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The Complete Letters of Henry James**

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Abstract: The paper presents an insider's view on the conception, organization and execution of the enormous undertaking of editing *The Complete Letters of Henry James*. Listing some of the problems the project has encountered, the author honors the people and institutions behind it, and names some of the most surprising and illuminating discoveries it has yielded this far.

Key words: The Center for Henry James Studies, letters, editing

Henry James: listy wszystkie

Streszczenie: Celem artykułu jest opis realizacji szeroko zakrojonego projektu, jaki stanowi redakcja i wydanie zebranych listów Henry'ego Jamesa. Jako główny pomysłodawca i wykonawca, autor artykułu przybliży początki i historię tego przedsięwzięcia, pokazuje zaangażowanie naukowców, którzy wzięli lub wciąż biorą udział w pracach edytorskich, oraz dokonuje analizy dotychczasowych osiągnięć.

Słowa kluczowe: Centrum Badań nad Twórczością Henry'ego Jamesa, listy, redakcja naukowa i techniczna

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Greg Zacharias, Director of the Center for Henry James Studies at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. From the author's private collection

As I write this essay, *The Complete Letters of Henry James*, an edition that will contain some 10,500 letters, notes and telegrams, has published ten volumes. The eleventh is well underway—but there is an almost overwhelming amount of work yet to be done, with more than one hundred more volumes of seventy-five or so letters, needed to finish the job. Though we've been relatively productive over the past ten years by publishing a volume per year, that pace must be increased dramatically to complete the edition within the lifetimes of anyone now working actively on it. Funding would enable that increased pace. But funding, it almost goes without saying, is also the chief barrier to greater production.

The Complete Letters project published its first two volumes in 2006. Those two volumes introduced the edition's editorial method: scholarly and critical, full annotation. The edition's editorial strategy is to represent James's originals in plain-text as a way to offer a reliable and readable edition and also to highlight James's own process of representation.¹ The books are organized in groups of two or three, with each group covering a biographically relevant time period in James's life. To support the edition, the Center for Henry James Studies at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, has to date collected nearly all of the some 10,500 extant letters and continues to develop a reference library for the letters project. The library contains dozens of Henry James first editions, hundreds of monographs and reference books having to do with Henry James studies, copies of thousands of supporting documents such as the diaries of Theodora Bosanquet (who was one of James's amanuenses), James's own diaries, letters to Henry James, James family letters, and letters written by some of James's friends and acquaintances. The James Center purchased more than eleven thousand pages of letter transcriptions and planning notes made

¹ P. A. Walker and G. W. Zacharias, "General Editors' Introduction," in: *The Complete Letters of Henry James, 1855–1872*, vol. 1, Lincoln 2006, pp. xlix–lxviii.

by Leon Edel for both his five-volume biography of Henry James and also his four-volume *Henry James Letters* edition.² The Edel transcriptions include a number of letters lost or damaged since Edel saw them. They also provide insight into Edel's method for building the biography, which itself has influenced James studies over the past forty or so years. More than an adjunct of *The Complete Letters*, the James Center's resources enable its staff to serve students and scholars of Henry James (some of whom have worked in-residence at the James Center) from around the world and at little or no cost.³ The James Center will also serve as home to the Henry James Society as long as I am fortunate enough to continue as the Society's executive director. Through the James Center, the Henry James Society has legal status as an incorporated organization in the state of Nebraska and has an institutional harbor in Creighton University. Both the legal status and the institutional relationship enable the James Center to serve the Henry James Society by locating the Society's website⁴ and listserv,⁵ helping it organize annual officer elections, supporting its journal, the *Henry James Review* (which is itself headquartered at the University of Louisville under the leadership of its editor, Susan M. Griffin) and contributing both staff and resources to the Society's triennial international conference and other meetings, such as the commemoration of the centenary of James's death and annual panels at the meetings of the Modern Language Association and American Literature Association. Funding for the James Center and all of its work comes from Creighton University, the Gilbert C. Swanson Foundation, Inc, and donations and grants. Mr. Joseph Biancalana has been especially supportive of *The Complete Letters of Henry James*.

