

Henry James's Dramas of Cultivation: Liberalism and Democracy in *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima*

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Parallel structures in Henry James's anomalously political novels of 1886 have remained curiously unaddressed. Both *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima* feature a wealthy woman whose ascetic rejection of the pleasures of art is part of her devotion to a revolutionary political cause. Both of these women more or less adopt a young, politically marginal person. As the plots play out, each of these young people undergoes a kind of education. Both books are, in this sense, dramas of cultivation. As such, they engage critically with a body of political thought that pervaded both James's intellectual milieu and the pages of the periodicals in which these novels were first serialized in 1885, the *Century* and the *Atlantic Monthly*. Because that body of thought has been disregarded and misrecognized, this engagement has gone unnoticed.

These periodicals and the men who produced them—men such as Charles Eliot Norton, James Russell Lowell, William Dean Howells, and Richard Watson Gilder—have been associated with a “genteel tradition” that used culture to consolidate elite power, pursuing a project of social control. Recent scholarship, however, studies these men as active participants in the discourse of transatlantic Victorian liberalism and argues that their liberalism prized an ideal of broadly diffused culture that was distinctly democratic. Here “culture,” or “cultivation,” refers to an inclusive process rather than an elitist criterion for exclusion. It is not a possession that confers distinction but an ongoing, autonomous practice of learning undertaken through the experience of art and literature, among other means.¹ This understanding of culture as self-development, articulated powerfully by John Stuart Mill and Matthew Arnold, is central to Victorian liberalism, which generally understands the cultivated liberal

subject to be a competent citizen capable of thinking independently.² When we understand the mission of the *Century* and the *Atlantic Monthly* as a liberal project of cultivation, we see that James's dramas of cultivation in fact interrogate the mission of the periodicals in which they first appeared.

In order to understand the way these novels speak to the political questions of their moment, we need to read them alongside each other, and we need to read them in the context of Victorian liberalism. Both books provocatively propose a mode of liberal cultivation that takes as much from Walter Pater as it does from Mill or Arnold, but, in the end, both novels deny their protagonists access to such cultivation. *The Bostonians* represents a liberal cultivation first corrupted by a demagogue and then crushed altogether by a tyrant. *The Princess Casamassima* literalizes the democratic liberal premise that the uncultivated poor can be cultivated, only to fold back on itself by assimilating democracy with anarchy and assuming that cultivation on a large scale causes the destruction of culture itself. By staging troubled cultivations and by concluding in dark irresolution, these novels, I argue, dramatize liberalism's internal contradictions.

Studied separately from the longer history of transatlantic Victorian liberalism, the *Century* and the *Atlantic Monthly* have been seen as forces for "cultural custodianship" (Glazener 23). Nancy Glazener's important study of American realism notably explores the role of "the *Atlantic* group" magazines (including the *Century*) in "the legitimizing reformulation of a particular bourgeois group's hegemony." Noting that "any bourgeois group's project of cultural hegemony is necessarily structured by profound ambivalence," Glazener observes a "schizophrenia" in which the bourgeois group paradoxically pronounces that democracy will foster "the improvement of public taste" while warning that "only more zealous boundary-patrolling on the part of custodians of culture could prevent the public taste from sinking to the lowest level" (21–22). Newer scholarship on nineteenth-century liberals in Britain and America offers a different way of thinking about this paradox—and reassessments of both Victorian liberalism and the genteel tradition invite us to reexamine the ways that literary texts speak to the ideas that animate the genteel periodicals in which they first appeared.

"Liberalism," Amanda Anderson writes, "is best understood . . . as a philosophical and political aspiration conceived in an acute awareness of the challenges and often bleak prospects confronting it" (*Theory* 250). She points out that Mill's thought "combined a faith in the ideal of self-development on the one hand and a sociological assessment of the dangers associated with mass opinion on the other" (250–51). This account of the internal tension within liberalism helps us to reinterpret the duality that has appeared schizophrenic—or simply hypocritical—and identify it as both an acknowledged contradiction within a complex body of thought and a problem with which nineteenth-century liberals themselves grappled self-consciously. Anderson and others contributing to the reassessment of Victorian liberalism during the last two decades tend to describe their projects by stating that they aim to "take seriously" the claims of Victorian liberals.³ Nancy Bentley strikes a similar stance when she identifies "nineteenth-century arbiters of high culture" as "our critical ancestors" and suggests "we can assume that their investment in analytic thought . . . had the same potential for discovering insight—or falling into error and distortion—as our

own” (13). When we “take seriously” American liberals’ overt agenda, I contend, we can begin to see the ways that James’s novels of 1886 interrogate it.

Recent scholarship seeks to better understand that agenda as an attempt to realize an essentially democratic ideal. Bentley asserts that “the persistent plea for a higher national culture was not a gambit for imposing the power of one class over others but a program of inner transformation urged upon a broad citizenry” (74). This perspective finds support in historical studies that identify the men associated with the genteel tradition as members of a transatlantic liberal intellectual community and emphasize the value they placed on the inclusive ideal of broadly diffused liberal cultivation.⁴ For American liberals, Leslie Butler argues, “the goal was a renewal of American democracy. ‘Cultivation’ was the concept they repeatedly invoked as a means to achieving that goal” (7). During the years following the Civil War, Union victory and expansions of the franchise in both Britain and America appeared to affirm the march of democracy and progress, and this goal seemed within reach. Butler argues (as does Linda Dowling in her study of Norton) that this idealistic postwar phase shaped the agenda of American liberals for decades to come: “nearly every aspect of their Gilded Age project could be seen in the goals set forth in 1867, during the transatlantic high tide of democratic reform,” when they set out “to prove that public life could at once be broadly democratic and liberally cultivated” (129, 14; see also Dowling [*Norton* 37–67]).

