

## 2 The sentimental tourist in rural France

### Henry James's pictures of history in *A Little Tour in France* (1884, 1900)

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While travelling in France, James receives a particularly vivid impression of the Roman ruins at Nîmes. The remains of the *nymphaneum*, the baths and the aqueduct, trigger his imagination and he senses “a certain contagion of antiquity in the air” (James *LT* 1993a: 198). At the end of his visit, during his stroll in a French garden, into which Roman elements have been incorporated, he falls into a kind of reverie: “it seemed to me that I touched for a moment the ancient world” (James *LT* 1993a: 200). At the same time he also creates an image of his own moment of illumination by describing himself as he looks into the eighteenth-century French fountain built on Roman foundations, making out the slabs of Roman stone at the bottom of the basin through the clean green water. He not only feels he is able to touch the ancient past but also reflects on his own ability to create a connection to the past. This image of James glimpsing traces of the past recurs throughout his travelogue and brings together a picturesque scene, imaginative reconstruction and contemplation, historical interest and illumination, architectural ruins used and shaped by posterity, and, last but not least, reference to authorship. Through the use of these elements, James's *A Little Tour in France* constitutes an attempt to create imaginative personal impressions of past moments initiated by local sights. *A Little Tour* produces a view of rural France saturated with history and serves to prove the statement that France is not Paris. James travelled for six weeks from Touraine to Provence in central France, and the book represents his interest in French landscapes and views, Frenchness, French women, and the French past.<sup>1</sup>

James had first published the pieces that form *A Little Tour in France* under the title *En Provence* in the 1883 and 1884 issues of *The Atlantic Monthly*. He found a new title for the book version in his 1878 article he retitled “Rheims and Laon: A Little Tour,” when he prepared it for inclusion in *Portraits and Places* in 1883. James revised the text for a new book

version that came out in Boston at James R. Osgood and Company in 1884, the same year he declared travel writing was a class of composition he had left behind (Stowe 1994: 163). However, in 1900 he added a new Preface, rewrote the “Introductory,” and revised wording and punctuation. This new illustrated edition came with ninety-two drawings by Joseph Pennell, and was published by Houghton in Boston for the US market and by Heinemann in London, both in 1900 (Howard 1993: 792).

The work of revision remains a key issue for Jamesians and needs to be considered in connection with the two editions of *A Little Tour* as well. Philip Horne investigated the role of Jamesian revision in The New York Edition and claimed that James practised revision “as a respectful continuity” (1990: 154), a kind of explication replete with dialogue rather than a work of deletion and correction. Yet, Jamesian revision is not a chance explication, as David McWhirter explained when he characterized the relation between the original and the revised in James as a basically ethical act, as if “keeping the promise of the words he gave long ago” (McWhirter 1997: 159). Oliver Herford has traced James’s revisions of his essays between *Transatlantic Sketches* (1883) and *Italian Hours* (1909) with a focus on the deletions of the word “picturesque” in the later version. But, Herford writes, James “allows overtones to remain there, as though it was just as a word that ‘picturesque’ was objectionable, and not as a sign for a collection of cultural associations” (2016: 153). Herford goes on to assert that “the alterations of emphasis manifest strengthened loyalty to picturesque surfaces” (2016: 163) as the deletions and replacements of the word reflect on the multiple meanings “picturesque” still has for James in 1909.

The imaginative reconstruction of a place to create a visual impression of it in words is a characteristically Jamesian scenario of the imaginative act<sup>2</sup> that remains a concern during revision, too. The work of editing in *A Little Tour* in 1900 did not involve the deletion of “picturesque” the way it happened in the case of *Italian Hours*. Rather, revision added a special focus to the pictorial aspect. James reflects on his pictorial method explicitly in his 1900 Preface to *A Little Tour*, where he defines his writing as “governed by the pictorial spirit” (James *LT* 1993a: 3). He calls his reports a string of impressions, “sketches on ‘drawing paper’” (James *LT* 1993a: 3). In the third and final paragraph of the short Preface, he voices his regret that he has not spoken more or differently about France. He assumes that it must have been the depth of involvement that prevented a clearer articulation: “There are relations that soon get beyond all merely showy appearances of value for us. Their value becomes thus private and practical, and is represented by the process – the quieter, mostly, the better – of absorption and assimilation of what the relation has done for us” (James *LT* 1993a: 4). He feels he wrote little about his relation to France compared to how much he had been

shaped by it. As if illustrating Horne's idea of revision to show "continuity" and McWhirter's view of an "ethical relation," between old and new versions, in *A Little Tour* the picturesque method of writing about travel is related to Jamesian aesthetics in general: the late James seems to regret the lack of "artistic" penetration on the part of his younger self.