Most crucial to the scholarly and service missions of the Center for Henry James Studies and thus to its role in *The Complete Letters of Henry James* are the individuals who work there almost every day. The associate project editor (currently Katie Sommer) and between one and four talented graduate and/or undergraduate students comprise the staff. I serve as director. Though one or two staff members may work in the James Center as part of a graduate fellowship in the English Department, none is a volunteer or an intern and all are paid for their work. The associate project editor also earns health and retirement benefits. Thus the work in the office stays at a professional level. At the same time, each person contributes in significant ways to the work done in the office, including *The Complete Letters* project. Through the first nine volumes, the letters project depended fundamentally on a team in Massachusetts led by the edition's previous co-general editor, Pierre (Peter) A. Walker, and on a number of Jamesians in the United States, France, Italy, and the UK who regularly give time and effort to the project. After the ninth volume, *The Complete Letters of Henry James, 1878–1880*, volume 2, Pierre Walker stepped away from the project. Following Walker, Michael Anesko joined the edition as co-general editor and brought with him resources from his institution, The Pennsylvania State University. In addition to serving as co-general editor, Anesko has established at Penn State a digital Henry James archive. The Penn State digital archive, which is now in the process of being established, will enable

² L. Edel, *Henry James: The Master; Henry James Letters*, 4 vols., ed. L. Edel, Philadelphia 1972.

³ See The Center for Henry James Studies website, <http://mockingbird.creighton.edu/english/hjcenter.htm>, (accessed April 1, 2011).

⁴ See The Center for Henry James Studies website, <http://mockingbird.creighton.edu/english/HJS/home.html> (accessed April 1, 2011).

⁵ See The Center for Henry James Studies listserv, jamesf-l@lists.creighton.edu (accessed April 1, 2011).

access to clear-text versions of the letters with all of the richness that electronic representation can provide. It will both complement and supplement the print edition and its e-book companion, which will be produced, like the print edition, by the University of Nebraska Press.

While the ongoing viability of *The Complete Letters* project is a function of funding, persistence, and adaptation, the founding of it was also a function of fortune and foresight. The fortune began in June 1993 at a six-day conference at New York University organized by the Henry James Society to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Henry James's birth. That conference coincided with the opening of James studies (itself enabled by access greater than ever before to the Henry James archive at Harvard's Houghton Library and other repositories). The opening of the archive and thus the new opening of James studies, in turn, also depended on coincidence. Leon Edel, who had dominated Henry James studies for much of the last half of the twentieth century and had notoriously limited access to Henry James's letters,⁶ was in declining health. In addition, Alexander R. James, the executor of the James family papers, who had collaborated with Edel to restrict access to and publication of Henry James's letters, was himself aging and, without Edel to maintain surveillance over the archive, did not continue Edel's restrictions. Following Alexander R. James's death in 1995 and after a period of uncertainty over who would administer control over the papers, Alexander James's daughter, Bay James, assumed responsibility for the James family papers. With Edel no longer active and with the temporal distance between Henry James and herself greater than that between any James family papers executor and his famous ancestor, Bay James opened access to the James papers to all James scholars. Fred Kaplan, who had been writing *Henry James: The Imagination of Genius*, was one of the first since Edel to see the entire Houghton archive.⁷ Kaplan was present at that 1993 meeting in New York and during it rallied Jamesians to the fundamentally new, that is non-Edelian, Henry James, whom he had seen represented in the full sweep of the Harvard letters. Not only was I moved by Kaplan's enthusiasm to the possibilities promised by open access to the archive; I was utterly and absolutely converted to its promise. There was, however, a significant obstacle to overcome.