Periodicals, Butler shows, were central to that project: print technology, these men believed, would provide access to rational debate and fine works of the imagination for a wide body of readers who could thus develop as a “reading citizenry” of competent liberal subjects capable of independent thought (123–25). Periodicals would thus serve not merely as a site for the expression of liberal views but as the means by which the liberal ideal of broadly diffused cultivation might be achieved. Gilder’s New York-based *Century*, with its enormous circulation, was particularly well poised to strive for this ideal. The more prestigious and distinctly Bostonian *Atlantic Monthly* had far fewer readers, and its editor from 1881–1890, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, did not share the democratic aspirations of his predecessors Lowell and Howells. Yet the *Atlantic Monthly* had been and would remain an important institution of democratic liberalism in America.⁵

The “reading citizenry” that American liberals sought to cultivate is analogous to the liberal public sphere of rational critical debate that Jürgen Habermas sees compromised by the rise of the mass media during the second half of the nineteenth century, and, indeed, Habermas’s account of that “transformation of the public sphere” points to challenges that American liberals and their “quality” periodicals faced. Bentley and Richard Salmon have read *The Bostonians* as a novel that speaks to and of this Habermasian transformation.⁶ I seek to build upon those readings by considering the novels in the context of their serialization and understanding that context as part of the landscape of transatlantic Victorian liberalism. Studies of James that do consider the serialization of his work have been attentive to genteel periodicals’ repressive effects and complicity in defining exclusionary racial and national identities (see Blair, *Race*; Noonan; and Warren). I hope to complement that work by giving more sustained attention to the aims that these periodicals and their editors claimed for themselves—aims better understood in the context of a historically specific liberalism. A broader understanding of liberalism has informed readings of *The Princess*

Casamassima: Lionel Trilling, working self-consciously in the Arnoldian tradition, identifies in the book a “moral realism” consistent with his own liberalism (88–89). Martha Nussbaum too suggests that the novel “advocates liberalism” (205). But these readings tend to engage with the liberalisms of their respective moments rather than the particular liberalism with which the novels grapple.

That liberalism is especially committed to the realization of a democratic ideal by the broad diffusion of culture. The Bostonians of the Civil War generation who were its core proponents took inspiration in their youth from Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson but in the 1860s came to embrace Mill more fully, in particular his ideas about the educative nature of democracy and the importance of individual self-development. They also affirmed Arnold’s call for the renewal of society through culture. Along with the Unitarian concept of “self-culture,” Butler writes, “their dedication to the kind of culture associated with Arnold blended easily with the Millian components of their liberalism, nurturing the same processes of self-development and inner growth” (8, 15).⁷ James knew this liberalism well. He moved in the same circles as its advocates and read the publications in which it found expression. He also happened to live in Boston at the height of liberal optimism after the Civil War and to visit the city again in the years before he began writing *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima*.⁸

James’s early mentor, Charles Eliot Norton, gives voice to this liberalism when, arguing in favor of female suffrage in 1867, he writes, “education, meaning the cultivation of intelligence and character, is the only safeguard and secure foundation of a democracy in which universal suffrage prevails” (152). Norton’s liberal project, like that of his peers, was to educate tirelessly in order to create that “secure foundation” for democracy. In the early 1880s, when James set out to write his political novels, this liberal project—and indeed, Anglo-American liberalism at large—was encountering increasing challenge, and the bright optimism of the 1860s had faded. Regarding the question of “American institutions, social or political,” Norton had written to James in 1873, “I believe in a distant future not the present as I used to do” (LL 53 n. 4). But this belief in a longer trajectory of progress continued to drive the work of Norton and his colleagues even as they saw their democratic ideal repeatedly checked and baffled by the difficulties of reconstruction, the corruption of party politics, the intensification of consumer culture, the crude sensationalism of the growing popular press, and the increasing numbers of Americans who apparently had neither access to nor interest in the practice of cultivation. James writes his political novels at a moment when the tensions intrinsic to liberalism threaten to fracture its ideals, and public debates on both sides of the Atlantic pose questions about the receptivity to cultivation—and thereby the suitability for suffrage and citizenship—of populations seeking the franchise, including women, working-class men, imperial subjects, and the freedmen of the American South.⁹

James’s novels do not embroil themselves in these debates by taking a side, nor do they engage with democratic liberal political thought by advocating or condemning it. Perhaps the strongest indication that we should not attempt to read either *The Bostonians* or *The Princess Casamassima* as an endorsement of liberal democracy or any other political formation is the diversity of political readings that they have elicited over the years: the fact that each has been read by different critics to express political stances that cancel each other out suggests that we require an interpretive

practice that describes rather than manifests and perpetuates that conflict. Anderson has proposed that the nineteenth-century realist novel is a prime site for complex literary encounters with liberalism, suggesting that we would do well to “explore the ways in which certain literary texts exemplify the problem of exemplifying liberalism” (*Theory* 258). She warns against readings that “simply seek to assign authors to ideological positions” and points to Trollope as a case in which we find “less an active promotion of liberal ideology or the importance of a liberal state than a dynamic engagement with core ideas of liberalism” (259).¹⁰ In taking up *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima*, I adopt a mode of reading that does not attempt to nail down James’s “position” but instead historicizes in order to discern the ways that the texts (to use Anderson’s terms) “exemplify” or achieve a “dynamic engagement with” liberalism’s internal irresolutions.

In order to restore the visibility of the novels’ engagement with liberalism, we need to read them as a pair and give attention to parallel structures in plot and character. Olive Chancellor and the Princess Casamassima are both readily recognizable versions of the “slumming” lady philanthropist, and a passion for ascetic self-denial governs each woman’s commitment to her radical cause. Starving and abusing their aesthetic senses—or, as Olive thinks of it, trying to “kill that nerve”—is for these women an important political act: the Princess believes “that the right way to acquaint oneself with the sensations of the wretched was to suffer the anguish of exasperated taste” (*BO* 25; *PC* 421). Olive embraces a similar aesthetic masochism: “her most poignant suffering,” we read, “came from the injury of her taste” (25). For mostly selfish reasons, each of these women more or less adopts a young person whom she perceives as a member of “the people.” These adoptees—Verena Tarrant and Hyacinth Robinson—disrupt the naturalist logic of determinism by displaying exceptional characteristics that are not predicted in simple ways by their respective heredities and environments. The inexplicability and unpredictability of their capacities put pressure on the democratic liberal ideal that posits the cultivability of all citizens. The cultivations of these young learners ostensibly of “the people” proceed quite differently, but neither ends well.

Each of the rivals for ownership of Verena—Olive, Basil Ransom, and Henry Burrage—also tries to be responsible for some sort of education for her. Early in the novel, Olive is struck by the extent to which Verena remains “untaught” (90). The novel repeatedly figures the younger woman as an empty vessel ready to be filled. Of her speech about “equality,” Basil reflects, “she had been stuffed with this trash by her father,” apparently understanding that her vacant mind can be “stuffed” with whatever the most powerful person around her pleases (49). For Basil and Olive, this blank emptiness is enchanting, but James’s narrator suggests it might also be seen as “a singular hollowness of character.”

