 13 The sentimental view of the English landscape as the depository of the age-old pastoral tradition is unquestionably influenced by the foreign origin of the two artists, unsettled by the effects of industrialization and urbanization in their homeland. The island still presented the descendants of the pioneers with “the virginal stillness of nature”, the absence of which is deplored in the overcivilized seaside town of Ventnor held up as an isolated counter-example: “What strikes an American [...] is that it is far less natural, less pastoral and bosky than his own fond image of a summer retreat. There is too much brick and mortar” (EH 202). The celebrated harmony of rural settings, conveyed by such adjectives as “soft” or “gentle” in relation to colours or curves, stems from the happy blend of nature and human habitation. Confirmation of this can be found in the compositional balance in Pennell’s corresponding drawings since the buildings which most appeal to James’s fancy, like Stratford Church, Stokesay or Ludlow Castle, evenly

share the pictorial space with their natural environment and are perfectly integrated into it, being either fused into the surrounding vegetation or mirrored in an adjacent expanse of water (EH 169, 189, 191).

- 14 The check given to rampant urbanization results in another harmonious balance, that between past and present, which proclaims the essence of England as a land of traditions. This feature is everywhere to be seen and is epitomized by the incomparable English village, a downright national institution. Extracting an essence out of the English landscape is an easy task because the pattern never varies from one place to another and is composed of the same elements, which James takes pleasure in listing, using the definite article and the singular for every item so as to underscore their representativeness: “The big house and its woods are always at hand”; “the tradition of the village green”; “The russet, low-browed inn” (EH 261). He ascribes the impression of stability produced by the recurrent combination to the social order that, in his eyes, has been preserved over the centuries by the joint rule of the squire and the parson, manifest in the ubiquitous castles and church spires. The English landscape is seen as blessed with the aesthetic forms indicative of social forms that the novelist was to find most wanting in America when he returned to his native country in 1904. In his collection of impressions published in 1907, *The American Scene*, he deplored “the looseness of appearances” which “kept telling the tale of the difference made, in a land of long winters, by the suppression of the two great factors of the familiar English landscape, the squire and the parson” (James 1907, 375). His biographer, Leon Edel, points out his emotional response to the “national stability” derived from traditions: “To a member of America’s upper middle class, nourished on a continent in which society was in a state of flux, England’s codes and rules, and its stratified class structure, proved a revelation” (Edel 276).
- 15 What speaks most powerfully to the two American artists in the English landscape is the felt presence of the past, the visible historical continuity, which modern urbanization has taken such pains to erase across the Atlantic in James’s eyes, destroying all architectural vestiges to the point of turning the country into a uniform blank surface devoid of landmarks. In England on the contrary, the landscape tells the rich story of the past, romantically so when only towers in ruins remain. Old monuments have not given way to modern constructions but are still there to bear witness to the various stages of national history and to conjure up ghosts from the past for the benefit of the observant and caring visitor. The crumbling priory of Dunwich brings home the fact that “it was a city, the main port of Suffolk, as even its poor relics show” (EH 256) and Ludlow, still immune from industrialization, that “some hundred years ago it was the centre of a large provincial society”, which “has left so sensible a stamp” (EH 195). Therefore the English landscape has the irresistible power of taking us back to the remotest stretches of a past long dead and gone and yet so essential to the identity of the nation. Along the picturesque perspectives leading up to the old homes, space serves as a metaphor for time, like the grounds of Charlecote Park, which “stretching away, in the early evening, to vaguely seen Tudor walls, lie there like the backward years receding to the age of Elizabeth” (EH 175). Pennell has perfectly captured the impression in his corresponding illustration, as the dark volumes of vegetation, which occupy most of the foreground, both vertically and horizontally, drive the manor back into the distance in spite of its being the focus of the picture.