In June 1993 I was a beginning assistant professor with fewer than two years on the job. I was looking for a new project following the publication of my first book. Having been interested for some time in the ways that James's letters informed an understanding of his biography and poetics, the opening of the James letter archive and Kaplan's encouragement at the sesquicentennial conference provoked me to think seriously about the logistics of a more complete edition. After all, Edel's edition had published only about twenty-five percent of James's extant letters and Lubbock's even fewer. There was a great deal to be done.

Also at the 1993 meeting were two Jamesians of about my age who would play important roles in the establishment of *The Complete Letters* project, Steven H. Jobe and Peter A. Walker. Jobe would be most important earlier and Walker a little later.

⁶ See M. Anesko, *Monopolizing the Master: Henry James as Cultural Capital*, Palo Alto 2011, and P. A. Walker, "Leon Edel and the 'Policing' of the Henry James Letters," *The Henry James Review* 21.3 (2000), pp. 279–289.

⁷ F. Kaplan, *Henry James: The Imagination of Genius*, New York 1992.

When the 1993 meeting in New York opened, Steve Jobe had already been working for several years to catalogue Henry James's letters. That work had been suggested to Jobe by one of Edel's appendices in the fourth volume of *Henry James Letters*.⁸ Jobe took the suggestion and, with some help from Edel himself and an NEH grant in 1990 and another in 1995, set out to produce *A Calendar of the Correspondence of Henry James*. That project, both as *A Partial Calendar of the Correspondence of Henry James*,⁹ privately printed October 1, 1994, and later the online *Calendar of the Letters of Henry James & the Biographical Register of Henry James's Correspondents*, which Jobe and Susan E. Gunter (who also attended the 1993 sesquicentennial conference) established,¹⁰ was and continues to be important to *The Complete Letters* project. (I hope that it will soon become a central element in Penn State's Henry James Archive.) But in 1993 and into 1994, when *The Complete Letters of Henry James* was still only a plan on paper, Jobe's *Calendar* helped to convert it into a reality.

When I first thought about starting *The Complete Letters* project following the NYU conference, locating all James's extant letters seemed to be one reason nobody had taken up such an edition.¹¹ But when I learned about Jobe's project and then saw a copy of his *Partial Calendar*, I knew that an edition of some 10,500 or more of Henry James's extant letters could be possible.¹² The *Partial Calendar* would be the key not only to identifying archives that held Henry James letters, to obtaining letter copies, and thus to producing the edition. It would also play an important role in convincing others of the project's viability. After Steve Jobe kindly gave his permission for me to use the *Partial Calendar* to secure support from the community of Henry James scholars, I had two dozen copies printed. I then sent one each to those established Jamesians who thought that they might be interested in serving on the edition's Advisory Board. Within several months, each one agreed to support the project. Because I was relatively new to Henry James studies, it was important for the edition to gain the support of established Jamesians who could vouch for and support the project as an advisory group. I believe that for this group, which included Michael Anesko, Millicent Bell, Daniel Mark Fogel, Susan Gunter, Richard Hocks, Philip Horne, Bay James, Henry James, Steve Jobe, Fred Kaplan, David McWhirter, George Monteiro, Lyall Powers, Rayburn Moore, Roberta Sheehan, Adeline Tintner, Cheryl Torsney and Ruth Yeazell, seeing the promise of the project through Jobe's *Partial Calendar* gave them confidence that the edition could be realized. Through their association with the project, *The Complete Letters of Henry James* gained credibility.

I also sent one copy of the *Partial Calendar* to my department chair, my dean, and the university's vice president for academic affairs. In the case of the latter, timing was everything. The vice president for academic affairs, a former faculty member in the philosophy

⁸ S. Jobe, "Register Acknowledgements," in: *Calendar of the Letters of Henry James & A Biographical Register of Henry James's Correspondents*, <http://jamescalendar.unl.edu/ack-jobe.htm>, accessed April 1, 2011.

⁹ Idem, *A Partial Calendar of the Correspondence of Henry James*, 1994.

¹⁰ S. H. Jobe and S. E. Gunter, *Calendar of the Letters of Henry James & A Biographical Register of Henry James's Correspondents*, <http://jamescalendar.unl.edu>, accessed April 1, 2011.