James associates Olive and her educational project with Bostonian liberalism—not least by making her a Bostonian and by representing the institutions of that city that embody its commitment to the liberal ideals of cultivation, civic participation, and the triumph of democracy in Union victory: the Athenaeum, the Music Hall, Harvard, and Harvard’s Memorial Hall. Olive’s stated aims for Verena, moreover, resemble those of a liberal education that seeks to cultivate an independent thinker capable of using her voice in the public sphere and of critically assessing a potentially demagogic popular press. When thinking to herself that the newspaper man, Mat-

thias Pardon, “wasn’t half educated,” Olive comforts herself with the reflection that “an educative process was now going on for Verena . . . which would enable her to make such a discovery for herself” (98). Olive seeks to “train and polish” the girl’s remarkable “qualities” and is “constantly reminding Verena that this winter was to be purely educative” (90, 137).¹¹ When Verena announces brightly, “I don’t know German; I should so like to study it; I want to know everything,” Olive pants in reply: “We will work at it together—we will study everything” (68). And so they do: “they threw themselves into study; they had innumerable big books from the Athenaeum, and consumed the midnight oil” (133).

That Olive’s feminism is so focused on education aligns her project with elements of Mill’s argument in *The Subjection of Women*—women, Mill suggests, may be naturally as capable of suffrage and citizenship as men, and allowing them the education commensurate with (and also inherent within) those responsibilities will make this capacity self-evident.¹² Olive believes in the “native refinement” of Verena and other American women, or “their latent ‘adaptability.’” She thrills at “the way her companion rose with the level of civilisation that surrounded her, the way she assimilated all delicacies and absorbed all traditions” (135). This belief in Verena’s native, latent capacities, and this delight in her ability to rise, assimilate, and absorb civilization when given the opportunity, echoes Mill’s claims about the capacity of humans for development. And indeed, Olive tells Basil that Verena “has developed greatly” (BO 197). Verena’s father believes Olive will “help her to develop.” Olive assures him that “Verena’s development was the thing in the world in which she took the most interest; she should have every opportunity for a free expansion” (128).

On the pages of Gilder’s *Century*, Verena is not the only American whose “educative process” makes her a prospective liberal subject. During the months of the novel’s serialization, the magazine hosted a controversial debate initiated by George Washington Cable’s “The Freedman’s Case in Equity.”¹³ Starting a month before the novel’s serialization began and continuing until shortly before its conclusion this sequence of articles participated in the *Century*’s larger project of sectional reconciliation that also included its massive Civil War retrospective and a good deal of plantation-myth fiction.¹⁴ The magazine thus intervenes in a larger American conversation about what Cable calls “the agonies of reconstruction” (412). In the course of doing so, it takes up questions specifically about the capacity of freedmen to be citizens.

In “Freedman’s Case,” Cable argues: “every interest in the land demands that the freedman be free to become . . . the same sort of American citizen he would be if, with the same intellectual and moral caliber, he were white” (413). A rebuttal from Henry Grady equates desegregation and civil rights with miscegenation. Two months later, Bishop T. U. Dudley examines the view that “the negro is incapable of development, and that he is utterly incapable of the proper performance of the citizen’s duty” (273). Rejecting this view, he asserts, “the Federal Government which added this great number to our roll of citizens should . . . do all that it may to help them to the attainment of civic capacity” (276). Black Americans, he writes, are not “lacking the capacity for development,” but “the superior race” must assist these “ignorant and untaught neighbors” and protect them from “demagogues” (277, 278, 275). Three months after that, Cable’s counter-rebuttal to Grady repeats his call for civil rights while decrying miscegenation and disavowing any call for social rights. Letters and editorials extend the discussion, contending, “we owe the colored

man an education . . . we have made him a citizen, and as such he is entitled to an education" (Jenkins 811).

The "untaught" Verena's education thus stands in a suggestive relation with that of the freedmen, and not just because her "capacity for development" remains uncertain.¹⁵ *The Subjection of Women* makes its argument by systematically comparing women to slaves (including American slaves), identifying these groups as analogous subject classes. Verena's chance to engage in the "development" and "free expansion" that are the signature features of liberal cultivation depends upon her becoming chattel: Olive essentially buys the girl from her father. Noting that Verena's "racial origin is ambiguous," Aaron Shaheen has argued that James's representation includes "racially coded images" that mark her as racially other, offering indicators of both Irish and African-American identity (285). But even in the absence of coded imagery, Verena herself belongs to a group whose ability to perform the duties of citizenship as a liberal subject was still very much in question during the 1880s.

The *Century's* references to cultivation and Millian educative democracy extend beyond the freedmen debate to articles that advocate Mugwump and liberal causes. An editorial declares that an election should be "a time when the whole people shall receive, in candid and fair debate, some sound political education . . . a spectacle in which the reason and conscience of the people shall be . . . evidently exalted and honored" ("Degradation" 460–61). The scholar Charles Waldstein (whom Norton would shortly recruit to be director of the American School of Classical Studies in Athens), writing on the "democratic spirit" in art, quotes George Washington: "in proportion as the structure of government gives force to public opinion . . . it is essential that public opinion be enlightened" (262). "Popular government," Waldstein continues, must "foster and cultivate . . . among the people" the "democratic pleasures of art" (269). An editorial comments approvingly on this piece, noting that "the prime necessity is that we should go earnestly and systematically to work to inspire, to develop, to guide and clarify the taste of the people" ("Broad" 474–75).

These incidental local instances of liberal discourse should remind us of the larger and less immediately evident discursive context in which the novel was written and read in the 1880s. Reading *The Bostonians* in the pages of the *Century* reminds us that the novel stages a cultivation of a member of "the people"—a potential participant in the liberal public sphere—at a moment when such cultivations are of pressing contemporary interest and helps us to attend to the ways that James deploys the language of liberalism that is also present in the magazine.

James's use of the language of liberalism as well as his representation of Verena's "educative process" are part of a representation of Bostonian liberalism that is distinctly critical. The "culture" in Olive's home calls up meanings that become more prevalent as the twentieth century advances, connoting not an inclusive process but an exclusive thing. When Basil enters her parlor, we read:

He had always heard Boston was a city of culture, and now there was culture in Miss Chancellor's tables and sofas, in the books that were everywhere, on little shelves like brackets . . . in the photographs and water-colours that covered the walls, in the curtains that were festooned rather stiffly in the doorways. (14–15)¹⁶

"Culture" here consists in commodities. Olive's "high intellectual and moral work" is an excuse for well-upholstered luxury. She applies the verb "cultivate" not to the terrain of the intellect, nor of aesthetic and moral sensibility, but instead to the feminine domestic sphere itself, where the fruits of cultivation are "material conditions" rather than "free expansion" of the self (BO 134, 128). The novel's critique here aims less at pleasures of materiality than at Olive's moralistic and hypocritical use of this "work" to legitimize sensory—and sensual—pleasure.