Joseph Pennell, "Charlecote Park", *English Hours*, Library of America, 177

- ¹⁶ If America was later to be found guilty of oversimplification, England appeals to the writer of fiction for its capacity to supply "richly complex" material, because it brings together two different facets, in the manner of a cubistic portrait, that is the two eras that make up its history, and it acknowledges the central role of the past in the present aspect of the country: "the present is always seen, as it were, in profile, and the past presents a full face" (EH 166). Pennell seems to have embraced this view since the monuments in his illustrations are usually represented facing the viewer, solid masses standing out starkly in the middle of the picture against a contrasted environment. Quite often the present appears in a subordinate position in the form of diminutive human shapes with barely distinguishable contours, passing along in profile or standing with their backs turned. The sense of historical continuity, which so much gratifies the writer, is conveyed in the drawings by the recurrent motif of the pond, in which the old walls are mirrored, together with the surrounding clouds. Thus the castle or the spire creates a link between the material earth walked by the visitor and the ethereal timeless sky, while its duplicated image evokes the two facets of time, the substantial one of the present and the immaterial one of the past.
- ¹⁷ Owing to its stable forms and enduring monuments, the English landscape strikes the American novelist as the picture of conservatism: "One had no need of being told that this is a conservative country; the fact seemed to be written in the hedgerows and in the verdant acres behind them" (EH 172). The picturesque constructions that have survived into the present provide him with a metaphor for the national attachment to the status quo: "Imperturbable British Toryism [...]—across the fields and behind the oaks and the benches—[...] deepens the very colour of the air; it may be said to be the style of the landscape" (EH 172-173). Another recurrent term summing up James's pleased impression when he gazes at a site, be it natural or architectural, is "dignity", a

virtue indicative of inner nobility in his fictional characters and consequently of greatness (EH 160). And indeed everything proclaims the greatness of England, as suggested by the climactic repetition of “great” and “greatness”, further supported by the words “glory” and “genius”, when his stroll about Woolwich common recalls to him the power of the British Empire (EH 145). He finally admits that this is what he has been seeking all along: “It is the imperial element in English history that he has chiefly cared for” (EH 145). As the visitor is reminded of the insular nature of the country by the watercolour quality of the riverside landscapes and by “the high-piled, weather-bearing clouds”, his fancy is inflamed by the romantic idea of the “little island” extending its rule to the other end of the world (EH 145). He ascribes “valour” and “bravery” to the military installations along the Thames and eventually dismisses fleeting doubts concerning the future of Empire as he feels comforted by “all those mementoes of British dominion” (EH 144, 146). The “wealth and power of the British Empire”, which is impressed on the observer in spite of the grime and inelegant style of the waterfront buildings, is conveyed by the pompous-looking solid facades flanked by fluttering banners in Pennell’s drawing entitled “Greenwich” (EH 141). On the whole, the illustrator even reinforced the impression of order and stability produced on foreign visitors by emphasizing the rectilinear forms and solemnity of his massive buildings. Significantly the final essay of *English Hours*, “Old Suffolk”, written after the rest in 1897, again returns to the dominant impression that “Britannia still more admirably rules” and ends with the pleasant imaginative suggestions of life in a cottage on the coast at Dunwich “so as to be circled, as it were, by the protecting arm of the Admiralty” (EH 262-263). Yet the ironical note that winds up the piece, the narrator’s admission that he finally chose not to elect abode in such a haven, reflects the author’s misgivings about the future of Empire as he grew older, a somber mood which Philip Horne notes concerning the last but one essay in the collection, “Winchelsea, Rye and ‘Denis Duval’”, written at the same period: “In the long run, James may be reflecting British and American imperialisms, and whatever future they have will ineluctably turn to ruins and incomplete schemes and ambitions” (Horne 2017, 223).