¹¹ Trying to produce an edition with both letters to and from James was never seriously discussed for two reasons. First, James probably burned thousands of letters addressed to him in at least one bonfire on his property in Rye, Sussex (Edel, pp. 436–437; *Henry James Letters*, 4, p. 541). Second, the scope of such a two-way project was beyond what I was prepared to do even in my most manic moments, unless staffing and funding requirements could be met.

¹² P. Horne estimated at one time that there might be twelve to fifteen thousand extant Henry James letters; see "Introduction," in: *Henry James: A Life in Letters*, New York 1999, p. xvi.

department who would approve or deny the James Center's budget, happened to be familiar with William James.

Not only was I fortunate that Charles Dougherty was serving in 1995 as Creighton's Vice President for Academic Affairs. I was also fortunate that both he and the university were willing to invest resources over the long term in the project of a relatively new assistant professor. After seeing the *Partial Calendar*, reviewing the names of Advisory Group members and listening to my work plan, Dougherty asked me to draw up a list of resources I would need to start the project. I listed only what I determined that I would need and avoided the temptation to pad the list. I noted that much of what I needed (such as office furniture, filing cabinets, computer hardware and a printer) could be second-hand. I received almost everything on the list. When the next fiscal year began, the project had a modest but very serviceable budget and an office large enough to house the project if not in luxury then in utilitarian comfort. I began to look for an assistant whom I could afford to hire for three days each week and provide standard health and retirement benefits. I also needed, I knew, a partner to help bring about this enormous project. I knew too that I needed someone young enough to stay with the project for at least fifteen to twenty years. Finally, I also needed someone whose skills complemented mine. The first person I decided I should ask was Peter Walker.

When I first met Peter Walker at a regional conference, he had been working on Henry James microbiography with Alfred Habegger. I thought that his work was excellent. While my strength was primarily in envisioning and planning large projects and programs and in developing work processes, Peter's first skill was in the details of work itself, I judged then. Though I recall that our first conversation at that regional conference was a collegial dispute over James's narrative style in *The Awkward Age*, we shared an interest and saw our futures both in the new opening of Henry James studies via James's letters and thus new ways of understanding his biography and also in his relation to cultural shifts in the United States, Britain and France in the later nineteenth century. Soon after I presented the project to him, Peter agreed to join as co-general editor. Between that time and the cessation of his work on the edition, he devoted heroic amounts of time and energy to the edition. The first problem I knew that Peter and I should solve concerned the editorial rationale, which would be the basis for everything that we would do with the edition.

The two standard editions of James's letters at the time I began to plan *The Complete Letters* were Percy Lubbock's *Letters of Henry James*¹³ and Leon Edel's *Henry James Letters*. Both are clear-text, "final intention" editions with minimal annotation. Due to the clear-text strategy and lack of textual annotation, neither attends to the process of James's writing or thinking as they are represented in the letter manuscripts via James's composition of the final letter. Instead, they offer cleaned-up versions of the letters that implicitly signal the relative lack of importance of those textual elements such as cancellations and insertions that are omitted because they are not considered by the editors to be a part of James's "intention" for the letter. Neither of the two earlier editions, moreover, offers a fully articulated rationale. Neither could be considered scholarly and critical in the full sense of those terms. Lubbock's edition marks the regular omissions in letters with ellipses. Edel's edition does not omit material regularly from the letters. But when omissions are made, they are made

¹³ *Letters of Henry James*, ed. P. Lubbock, New York 1920.

silently. Ignas K. Skrupskelis's and Elizabeth M. Berkeley's *The Correspondence of William James (CWJ)*,¹⁴ the first three volumes of which contain only letters between William and Henry James, were being published as I planned *The Complete Letters of Henry James* and as Peter and I began to imagine and implement the project's practices. Like the Lubbock and Edel editions, *CWJ* presents the letters in clear-text. However, *The Correspondence of William James* is scholarly and critical with full annotation and textual notes. It was clear to me that if our edition should endure, even become the standard edition of Henry James's letters for some time to come, then, like *CWJ*, it would have to be a critical and scholarly edition. It would have to serve James scholars first and general readers second. There were other editions of Henry James's letters to a single correspondent then finished and under-way. Peter and I envisioned our edition, though, to be more comprehensive.



Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska. From the author's private collection

To help insure that our work would be as careful and complete as possible, I decided that each book would earn the "Approved Edition" seal from the Modern Language Association's Committee on Scholarly Editing. In this I followed the example set by *Mark Twain's Papers* and *CWJ*. Later a clause was included in our contract with Nebraska defining the requirement for the seal for each book. Following that decision, Peter and I worked over one summer with the letters to develop a full work plan. With the project's foundation established in terms of a co-general editor, institutional location and work plan, I needed to find a publisher-partner willing to agree to publish more than ten thousand letters in a full critical and scholarly edition. Fortune again worked in my favor. It seemed that the moment was right for this project.

The mid-nineteen nineties were a time of greater than usual pride for achievements in the state of Nebraska, whose residents are even in flat times proud and resilient. The reason for their pride then, though, was because the football team of the University

¹⁴ *The Correspondence of William James*, eds. I. K. Skrupskelis and E. M. Berkeley, Charlottesville 1992–2004.

of Nebraska had won the collegiate National Championship of American football in 1994, 1995, and 1997. The championships proved to people in our low population state (about 1.75 million) that we could achieve large goals. At virtually the same time, the University of Nebraska Press enjoyed stellar direction under William Regier, who led the Press to international acclaim through innovative acquisitions and an impressive backlist. The quality of the book production was then (as it is today) superb. Richard Eckersley, designer of such beautiful and visually groundbreaking books as Avital Ronnell's *The Telephone Book*, Jacques Derrida's *Glas*, LeRoy C. Breunig's *The Cubist Poets in Paris*, and *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*, among so many other titles, headed the first-rate design team. In addition, the Press plotted an exciting, aggressive and creative course for electronic publication under Michael Jon Jensen, who continues to shape the field today (though no longer at Nebraska). Given the high level of pride in Nebraska for home-state achievement, I thought that it might be time to try to develop pride in its publishing and scholarship as well as football. Therefore with a project located in Omaha (the state's largest city), I sought to place *The Complete Letters of Henry James* at the University of Nebraska Press in Lincoln (the state capital) and to develop both print and digital editions. That the Press's humanities acquisitions editor, Douglas Clayton, was interested in using the project to build a list in James family titles was another factor in our favor. To the Press I brought a work plan that could suit both the electronic and print goals. But rather than being organized primarily for the print edition and secondarily for the electronic one, I offered a plan in which the electronic edition would organize the project's work flow. There were several advantages to organizing the edition for the digital edition first and the print second, and the Press seemed eager to try them.

Rather than producing each book through copy editing and page proofs and then transferring those files to the electronic edition for four-way digital publication (web, CD, selected letters available to download via an iTunes-like menu [this before the advent of iTunes], and print-on-demand of selected letters, which would allow the purchaser to design his or her own edition of Henry James letters), my plan was to use style sheets to prepare the books electronically. Work would first flow through the electronic edition, producing pdfs as page proofs, before moving work to print production from the corrected pdfs and associated files. This plan would save time and money in the print edition's production, since the pages would be set automatically, including special characters designed for the plain-text edition, by style sheets and would permit circumvention of conventional typesetting and page proofing. If the work plan or editorial rationale should change, we would adjust the representation of any textual feature in the entire electronic edition by changing one element in the style sheet. There would be no need to search and find each occurrence of that feature and change it either by hand and eye from hard copy or by machine. Working directly with hard copy and/or from a computer search are strategies that would serve well if one were working only with a single volume at a time. *The Complete Letters* project's planned electronic edition, on the other hand, required a way to adjust hundreds, maybe thousands, of documents both already published and also in preparation. Using style sheets seemed the best way to do this. Such innovation in both print and electronic editions of an author with Henry James's reputation, I imagined then, in collaboration with a publisher eager to develop print and electronic editions, would generate interest and pride as an all-Nebraska project. Thus Peter and I contracted with the University of Nebraska Press to bring out *The Complete Letters of Henry James* in print and digital editions.