Olive's instruction, proceeding all too "earnestly and systematically," serves to shut down independent thought rather than foster it. In her "strenuous parlor" reading is not about cultivating the capacity for open-minded reflection but about "facts and figures" and indoctrination (137, 112). The women read history with the aim of "finding confirmation in it for this idea that their sex had suffered inexpressibly" (136). Art, like history, is bent to this narrow agenda. When the women go to concerts at the Music Hall, "Bach and Beethoven only repeated, in myriad forms, the idea that was always with them. Symphonies and fugues only stimulated their convictions, excited their revolutionary passion, led their imagination further in the direction in which it was always pressing" (138). James presents a perversion of the ideal of liberal cultivation: rather than fostering self-development, these great works of art only press the women further back into their crunched and benighted corner.

The "educative process" in fact seeks merely to make Verena the mouthpiece for Olive's "mission." We can recall Basil's sense upon meeting Verena that she has been "stuffed" with content when the girl says to him: "she tells me what to say—the real things, the strong things. It's Miss Chancellor as much as me!" (175). "Olive," we read, "poured forth these views to her listening and responsive friend; she presented them again and again . . . Verena was immensely wrought upon; a subtle fire passed into her; she was not so hungry for revenge as Olive, but at the last . . . she quite agreed with her companion . . . men must take *their* turn, men must pay!" (141–42). Although Verena states that "it was very different from the old system, where her father had worked her up," we may reflect that in fact the process by which Verena was "stuffed" seems all too similar to the process by which "a subtle fire passed into her." Both the "old system" and the new one depend upon Verena being a "hollow" vessel that, once filled, will sing out the views of the person who happens to master her at the moment. As a subject for liberal cultivation, Verena is a miserable failure. And as the author of that failure, Olive is a demagogue. The novel offers a stinging critique of Olive's Bostonian liberalism—and the harshest element within that critique is its interrogation of the democratic liberal premise that persons like Verena may deserve to be citizens.

Basil's influence over Verena figures importantly in this interrogation. He rejects Olive's ideal of liberal cultivation. We learn that "he was an immense admirer of Thomas Carlyle, and was very suspicious of the encroachments of modern democracy" (149). The rivalry between Olive and Basil reproduces in the pages of *The Bostonians* the argument between Mill and Carlyle about "the negro question." Their "sharp debate about black capacity," Butler writes, "staked out two competing visions about difference and human potential that would continue to clash throughout the century" (101).¹⁷ Olive, echoing Mill, believes in Verena's natural capacity to develop and wishes to educate her so that she may rise to participate in "civilization" (135). Basil believes Verena's capacities are naturally limited and seeks to govern her. When

it is his turn to “educate” the girl, Basil does not do so by means of print; rather, he speaks to her. This medium is consistent with the political stance that he thus communicates, which is not a stance that endorses any sort of “reading citizenry”: “he thought the spread of education a gigantic farce. . . . You had a right to an education only if you had an intelligence, and if you looked at the matter with any desire to see things as they are you soon perceived that an intelligence was a very rare luxury, the attribute of one person in a hundred” (255). Basil’s oratory deeply affects Verena: “these words, the most effective and penetrating he had uttered, had sunk into her soul and worked and fermented there. She had come at last to believe them” (299). Just as Olive’s words earlier “passed into her,” Basil’s words succeed at “penetrating”: Verena has been “stuffed” once again.

Basil’s speech takes place in Central Park, and the unintelligent populace of his political imagination appears on the scene as if on cue: James’s cityscape includes “groups of the unemployed, the children of disappointment from beyond the seas” (264). Sara Blair’s reading of this passage reminds us that Central Park, designed to foster taste and decorum, was “an important site for testing claims about the character of the American mass public” (“Realism” 158). She shows that Basil sees only “rabble” when he looks at a crowd (161). This perception of the mass as a potentially dangerous throng totally unsuited for the responsibilities of citizenship is part of Basil’s larger political perspective, which declares that persons (and political subjects) like Verena need to be mastered and silenced rather than cultivated and given the opportunity to speak. If Olive is a demagogue, Basil is a tyrant. And Basil’s tyranny, it seems, will be a brutal one. Along with his forceful capture of Verena at the novel’s conclusion, there is the nauseating turn when he thinks to himself that “if he should become her husband he should know a way to strike her dumb” (249).

Mark J. Noonan suggests that Basil in his magazine work “may be usefully viewed as mimicking the project of ‘cultural containment’ pursued by the leading genteel editors and realist writers of the day” (108). When we understand the work of the men associated with the genteel tradition as an educative project of cultivation rather than a tyrannical project of social control, we can locate the novel’s mimicry of those men more logically in the Bostonian rather than the Mississippian. In making Olive a figure that mocks the Bostonian liberalism that would later fall under the dread rubric “genteel,” the novel offers a critical portrait of this movement distinct from that of disciplinarians like Basil Ransom who seek to retain their grip on power. James portrays something far more embattled and pathetic: a shy, unlikeable spinster who ultimately craves from “the people” not obedience but “a union of soul” and who uses education to work toward that aim (29, 63). Her failure, when it comes, is the failure of a spurned lover, not an oppressive dominator cast off. A demagogue in spite of herself, she loses “the people” when they succumb to the more potent charms of a master who prefers to keep them dumb. In this portrait of the Boston-based project of cultivation, James offers a nuanced commentary on that project’s history, as well as its defeat.

Along with the miseducations imposed upon her by Olive and Basil, Verena does get a fleeting taste of a more authentic and effective liberal cultivation, one that is easier to discern when we consider *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima* alongside each other. In the company of the Harvard law student Henry Burrage and his wealthy New York family, Verena has the opportunity for self-development through

the experience of culture. Blair finds the aesthete Burrage “an obviously insufficient figure, performing the rites of taste with the effect of narrowing, rather than enlarging, the boundaries of culture” (“Realism” 156). But this reading of Burrage tends to take the paranoid and biased impressions of Olive as objective accounts and to disregard the ways that the text distances itself from Olive’s perspective. It is Olive, not the narrator, who imagines the young man as “this glittering, laughing Burrage youth, with his chains and rings and shining shoes” and places him in the category of “young men in search of sensations” (95). For Olive, that category is a terrifying one. But the novel does not share her views on this conspicuously Paterian group, nor does it endorse her rejection of the pleasures they would embrace. In fact, *The Bostonians* suggests that Olive’s politically motivated wish to forgo the enjoyment of art and beauty is a sign of her inveterate wrongness. The Princess’s analogous asceticism in *The Princess Casamassima* serves a similar function. And just as *The Bostonians* exposes the futility of Olive’s belligerent suspicion of such pleasures, *The Princess Casamassima* ridicules the Princess’s “ascetic pretensions” (413). The world of the Burrages resembles the terrain on which Hyacinth takes in the rich experience that constitutes his cultivation. James describes both of these worlds in an idiom that emphasizes variety and intensity of pleasure.¹⁸ In both novels, it is this Paterian mode of cultivation that actually seems to achieve the aims of the liberal ideal.