A Flower of Civilization

- 18 Yet, for all its magnificent age-old heritage, which evidences the imperial power of a great nation, England at the same time evinces a simplicity that makes it easy for a visitor to come to terms with the country. What makes the landscape so appealing is not an arrogant architectural display of wealth or an exceptional sublime scenery. On the contrary it has the uncommon capacity to engage the tourist’s sensibility continually with the most ordinary objects: “It takes, in England, [...] no wonderful corner of the land to make the fiddle-string vibrate. The old usual rural things do this enough, and a part of one’s exposure to them is that they ask one to rise to no heroics. What is the charm, after all, but just the abyss of the familiar?” (EH 254-255). The landscape thus has the power to make the stranger feel at home, both aesthetically and socially. The description of Chichester cathedral is representative in this respect. It emphasizes the lack of anything out of the ordinary by means of recurrent negative prefixes or statements: “it has not at present the charm of antiquity”, the “cathedral is not of the highest interest; it is rather inexpressive”, it “has no particular element of unexpectedness”. Yet the judgement, supported by intensifiers, is unquestionably appreciative (“a very charming affair”, “this highly respectable edifice”) and approval

is felt to proceed from the unpretentious familiar surroundings, as suggested by the repetition of “usual” and the presence of adjectives like “quiet” and “small” (EH 207). The crowning experience, which takes place in the cloister, significantly affords simple, expected pleasures: “as is usual in such places, you may sit upon a grave-stone amid the deep grass” (EH 210). The only sight in Chichester which Pennell chose to draw is not the “cathedral of restricted grandeur” but the “old market-cross of the fifteenth century—a florid, romantic little structure” (EH 205, 207). The illustrator took special care to reproduce the details of the quaint monument, whose excrescences and profuse ornaments stand out against the geometrical facades of the modern-day buildings in the background. But he also attempted to recall the distant popular origin of that vestige from the past, which was erected in 1501 to serve as a toll-free marketplace for poor peasants,¹² a fact which the flock of sheep added in the bottom left corner of the picture is meant to remind us of (EH 205).

- 19 Part of the “familiar charm” of the English landscape stems from its humility. Requiring no “heroics” from tourists, it itself has no claim to heroic stature and therefore offers a significant contrast to France and Italy, where maximum effect is always sought for. A telling illustration is the town of Rye, where James was to choose to settle down in 1898. From a distance, the scene has everything to commend itself, “a classic, academic note, the note of Turner and Claude”, advantageous “conditions of atmosphere”, but the effect is lessened by the “stunted church”, which causes the observer to reflect that “both tower and hill would have been higher if the place had only been French or Italian” (EH 251-252). Still, the picture is redeemed precisely by its unpretentious appearance and by its authenticity, which has not been tampered with: “Its whole pleasant little pathos, in point of fact, is just that it is homely English” (EH 252). The adjective “homely” is revealing, because it points out the domestic suggestions of the home besides stressing the lack of sophisticated beauty, and the town is precisely the place where the novelist elected to take up permanent abode.¹³
- 20 The great merit of the English landscape is that it matches James’s lofty view of the democratization of art, which in his eyes should by no means involve vulgarization in the sense of entailing lowered standards and uniformity, as in industrialized America, but should instead refine public taste, the ultimate pursuit of a civilized society, an ideal shared by Pennell.¹⁴ This noble goal has been reached in England since the most beautiful scenery and buildings are available to all, including the humble part of the population in some cases. An American citizen is disconcerted to find that a great many treasures from the past are private property: “If therefore you talk of anything beautiful in England, the presumption will be that it is private” (EH 183). The drawback is that a visitor needs to be personally acquainted with the owner in order to be granted admittance, but on the other hand it means that places of historical value are lived in and harbour ordinary, uneventful existences. James himself could have elected to dwell in one of them, which he describes as “one of the quiet places, unknown to fame, which are locally spoken of as merely ‘good’” (EH 185). The most charming manors are home to obscure families, who lead quiet secluded lives screened from the world by walls and hedges, more often than not deep in the woods. The characteristic of the English landscape, then, is that its beauty lies in “unrenowned” houses, in “the lost and buried ones”, far more than in “the famous seats” (EH 260). The illustration provided by Pennell in this respect, “Fitzgerald’s Home”, supports this view since it features a cottage nestling in the depths of vegetation, bright with profuse sunlight and

bristling with chimneys, two of them crowned with plumes of smoke, the whole scene being highly reminiscent of a child's drawing of a house with all the suggestions of cosy happiness (EH 261).