While so many of our early difficulties, including solutions to a range of editorial and representational challenges, were, with the help of many individuals, overcome, other problems persisted. The electronic edition, once the centerpiece of the project and organizer of its work flow, continues to be the most important problem to solve. The Henry James Archive at Penn State, however, promises to be that long sought-after solution.

Shortly after Peter and I signed the contract with UNP, both Bill Regier and Michael Jensen left the Press for other jobs. At about the same time, the bubble of confidence that floated the publishing world's vision for digital publishing began to deflate, having been pricked by the reality that digital publishing would be neither inexpensive nor easy. Accordingly, the University of Nebraska Press's commitment to pioneering work in digital publication softened significantly. The electronic edition of *The Complete Letters* project was transferred to or adopted by (I'm not sure which) a group at the University of Nebraska called the Electronic Text Center (ETC; now the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities), which was headed by Katherine Walter, whom I regarded as an energetic, entrepreneurial, and visionary administrator. Her group contributed a number of projects, including the superb Walt Whitman Archive edited by Kenneth M. Price and Ed Folsom, so I was anything but dismayed by the transfer. Walter's staff was resourceful and extremely talented in terms of finding technical solutions for representational problems that would affect our edition on most browsers. These solutions included how to show multiple strike-throughs and underlines that would remain stable through or beneath the characters they were designed to be shown through or under, for example. In the end, however, I came to believe that the ETC couldn't give the James letters project the time we needed and the partnership was dissolved. We tried next to work with InteLex, a company that offers web-based publishing of an extensive "Past Masters" series, which institutions receive by subscription. In addition to its catalogue of canonical authors from Peter Abelard and Joseph Addison to William Wordsworth and William Butler Yeats in handsome print-page formats, InteLex's powerful search engines seemed right for how a digital letters edition might be used. Yet after several years with the company and no product or product development in sight, this partnership too was dissolved. Even so, with the success of the print edition, Creighton University, the University of Nebraska Press, the Gilbert C. Swanson Foundation, and donors continued to stand by the project and the project staff. But at that time, I hadn't yet given up on building an electronic edition of Henry James's letters.

Rather than working to build an electronic edition that could produce income for the project and the James Center, I sought and gained a relatively small start-up grant that would allow the creation and testing of a clear-text and unannotated edition of James's letters. This clear-text digital edition would neither compete with nor replicate the print one, but would complement it. We would offer the letters for download in Word doc form without cost to scholars and others. To enable this way of distributing the letters, I designed a user interface with two gifted students, Mathew Carroll and Patrick Phillips, who with several others in the office converted hundreds of letter files prepared for the print edition to clear-text presentation. These files were then linked to a public index of the James Center's letter holdings, which we also prepared. Anyone who wished to do so could search our collection for a letter written on a given date or to a particular correspondent and then from the record in the public index find out not only whether we held a copy of that letter, but could download an uncorrected clear-text version of that letter. During the experiment

we stored the trial database on a desktop computer, which I set up as a server. This trial was intended to test the viability of a full public edition of James's letters in clear text and it proved to be a complete success. With that success and in preparation for full public presentation, I began the process of moving the experiment from the PC-server to our university's main server and from the intra-office presentation software I used to express the database and clear-text letters to more robust database management software. This time, however, fortune abandoned me.