The liberal cultivation that the novel stages for Hyacinth gives his acute sensibilities unprecedented access to the treasures of art and civilization. At the Princess’s rented country house, he is exposed to pleasures the like of which he has never met before: parks and gardens, Italian cuisine, a library full of old books, the music played by the Princess herself on the piano. This stay offers Hyacinth an “exquisite experience,” one in which “novelty” and “civilisation” work to change his views (325). Then he travels to the great cities of the continent, where he lives “intensely” and enjoys “a rich experience,” soaking up art, architecture, and the vivid life on the streets of Paris and Venice (383, 401). Like Verena’s, Hyacinth’s education includes reading. But while Verena, under Olive’s direction, selectively mines histories for evidence of female suffering, Hyacinth chooses his own books and sinks deep into fiction, including the latest French novels. Verena’s reading is meant to educate by filling her with facts; Hyacinth’s educates by giving him the experience of literary art. Over the course of the novel, the experience through which he develops is described with a Paterian emphasis on maximized, varied sensation: in Paris, “he had seen so much, felt so much, learned so much, thrilled and throbbed and laughed and sighed so much” (379). So too in the Burrages’ New York, Verena feels, there is “something in the air that carried one along, and a sense of vastness and variety, of the infinite possibilities of a great city, which . . . might in the end make up for the want of the Boston earnestness” (225). She tells Olive of “the beauty of the park, the splendour and interest of the Museum, the wonder of the young man’s acquaintance with everything it contained, the swiftness of his horses, the softness of his English car, the pleasure of rolling at that pace over roads as firm as may be, the entertainment he promised them for the evening”—this entertainment including dinner at Delmonico’s and a trip to see *Lohengrin*, about which Verena also raves, speaking “only of Wagner’s music, of the singers, the orchestra, the immensity of the house, her tremendous pleasure” (222, 231). Olive observes anxiously Verena’s liking for New York, “where that kind of pleasure was so much more in the air” (231). The “great city” full of

pleasure stands in stark contrast to the Boston full of “earnestness” and aligns itself with the continental urban landscapes in which Hyacinth practices self-development.

Burrage’s Cambridge rooms are also a site for cultivation. Burrage is, like the Princess, a collector of *bibelots* and a pianist. When Olive and Verena visit his carefully decorated rooms and hear him play, an Arnoldian “harmony” coexists with a Paterian sensuality that affirms pleasure as a legitimate source of moral, intellectual, and aesthetic learning. Olive eases involuntarily into peace:

there was a moment when she came near being happy . . . Olive was extremely susceptible to music, and it was impossible to her not to be soothed and beguiled by the young man’s charming art. . . . It was given to Olive, under these circumstances . . . to surrender herself, to enjoy the music, to admit that Mr. Burrage played with exquisite taste, to feel as if the situation were some kind of truce. Her nerves were calmed, her problems—for a time—subsided. Civilization, under such an influence, in such a setting, appeared to have done its work: harmony ruled the scene; human life ceased to be a battle. She went so far as to ask herself why one would have a quarrel with it; the relations of men and women, in that picturesque grouping, had not the air of being internecine. In short, she had an interval of unexpected rest. . . . (119–20)

Blair observes in Burrage’s rooms a “seductively decadent atmosphere” characteristic of an aestheticism that is “wanting” as a “site of cultural activity or training”; she sees James presenting the “harmony” of “civilization” available there as an undesirable thing “from which the rough and tumble of contemporary social life, its contest over the forms of culture, are shut out” (“Realism” 155–56). But the text in fact presents this “harmony” as a very desirable thing indeed. It is Olive’s aversion to it that the novel criticizes. The firelit scene painted by James in this passage evokes a wholesome *Liederabend* more readily than a decadent *soirée*. And the novel has repeatedly suggested that the radicalism and asceticism from which Olive lapses here are both wrongheaded and selfishly motivated. The seduction here is a healthy one.

This seduction by art—which affects Verena as well as Olive—results not in narrowing but in growth: the pleasurable world of the Burrages is the only realm in which Verena ever shows any signs of competence as a liberal subject. When she is allowed to enjoy the liberal cultivation that they offer, she shows a flash of reflective intelligence and dares to question the dogma of her teacher. Having spent some time with Burrage, Verena goes “so far as to ask Olive whether taste and art were not something” (117). After the musical gathering in his rooms, she goes even farther:

It would be very nice to do that always—just to take men as they are, and not to have to think about their badness. It would be very nice not to have so many questions, but to think they were all comfortably answered, so that one could sit there on an old Spanish leather chair, with the curtains drawn and keeping out the cold, the darkness, all the big, terrible, cruel world—sit there and listen for ever to Schubert and Mendelssohn. *They* didn’t care anything about female suffrage! And I didn’t feel the want of the vote to-day at all, did you? . . . Do you know, Olive, I sometimes wonder whether, if it wasn’t for you, I should feel it so very much! (121)

Although Verena seems to dismiss the reflective practice that drives liberal cultivation, her musing in fact constitutes exactly the kind of questioning that is central to the habits of liberal subjecthood: her expressed desire to avoid questioning is itself a question pointedly directed at the “mission” of her mentor. In the course of her dalliance with independent thought, Verena describes a warm, well-furnished, curtained-off zone that, in accordance with Blair’s account, excludes “the rough and tumble of contemporary social life” (“Realism” 156), and, in daring here to say she would like to reside within that pleasant realm “for ever,” she expresses views that the novel seems to endorse: “badness” is not the first thing to note about every man, and “taste and art” are indeed “something” (BO 121). In New York, the experience of pleasure once again prompts Verena to take an unusually critical perspective of her teacher: “Olive’s earnestness began to appear as inharmonious with the scheme of the universe as if it had been a broken saw” (230). Experiencing the “harmony” of “civilization” in Burrage’s Cambridge rooms and his luxurious New York world, Verena begins to perceive the ugly dissonance of Olive’s “Boston earnestness” (119, 225).¹⁹

We can compare Verena’s rejection of Olive to Hyacinth’s parallel rejection of the Princess. In both cases, the experience of art and culture prompts the young person to think independently. After Hyacinth has savored his experience abroad, he learns that the Princess has sold off her *bibelots*: “When thousands and tens of thousands haven’t bread to put in their mouths, I can dispense with tapestry and old china,” she declaims, asserting that “the world will be beautiful enough when it is good enough” (412, 413). Hyacinth disagrees: “I think there can’t be too many pictures and statues and works of art . . . the more the better, whether people are hungry or not. In the way of ameliorating influences, are not those the most definite?” (413). Expressing his regret that she has “given up her beautiful things,” he articulates his fondness for *bibelots* as a political stance, one that makes art an “ameliorating influence” more powerful than bread or suffrage (416). Burrage too collects “beautiful things,” and in making a more eloquently expressed case for their value than the cheerfully unintelligent Burrage possibly could, Hyacinth articulates an argument that opposes Olive’s beliefs as well as those of his own radical mentor.