- 21 The seductive idea revealed by the landscape is finally that England stands out as a supremely civilized nation: "But I find on consulting my memory that the details have melted away into the single deep impression of a perfect ripeness of civilization" (EH 179). The fact is forcefully driven home at the sight of old gems of architecture converted into charitable institutions housing the forsaken souls of human society. The initiative is held up by James as a shining example to American citizens, who are not familiar with such disinterested benevolence: "those inquiring Occidentals who are used to seeing charity more drily and practically administered" (EH 174). The novelist successively describes three ancient buildings in Warwickshire—Leicester's Hospital for veterans in Warwick,¹⁵ a nursing home and an orphanage in Coventry—remarkable for their elaborate facades and their interior arrangement of little courts, galleries and staircases. He details the sculptural ornaments denoting taste and delicacy in order to suggest that the most underprivileged are entitled to the use of the nation's picturesque heritage, represented as "a wonderfully elaborate piece of machinery for its humble purpose" (EH 174). Those dwellings, while eliciting an ambivalent response from the novelist for contributing to the theatrical staging of "personal woe", are among the things that "speak more quaintly and suggestively of the old England that an American loves" (EH 173). The relative clause introduced by the pronoun "that" should be understood in a restrictive sense. Picturesque ancient monuments converted for use in modern times and integrated into everyday life are what Americans such as James and Pennell love about the country. With a metaphor that would later on furnish the title of one of his short stories and become his trademark, the novelist points out the significance of this interaction for him: "The houses we went to see have not a national reputation; they are simply interwoven figures in the rich pattern of the midlands" (EH 179).
- 22 However the two artists are not blind to the dire economic and social effects of industrialization in Victorian England, such as squalid poverty, besotted lower class people, suburban grime, which the writer exposes on a number of occasions, increasingly so in the pieces from the late 1870s, while the illustrator supplies three dark-hued views of smoky factory cityscape towards the end of the volume to match the sombre mood of the later essays.¹⁶ If the English landscape is still evidence of the best that civilization has to offer, or if the two Americans cling to that belief, there are strong suggestions that the values inherited from the past are seriously threatened by the growing signs of de-civilization which James uneasily perceives in the human figures observed at close quarters, whereas Pennell's illustrations, concerned as they are with elements of scenery, tend to elude the fact and are mostly a tribute to the enduring heritage of the nation. The novelist himself adopted the same bias in his 1872 essay "Devon", depicting a rural cottage in the following way: "it seems to have been stationed there for no more obvious purpose than to keep a promise to your fancy, though it covers, I suppose, not a little of the sordid side of life which the fancy likes to slur over" (EH 82). He preferred to confine the "uglinesses, the 'rookeries,' the brutalities" of life to London, as the inevitable ills of industrialization, in order to focus on what in his eyes was truly representative of the English character and still surviving in the heart of the country, contrary to his homeland (EH 35).