Following several planning meetings and a week before I was to meet with my contact person in the university to begin to move the digital edition, the first heat wave of what would become the global financial meltdown of 2008 rolled across my university. Within two weeks of that date, university hiring dried up, most new projects were stopped and the plan to develop the electronic edition of *The Complete Letters of Henry James* was put on the shelf, where it rested until Michael Anesko began to institute the Henry James Archive at Penn State University. But the motives of the digital project in the James Center are far from dormant. Those working on the letters project still use the test site's databases nearly every day as we move from a paper office to an electronic and digital one, in which most work is now conducted electronically and many work records are available to all staff members working anywhere in the world where there is internet connectivity through a server. Many hundreds of the paper copies of James's letters and hundreds of other images of James's originals have been scanned. These digital images comprise primary copy-texts for initial transcriptions.

Even as the electronic edition had for some time been the source of recurrent frustration and disappointment as well as some advances, the print one continues consistently to bring rewards and foster satisfaction and pride. Reviews of the volumes have been uniformly strong. Richard Eckersley's design continues to show the importance of classic book design in academic publishing, at least, and the quality of the Press's production continues to grace our work. Whatever minor delays or frustrations I experience through the production of any given book, every finished print volume has taken away my breath not only when seen for the first time, but also when I return to it. The high quality of the paper and printing, as well as the page design itself, enables us to show clearly through plain-text editorial signs a highly readable and also reliable edited text, including three, four and five cancellation marks through a word or a letter character. Photographs and illustrations reproduce crisply and with excellent contrast. The quality of the finished books helps us to maintain the integrity of the work process itself.

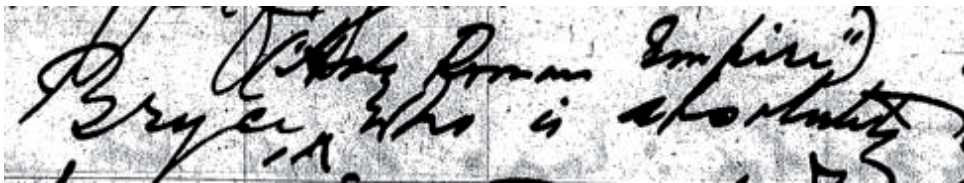
We've been honored, moreover, to have eminent Jamesians write introductions: Alfred Habegger for the first two books;¹⁵ Millicent Bell for the next three;¹⁶ Martha Banta for

¹⁵ *The Complete Letters of Henry James: 1855–1872*, vols. 1–2, ed. P. A. Walker and G. W. Zacharias, Introduction by A. Habegger, Lincoln 2006.

¹⁶ *The Complete Letters of Henry James: 1872–1876*, vol. 1, ed. P. A. Walker and G. W. Zacharias, Introduction by M. Bell, Lincoln 2008; *The Complete Letters of Henry James: 1872–1876*, vol. 2, ed. Pierre A. Walker and G. W. Zacharias, Introduction by Millicent Bell, Lincoln 2009; *The Complete Letters of Henry James: 1872–1876*, vol. 3, ed. P. A. Walker and G. W. Zacharias, Introduction by M. Bell, Lincoln 2011; *The Complete Letters of Henry James: 1876–1878*, vol. 1, ed. P. A. Walker and G. W. Zacharias, Introduction by Martha Banta, Lincoln 2012; *The Complete Letters of Henry James: 1876–1878*, vol. 2, ed. P. A. Walker and G. W. Zacharias, Introduction by M. Banta, Lincoln 2013; *The Complete Letters of Henry James: 1878–1880*, vol. 1, ed. P. A. Walker and G. W. Zacharias, Introduction by M. Anesko, Lincoln 2014; *The Complete Letters of Henry James: 1878–1880*, vol. 2, ed. P. A. Walker and G. W. Zacharias, Introduction by M. Anesko, Lincoln 2015; *The Complete Letters of Henry James: 1880–1883*,

the sixth and seventh, Michael Anesko for the eighth and ninth, and Susan M. Griffin for the tenth and eleventh, which is as far as we've organized individual volumes to date.