Hyacinth announces his opposition to the Princess in a letter, writing that in his travels he has seen “want and toil and suffering” of the people, and yet he hasn’t “minded them”: instead, he has been struck by “the splendid accumulations of the happier few, to which, doubtless, the miserable many have also in their degree contributed” (396). Hyacinth’s letter recalls the firelit seduction in Cambridge when it appeals to

the monuments and treasures of art, the great palaces and properties, the conquests of learning and taste, the general fabric of civilisation as we know it, based, if you will, upon all the despotisms, the cruelties, the exclusions, the monopolies and the rapacities of the past, but thanks to which, all the same, the world is less impracticable and life more tolerable.

The pleasures of “civilisation” and its art surpass in importance the misery that helps create them. Hyacinth tells the Princess that his rich experience has “demoralised” him (PC 395); after their visit to Burrage, Olive feels that “they were both (Verena and she) quite demoralised” (BO 120). Hyacinth discovers that in Paris, “he had grown

more relaxed” and that this “relaxation” discourages his pursuit of revolution (*PC* 382); as she listens to Burrage, Olive grows “calmed,” finds “rest,” and questions her radical cause (*BO* 120, 119). This relaxed “demoralisation,” with its emphasis on pleasure, stands in stark contrast to the “strenuous” and quite intensely moralizing practices of the Bostonian educative process.

In making a Paterian embrace of pleasure the criterion for successful liberal cultivation in the novels of 1886, James needles the Bostonian liberalism that Olive helps to represent. When *The Bostonians* associates Burrage with “young men in search of sensations” at Harvard, it subtly evokes friction between Norton’s Ruskinian aestheticism and a newer Paterian aestheticism (95). Burrage attends the law school, not the college, and his story takes place in the late 1870s—but it is worth noting that at the time of the novel’s publication a Harvard student who was an aesthete would almost certainly have been attending Norton’s enormously popular art history lectures, in spite of Norton’s staunch resistance to the Paterian ideas that those students found so thrilling (see Turner 277, 316–19; Dowling, *Norton* 134–43). That Burrage’s Cambridge rooms are an important site of cultivation for Verena takes on new significance when we consider that Norton—who pursued his work as a scholar and teacher explicitly in service of democratic liberal ideals—urged his students to make their rooms places of culture (Vanderbilt 128). In Burrage’s rooms, as in his family’s New York world and at the sites of Hyacinth’s steady growth, James represents productive self-development that depends upon Paterian pleasure—and also upon a certain inattentiveness to moral and political concerns. This is a vision of cultivation that would trouble Norton considerably. Jonathan Freedman has identified in James’s expressed affinities with Paterian aestheticism a critique of Norton’s moralistic Boston-based Ruskinian aestheticism (see 86–93, 115–16, 134). But Norton’s aestheticism is not really separable from his liberalism: art is central to his politics, and political morality is central to his views on art. In these novels, I want to suggest, James’s Paterian resistance to Norton’s Bostonian aestheticism also functions as resistance to Norton’s Bostonian liberalism. In this sense, Verena’s and Hyacinth’s successful learning through pleasure forms an extension to the more obvious critique of Bostonian liberalism that plays out in the representation of Olive’s “educative processes.”

The *Atlantic* of the mid-1880s features far fewer expressions of democratic liberal thought than does the *Century*, and this is not an accident. Aldrich sought to make the magazine less political and more literary, moving away from the explicitly democratic agenda of previous editors. This flight to a culture ostensibly elevated above politics disrupts the ideals and assumptions of the liberalism that understands culture as an essential component of democracy. *The Princess Casamassima* reproduces that disruption by representing democracy and culture as essentially antagonistic. The novel resists the ideals of liberal reform and liberal democracy partly by proceeding as if they did not exist, even in theoretical form. Instead of imagining reform and nonviolent democratization, it imagines anarchism and revolt. Within the novel, those who seek reform are anarchist revolutionaries and those who actually live out some form of social change are not reformers: like Dr. Prance in *The Bostonians*, Millicent Henning quietly manages to claim a certain power within extant civilization and does not join the grasping cohort who want to transform it. That cohort’s anarchism, like Olive’s feminism, is usually driven by selfishness. Olive seeks revenge rather than justice. Similarly, these anarchists aim to invert the present hierarchy rather than foster

equality. Because the novel imagines the expansion of access to culture as self-serving theft and wanton destruction, it understands democracy as the destruction of culture.

The novel inscribes itself into contemporary debates about access to art and culture by unfolding its plot over the course of a series of Sundays. In hailing “public galleries” by name and mentioning “the question of opening museums on Sunday” it alludes to the controversy about Sunday museum openings that spanned the last decades of the century in which the Anti-Sabbatarian Sunday Society fought to give workers access to art and science museums (*PC* 245, 540). Such access was meant to facilitate liberal cultivation. And indeed, Jordanna Bailkin identifies the controversy about museum openings as part of an ongoing debate through which “Britons confronted the dilemmas facing both the Liberal Party and Liberalism itself” (26). *The Princess Casamassima* evokes these dilemmas and gestures toward the role of museums in providing broad access to liberal cultivation—but it does so only to suggest that museums somehow fail in this function. Most of the many amusements that its characters enjoy on Sundays are not museums. And, oddly enough, Hyacinth’s own political logic seems to deny not just the efficacy of museums but their very existence. In spite of his own happy hours in the Louvre and the National Gallery, he envisions the democratization of art as incompatible with its preservation. He writes that the revolutionary leader he has followed would wish to “cut up the ceilings of the Veronese into strips, so that every one might have a little piece” (*PC* 396). Hyacinth states resolutely: “I don’t want every one to have a little piece of anything” (397).

This logic opposes the ideal of broad cultivation that drove American liberals. We can identify a contrasting analogue to Hyacinth’s horrifying vision of the parceled-out Veronese in the effort of American periodicals to give readers access to visual art.²⁰ In 1883, Gilder initiated the “Old Masters Series,” offering *Century* readers engraved reproductions of works of art from Europe, along with interpretive text (John 188–90). Gilder’s series aimed to provide readers with access to art otherwise unavailable to them, using print technology to reproduce and proliferate so that every reader might indeed “have a little piece.” James’s protagonist imagines such access and such distribution as incompatible with the preservation of the work of art itself.