- 23 The English landscape is unquestionably viewed in a romantic light by the two artists, as indicated by the striking recurrence of the adjective and of related ones like “picturesque” and “pastoral” in the essays, and as confirmed by the corresponding vein in the drawings. Of course they approached their object equipped with their national stereotypes and artistic expectations, since they felt the need to go back to their European cultural roots in order to stimulate their imaginations and to nurture their creativity. It is significant that both were unsettled by the highly urbanized and industrialized state of their homeland on returning to it because the picturesque style and its conventions, which had worked so well in England to bring out the general character of the country, proved inadequate across the Atlantic and had to be adapted. James’s aesthetic response to the English landscape was moreover coloured by his political views, by his conservatism as for matters of taste, out of an instinctive aversion to chaos. At the time when he wrote most of the essays of the collection, he was still very much under the sway of his patrician class-consciousness, just as he was striving to achieve authorial control over his literary material, a reassuring stance that he was willing to relinquish in his late book of travel writing, *The American Scene*, in order to come to a better understanding of his changing homeland through exposure to a destabilizing loss of mastery.¹⁷ The stability and social order evidenced by the invariable pattern of the English village and the historical continuity preserved by a country respectful of its past heritage convinced James that England was a remaining stronghold of civilization as he saw it, while civilization was being imperilled by modernization, immigration and democratization across the Atlantic. Therefore, if his descriptions in *English Hours* were meant to provide a general sense of the English character to the American public, they also covertly provided his reasons for electing the “great” “little island” as his home, as a refuge for both the artist and the citizen (EH 145). It is worth noting that most of Pennell’s drawings illustrating the last two essays written in 1897 and 1899 are singularly conceived on the same pattern, with a wide fairly linear road or river cutting across the middle of the picture to vanishing point in the peaceful rural scenery, as if inviting the viewer to enter the landscape.

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NOTES

1. I have borrowed the phrase from Wendy Graham's article "Picture for Texts" (5).
2. All references to *English Hours* in this paper, abbreviated as EH, are drawn from the Library of America edition.
3. In a letter to Grace Norton dated July 1878, that is a year and a half after settling in London, James emphasized his sense of being an outside observer, as quoted by his biographer Leon Edel: "In one sense I feel intimately at home here, and in another sense I feel—as an American may be on the whole very willing, at times, very glad, to feel—like a complete outsider" (Edel 279).
4. Joseph Pennell supplied the illustrations and his wife Elizabeth Robins Pennell the text of *A Canterbury Pilgrimage* (1885) and of *Our Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1887) for example. Among his famous London plates are *Charing Cross to St. Paul's* (1891), *The Thames* and *St. Paul's From the River* (1894).
5. For further reading on the subject of the picturesque, see major reference studies like the essays by William Gilpin and Martin Price, along with John Conron's analysis of the significance of the genre for American art.
6. The picturesque as perfect picture was the way James defined this style in an earlier piece of travel writing, "Lake George", published in 1870: "If the pure picturesque means simply the presentation of a picture, self-informed and complete" (James 1993, 743).
7. James feared the competition and encroachment of illustrations: "finding itself elbowed [...] by another and a competitive process", "to graft or 'grow', at whatever point, a picture by another hand on my own picture". He found that the reliance of prose on images "does it the worst of services" since its "duty" is to be "pictorial enough, above all *in itself*". Each art should keep to itself: "the frame of one's own work no more provides place for such a plot than we expect flesh and fish to be served on the same platter" (Preface to *The Golden Bowl*, *The Prefaces* 1326).
8. See Philip Horne's reproduction of the letter and his notes on the relationship between the two men (Horne 2000, 401-402 and 383).
9. Margaret Schmitz's central argument in her article is that "the formation of Pennell's modern New York was stimulated by a rupture of his European, specifically British, sense of what was pictorially acceptable as far as urban centres were concerned" (3).
10. James is looking back on his childish self with mild irony, mocking his credulous belief that the "essence of England" could be so neatly encapsulated. Even though he goes on to say that his older self is still prey to the same credulity, his international experience has taught him how futile such an expectation is. John P. McCombe emphasizes "his own cosmopolitan resistance to rigid national identities" (170).
11. Henry James discusses the romantic potential of adventure in the preface to his 1876 novel *The American*.
12. The information is supplied by the Novium Museum at Chichester, in an on-line account by Amanda Harwood entitled "Chichester's Market Cross".
13. I leave aside the more specific suggestions relevant to writing and to the complex pattern of interaction between James and Thackeray discussed by Philip Horne in his essay about Winchelsea and Rye (Horne 2017, 229). The critic perceptively reads the two towns as metaphors for the literary projects of Thackeray and James, the "stunted church" of Rye standing for the lesser stature which the American claims to have compared with the British novelist.
14. In his study of "liberal journalism", Jack Mcleod writes about Pennell, who contributed articles to the British daily newspaper *The Star*: "Even Pennell, who excoriated 'the bourgeois and middle-class, and the whole Anglo-Saxon race, which loves banalities, boorishness and buncombe,' considered that the aim of the *Star* was 'to elevate the masses,' and, as 'Artist Unknown,' 'believed [he] could bring art to the people'" (9-10).