While the fundamental plain-text editorial approach to the edition has remained consistent from the start, learning to understand the nuances of how the approach affects the mediation of James's letters for our readers has also pressed the edition to evolve as we've come to a better understanding of Henry James's process of composition. James's compositional habits are important because they represent patterns of thinking and thus meaning, which is more important for us to represent than, necessarily, the specific placement of a character on a page or series of characters as if it were a typographical facsimile. Of the many routine adjustments we've made to the process, one of the more visually interesting ones comes into play when two textual changes are related and the sequence of the changes can be determined—for through that sequence one can nearly see James's mind in action. In this case, our emphasis on representing James's compositional sequence and thus his change in meaning rather than on trying to create a typographic facsimile informs the representation of the manuscript. In the following example from James's 4 May [1877] letter to his mother, James wrote "...Bryce, who is absolutely..." but then changed his mind, overwrote the comma following "Bryce" with a caret, interlineated ("Holy Roman Empire") as a way to identify "Bryce," and replaced the comma that had been deleted by the overwriting of the caret with another one immediately following "Bryce." Thus the passage from the manuscript reads:



Houghton Library, Harvard University, BMS Am 1094 [1847]. From the author's private collection

The passage in the edited letter text reads:

Bryce, [slashed comma] [^] ("Holy Roman Empire") [_^] who is absolutely

The related textual note reads:

Bryce, [slashed comma] [^] • [_^ *overwrites , ; , inserted*]

Thus the edited sentence understood in combination with the note renders James's compositional sequence by representing the canceled and replaced comma and the caret insertion, the cancellation of the first comma being the result of the decision to name Bryce's *The Holy Roman Empire* so that James's mother would know what James Bryce her son was writing about.¹⁷

vol. 1, ed. P. A. Walker and G. W. Zacharias (associate editor Katie Sommer), Introduction by S. M. Griffin, Lincoln 2016.

¹⁷ J. Bryce, *The Holy Roman Empire*, London 1864.

In addition, we've learned that what we read early in the edition as an underline beneath James's conventional place and date information at letter openings should be rendered as a rule that divides parts of his letter. Since this habit begins nearly the moment James began to live in Paris and since French writers learned to use the rule in school, we suspect that James's use of the rule emerged as a response to conventions he began seeing from his French correspondents in 1876. He then used the rule convention both with French and non-French correspondents. But we've learned more than editorial strategy.

We've learned (and continue to learn every day) about James's life from the letters. For example, we now know that James in youth and up to his thirties was often unsure of how to use the possessive apostrophe—even using the same possessive apostrophe in different ways in the same letter (“it’s” for “its” or “your’s” for “yours”), though he improved over time. We learned that James, whose ability to render dialect in his fiction—though highly accurate—is very much underdiscussed (partly because he attempts it so infrequently), shows the acuity of his ear by his accurate rendering of dialect and idiosyncratic speech in his letters. He renders dialectic pronunciation mainly to parody/imitate American speech (e.g. “Curnarder” for Cunarder; “injoyment” for enjoyment; “charmingist” for charmingest; “shill” for shall; “probaly” for probably; and “har” for hear). We learned that James had special terms he used to foster intimacy, “tiss” for kiss, for example, in a letter to his sister. We learned that what we first read as odd misspellings of Italian were more likely accurate representations of Venetian Italian, the source of some of his Italian at the time of the particular letter. We learned that James traveled in Europe, at least through the mid-1870s, not as a make-your-own-route sojourner, but by closely following route and even hotel recommendations made by the *Baedeker's* travel books. We learned that as James wrote and changed his mind about a letter character or word or part of punctuation he had just written, he would begin to make that change by blotting the still-wet ink with a finger before making the correction. To imagine James, whom we thought of as ultra fastidious, with ink-stained fingers gave us a surprise.

But most of all, and I believe that I can speak for Peter Walker and Michael Anesko and all of those who work now and have worked on *The Complete Letters of Henry James* project, we have learned how much we love working on this project nearly every day because we enjoy so fundamentally working with Henry James's letters and his biography and bibliography. And working on this project enables all of us to work more closely and frequently with others who share our interests in so many places around the world.

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