Hyacinth, “a youth upon whom nothing is lost,” has the novelist’s own sensitivity (*PC* 164). James makes this autobiographical element explicit in his preface to the novel: “To find his possible adventure interesting,” he writes of his protagonist, “I had only to conceive of his watching the same public show, the same innumerable appearances, I had watched myself, and of his watching very much as I had watched; save indeed for one little difference” (34). The difference is one of access: the story, he writes, will concern “some small obscure intelligent creature . . . capable of profiting by all the civilization . . . yet condemned to see these things only from the outside.” Thus the Princess exclaims to Hyacinth: “Fancy the strange, the bitter fate: to be constituted as you are constituted, to feel the capacity that you must feel, and yet to look at the good things of life only through the glass of the pastry-cook’s window!” (337). In imagining his own sensibility lodged in a marginal youth, James enacts the “paradox” that Dowling observes at the heart of nineteenth-century liberalism. During the formative years of Whig thought, Dowling argues, Shaftesbury arrives at the “moral sense” theory that legitimizes liberal polity by “projecting his own aristocratic sensibility outward onto humanity as a whole” (*Vulgarization* 15). This theory identifies a moral-aesthetic sense universal to humanity and thus enables the

liberal belief in the cultivability of all citizens.²¹ In making Hyacinth a lower-class person who is “capable” like himself, blessed with the same “capacity”—and who is also haunted by the possibility that he has aristocratic blood—James reproduces Shaftesbury’s projection and turns it into the basis for a plot.

That plot ends, of course, in suicide. *The Princess Casamassima* shows us a liberal subject who develops responsively into intellectual independence, only to arrive, independently, at the conclusion that lower-class persons like himself should not have the chance to become liberally cultivated because such broad cultivation would result in the destruction of culture. As a cultivated member of “the people,” Hyacinth now falls into a category he believes should not exist. Following the logic of his own political views, he eliminates himself: the revolver with which he had promised to assassinate a duke serves instead to blow a hole in his own chest. The problem that drives Hyacinth to suicide is also an unresolved problem within Victorian liberal thought.

Both novels express doubt about the ideal of broad cultivation that American liberals so prized. In *The Bostonians*, an incompetent liberal subject becomes a victim of demagoguery and tyranny. In *The Princess Casamassima*, a liberal subject’s extreme competence perversely leads him to turn against democratization and seek self-destruction. But both novels express this doubt in a manner that is deeply ambivalent. Each plot concludes in tragedy and sudden, muted violence: both books end with a silent gunshot and the obliteration of the young learner. As Basil prepares to kidnap Verena before her speech, he thinks of an assassin ready “to discharge a pistol” (BO 333). Then, we read, he “by muscular force, wrenched her away” and “thrust the hood of Verena’s long cloak over her head, to conceal her face and her identity” (349). Effaced and silenced by Basil’s muscular thrust, Verena departs in tears under his control. We do not hear the pistol shot that kills Hyacinth, but we see its results: the Princess at first can only see “something black, something ambiguous, something outstretched” (PC 590). She slowly perceives Hyacinth with “a horrible thing, a mess of blood, on the bed, in his side, in his heart.” Hyacinth’s eyes and voice disappear as Verena’s do, and, like Verena, he becomes a sightless, silent thing rather than an autonomous human. The doubts that the novels express about democratized liberal cultivation are expressed within texts that also vividly stage the human tragedy of thwarted cultivation and crushed liberal subjecthood. And the novels refuse to resolve this contradiction: they express doubt, and they also express enormous regret about that doubt.

The elusiveness of the democratic liberal ideal of a broadly cultivated public would have significant consequences for James’s ambitions as an artist: the “public sphere” of potentially cultivated liberal subjects is also a market of readers. *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima* arose from an urge to “do something great”: in the early 1880s, as he entered his forties, James wanted to write novels that would both find a wide audience and merit critical acclaim (CN 233). The novels he actually wrote suggest that those things might never coincide. Soon after the resounding failure of both books, James wrote to Norton, “the general public has small sense and less taste, and its likes and dislikes, I think, must mostly make the judicious grieve” (LHJ 123). Despite their differences, both Norton and James could count themselves among the “judicious” for whom the uncultivated state of the mass would remain a source of alienation. In a 1914 letter to his agent, James refers to “that very minor and ‘cultivated’ public to whom, alas, almost solely, my productions appear to ad-

dress themselves” (qtd. in Bell 225). His quotation marks manifest a sarcasm likely intensified by the fact that as the nineteenth century closed and the twentieth began, “cultivation” increasingly became a thing to purchase and flaunt. But in the conclusion to “The Long Wards,” James, surveying “the crude and the waste, the ignored and neglected,” asks: “what wouldn’t it do for us tended and fostered and cultivated? That is my moral, for I believe in Culture—speaking strictly now of the honest and of our own congruous kind” (*HJC* 176). The meanings that we read into this complex response to the destruction wrought by World War I must be informed by a sense of James’s engagements with “cultivation” three decades earlier in *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima*. Just so, his writings on the scene of American democracy from the first decade of the twentieth century need to be understood as part of a longer trajectory that also includes the novels of 1886, in which the representation of two thwarted cultivations is also an interrogation of the liberal principles that are the foundation for that democracy.

NOTES

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¹I use “drama of cultivation” rather than “*Bildungsroman*” in order to investigate “cultivation” as a concept in Anglo-American liberalism. On the adoption and modification of *Bildung* by Mill and Arnold, see Collini (*Public* 101–03). On the shifting definition of “culture,” see Butler (7–8, 140–42); and Lustig (167–69).

²The internally diverse transatlantic Victorian liberalism discussed here should not be confused with the program of any one political party. Mill’s and Arnold’s liberalisms differ importantly, and neither conforms to the program of the British Liberal Party; see Collini (*Public* [155–69] and *Matthew* [69–92]). The American liberalism that James’s novels address manifests itself variously in Radical Republicanism and Mugwumpery; see Butler (9–12).

³Anderson and Butler both use the phrase “take seriously” in describing their approach to nineteenth-century thought, as do Schneirov and Dowling in earlier work. See Anderson (*Powers of Distance* 5; Butler 6; Schneirov 18; Dowling, *Vulgarization* x). Hadley similarly states that her book “takes midcentury liberalism at its word” (3).

⁴See Butler; Dowling; (*Norton*); and Turner; Schneirov offers an earlier revisionist account of the Mugwumps and their periodicals. See also Blodgett’s historiographic study.