15. As reflected in Pennell's illustration (EH 173), Leicester's Hospital is a 14th century "picturesque dwelling" with "cross-timbered gable-ends and deeply sunken lattices" (EH 174).
16. Peter Rawlings has highlighted James's frequent reliance on the grotesque to depict the lower classes in a Bakhtinian "carnival" mood, taking advantage of the flimsy borderline between that mode of representation and the picturesque aesthetic, which similarly values distortion and crookedness (Rawlings 176, 179-182).
17. See Ross Posnock and Gert Buelens for their stimulating studies of James's surrender to the Other in the modern American scene.

ABSTRACTS

English Hours, the 1905 collected edition of Henry James's earlier separate accounts of his travels around Britain, is interspersed with illustrations by another American expatriate, the engraver Joseph Pennell. Focusing on the portrayal of provincial towns and rural scenery, regarded by the writer as highly emblematic of the English character, this article examines what Englishness consists of in the eyes of two outsiders and how it is conveyed by their respective media. The first outstanding feature of the English landscape is its capacity to form a perfect picture meeting the aesthetic requirements of composition, framing, lighting and harmonious arrangement. It was therefore appropriate that its romantic appeal should be captured by the picturesque style which Pennell was known for in his day and which proves to be the dominant note in his illustrations of the essays. The overwhelming sense of harmony stems from the happy blend of nature and human civilization as well as of past and present. The English landscape then reveals its identity as a land of traditions and customs, most visible in the remarkable English village, where social order has been preserved over the centuries by the joint rule of the squire and the parson reflected in the ubiquitous castles and church steeples. The English landscape thus turns out to be the picture of conservatism, which inevitably recalls the greatness of the nation and the glory of Empire. Finally the country has achieved a highly evolved form of civilization, as it has managed to integrate the past heritage into the present as well as into the daily lives of humble people.

English Hours, recueil de récits de voyage à travers la Grande-Bretagne publié en 1905 par Henry James et regroupant divers essais parus antérieurement, est illustré de dessins exécutés par le graveur Joseph Pennell, autre expatrié américain. S'attachant à la peinture de villes de province et de paysages ruraux qui, pour l'écrivain, affichaient au plus haut point leur caractère anglais, cet article analyse en quoi réside celui-ci aux yeux de deux étrangers et comment il est traduit dans leur art respectif. Tout d'abord, le paysage anglais se distingue par sa capacité à se constituer d'emblée en un véritable tableau, qui répond aux exigences esthétiques de composition, cadrage, éclairage et disposition harmonieuse. Il était donc approprié que l'attrait romantique en soit reflété par l'esthétique du pittoresque qui faisait la réputation de Pennell à l'époque et qui effectivement régit les illustrations des essais. Le sentiment dominant d'harmonie provient de l'heureuse fusion entre la nature et la civilisation humaine de même qu'entre le passé et le présent. Par là, le paysage anglais révèle son identité, celle d'une terre de traditions et de coutumes, symbolisée par le légendaire village anglais, où l'ordre social a été préservé durant des siècles par la double autorité du châtelain et du pasteur, dont témoigne l'omniprésence des châteaux et des clochers. Le paysage anglais se fait alors image du conservatisme et ne manque

pas d'évoquer la grandeur de la nation et la gloire de l'empire. En dernier lieu le pays s'affirme comme une forme aboutie de civilisation, qui intègre l'héritage du passé dans le présent et dans la vie quotidienne des plus humbles.

INDEX

Mots-clés: récit de voyage, campagne anglaise, représentation, illustration, pittoresque

Keywords: travel writing, English countryside, representation, illustration, picturesque

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