⁵Anesko describes the partly simultaneous composition and publication of these novels (79–118). On Aldrich, see Sedgewick (*History* 161–99). On James’s relations with the *Atlantic*, see Brodhead (*School* 108–13); and Sedgewick (“Henry James”). On the *Century*, see John; and Noonan; on James’s relations with *Gilder*, see Smith (81–85). For arguments about the role these magazines played in American society, see Schneirov, Glazener, and Brodhead (“Literature” 470–75). On the important differences between the two magazines, see Noonan (xii); and Butler (144–45).

⁶See Bentley (113–22) and Salmon (14–45). Henry (126–63) also uses Habermas to discuss *The Bostonians*’s engagement with liberalism.

⁷Butler offers the fullest account of this liberalism. Dowling discusses “the Millite generation” and their understanding of “culture” (*Norton* 85–91). Turner describes the republican Boston “clerisy” from which this liberalism emerges (1–20). His biography provides a vivid account of “the essential interpenetration of . . . politics and learning, culture and democracy” that prevails in Norton’s Bostonian perspective (207).

⁸See Zacharias on James’s liberal (or Liberal) social and professional world in London. That world is contiguous with liberal Boston, part of the transatlantic scene Butler describes.

⁹There was much to draw James’s attention to questions within liberalism in the early 1880s, including the 1883 Civil Rights Cases and the 1884 Mugwump revolt in the U.S. and, in Britain, the *Reform Act of 1884–1885*, as well as controversies regarding Ireland and India, or what Mantena calls the “crisis of liberal imperialism.” Arnold’s “A Word About America” (1882), notably concerned with Bostonians, precedes his visit to the U.S. in 1883–1884.

¹⁰Irene Tucker anticipates Anderson’s recommendations by reading the heroine of *What Maisie Knew* as a liberal subject whose agency is compromised by her historical and material conditions. She argues that *Maisie* “acts out the tension within liberalism between agency and cultural determination” (127).

¹¹Bollinger comments: “that so much of the book describes Olive’s individualized research and study—shared with Verena, but with Olive as a teacher—suggests a focus on self-improvement and scholarship typical of Unitarians” (170). Unitarian “self-culture” is an important element in Bostonian liberal understandings of self-development.

¹²Habegger discusses the reception of Mill's *Subjection* in the James family, arguing that James (who did read it) adopts the anti-feminist views of William and his father, both of whom reject Mill's argument for equal capacity (27–62).

¹³Hochman reads *The Bostonians* in the *Century* and notes the debate. Henry discusses the debate (87–125) but reads *The Bostonians* separately (126–63). Warren's discussion of the debate (42–56) makes reference to *The Princess Casamassima* (44–45) but not to *The Bostonians*, which he treats elsewhere (93–101). Noonan, too, discusses the debate (82, 172) and the novel (102–08) separately. See also John (203–05); and Smith (67–73).

¹⁴See Hochman and Noonan (124–53). “Plantation myth” fiction included Constance Fenimore Woolson's “King David,” which describes a Yankee schoolmaster's unsuccessful attempt to educate freedmen. James praised the book in which the story was published, noting Woolson's “singularly expert familiarity with the ‘natural objects’ of the region, including the negro of reality” (EL 641). *The Bostonians* echoes the tale: Olive, like Woolson's protagonist, is a Yankee educator whose student lacks capacity.

¹⁵I find no indication that the simultaneous publication of the debate and the novel is deliberate. Others have suggested that the novel was designed to complement the Civil War series with which it ran. Noting that Gilder sought literary content related to the war, Smith and Peinovich speculate:

Doubtless the agreement that started James to work on *The Bostonians* . . . was for some form of a novel that would help in the “reconciliation” of North and South that seemed to be the *Century*'s self-imposed duty of the period. James had only to make one change in his original plan for the novel to fit the *Century* formula: he converted Basil Ransom from a Westerner to a native of Mississippi. (300)

Jacobson shows that in making Basil a Mississippian, James plays productively with tropes from the popular Civil War romance genre (28–40).

¹⁶James's edits to this scene suggest sensitivity to the instability of the word “culture.” The serialized text refers to “the ‘culture’ of Charles Street,” while the book text omits those quotation marks (15). See Smith and Peinovich (304).

¹⁷The Mill-Carlyle exchange remains the subject of debate. See Goldberg; Varouxakis. Hall argues: “Mill's imagined community was one of potential equality” in which “a process of civilisation” would allow blacks to gain membership, while “Carlyle's imagined community was a hierarchically ordered one” in which whites ruled (25). Butler notes that Carlyle became for American liberals a “symbol of a corrupting and dehumanizing racism” and, in his opposition to democracy and the expansion of suffrage, their “perfect foil”—but they valued the “vindication of cultivated duty and aesthetic truth” in his earlier work (107, 109; see also 100–09, 138–40). Noting James's attention to Carlyle while writing *The Bostonians*, Habegger argues that the novel favors Carlyle's views and opposes Mill's (195–98).

¹⁸Rejection of “pleasure” defines James's New Englanders elsewhere too. Consider Babcock in *The American* or the Wentworths in *The Europeans*. Bollinger explains James's representations of this “Puritan” Unitarian morality. The Unitarians whom she discusses are also liberals.

¹⁹“Harmony” figures importantly in Arnold's writing on culture. It is significant that “civilisation” generates “harmony” for Olive and that her rejection of civilization's pleasures seems “inharmonious” (BO 119, 230). Lustig, documenting James's increasing disaffection toward Arnold during the early 1880s, argues that Arnold makes a “distinction between material civilization and culture” that James does not (175–76). James's uses of “civilisation” in these novels thus might be seen to resist Arnoldian understandings of that term. And indeed, Lustig observes that “references to both ‘culture’ and ‘civilisation’ in *The Bostonians* are very far from being straight applications of social criticism in the manner of Arnold” (178 n. 70). If James's “civilization” helps to describe a “culture” that is more embodied in materiality than the one imagined by Arnold—and by his American admirers—then his use of the word fits within a larger pattern of resistance that valorizes sensuous pleasure.

²⁰Noting the role of illustration in the *Atlantic Monthly*'s “mission to educate and elevate the tastes” of readers, Amy Tucker discusses an 1870 article emphasizing the importance of illustrations “for vast populations . . . out of the reach of museums and art galleries” (6).

²¹Dowling sees Mill perpetuate this projection when he makes a “generous mistake” in his “assumption that human beings will by nature seek to expand and use their higher capacities” and notes that his follower Norton “only gradually” became aware of this “fatal flaw” in liberal thought (Norton 96–97).

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