"Pictures" in *A Little Tour* are related to past eras and reveal a historical continuity that remains central in both editions of the text. This chapter aims at explicating a spectrum of the meaning of these "pictures." Despite James's later claim to the contrary, there is a pervading interest in historical relations behind the surface the sketches show. In particular, young James develops a preference for three specific historical eras important for the French countryside. Firstly, travelling in the French South, he is impressed by the ruins of the Gallo-Roman past. Secondly, he investigates traces of the French Middle Ages in cathedrals and castles. Thirdly, he appreciates the work of the French Renaissance: palaces, tombs, and domestic architecture. He abhors the destruction the French Revolution left behind.

The role of the past in James's non-fiction in general and in *A Little Tour* in particular has been interpreted in contrasting ways. Tony Tanner writes about a wilful lack of history in James's travel texts: "[t]here is precious little history, as conventionally understood, in James's travel writing. One will look invariably in vain for a date, a fact, increasingly even a name" (1995: 12). Tanner considers this "crucial to James's original transformation of the genre" (1995: 12) as instead of facts James is looking for pleasure in the differences (Kermode 1999: 61). Nicola Bradbury agrees with Tanner that the process of imaginative reconstruction is more important for James than historical fact in his non-fiction about France (2004:188). By contrast, Herford lists the historical as one out of many strands of meaning related to the "picturesque" (2016: 164). In a similar but more explicit gesture, Eric Haralson and Kendall Johnson end their useful summary by asserting that *A Little Tour* "is especially marked by James's continual . . . realisation of the violent history of France" (2009: 355). They pinpoint James's unfaltering interest in the Enlightenment and in the enormous cultural destruction the French Revolution caused (Haralson and Johnson 2009: 356).

This chapter looks into how historical reflection is related to picturesque presentation in the book and argues that mental images of places are always related to a sense of history in Jamesian descriptions of rural and small-town France. James often relies on architecture as the source of picturesque images in order to create a sense of the past that he verbalizes for the readers. The illuminated impressions of the past in *A Little Tour* most often arise during the contemplation of buildings. This is no coincidence in a travelogue, but there are at least two major added reasons for the systematic architectural imagery. Firstly, it manifests Ruskin's habit of precise

observation (Benert 1996: 325). Secondly, for the New York elite James belonged to, “France in particular represented the standard in landscapes, public places, and domestic spaces” (Benert 1996: 324). This method has been used in interpretations of *The American Scene* and can be expanded to include *A Little Tour*. Tamara Follini argues that James “organizes his memories of the American past and his critique of the American present” around architectural sites in *The American Scene* (2014: 28). One example for this process is the way he identifies features of consumer culture with the visual ugliness of skyscrapers (Buitenhuis 1957: 320). This chapter focuses on how architecture functions as the memory of the French past for James<sup>3</sup> in his picturesque representations of rural France in the late nineteenth century.

argument centres around three key points and has been divided into three parts. The first section deals with the notion of the picturesque method, the second section analyses the relation of history and architecture in James’s picturesque reports of history, and the final section shows what contemporary relevance James attributes to the past.

### Self-definitions by the sentimental tourist

*A Little Tour* begins with a proposition it intends to demonstrate for US tourists that Paris does not equal France. Beside Paris, central France is just as interesting, the country around Tour with the Loire valley called Touraine especially, because it offers a view of the glittering times of the Monarchy with its cultivated fields and gallery of architectural specimens (James *LT* 1993a: 20). So is Southern France, the book illustrates, asserting at the end that the “proposition has been demonstrated” (James *LT* 1993a: 273).

The narrator looks for glimpses that leave “a picture in my mind” (James *LT* 1993a: 249), and this interest is defined as the “picturesque method” (James *LT* 1993a: 183) in opposition to Stendhal’s travel writing, which presents no image, no colour and hence reads like an “account by a commercial traveller” (James *LT* 1993a: 183). In contrast to Stendhal, James attempts to “render the superficial aspects of things” (James *LT* 1993a: 184). His picturesque method aims at exploring the spectacle and not at creating a classification. Similarly, he enjoys a visual surprise, “those accidents in the hope of which the traveller with a propensity for sketching (either on a little paper-bloc or on the tablets of his brain) decides to turn a corner at a venture” (James *LT* 1993a: 103).

The narrator calls himself a sentimental tourist (James *LT* 1993a: 243), as he intends to capture emotions triggered by the picturesque views he finds. The term is obviously a reference to Laurence Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (8), an extremely popular travel account

in the hundred years before James's publication. In Sterne, "sentimental" serves as the opposite of classical learning and objective point of view. It refers to the need for subjective discussions of personal taste, an interest in manners and morals rather than facts (Sterne 1774: 13–14). In this vein, in view of Carcassonne, James records a great emotion (James *LT* 1993a: 160) and calls it "the best quality that a reader may hope to extract from a narrative in which 'useful information' and technical lore . . . are completely absent" (James *LT* 1993a: 160). The sentimental tourist is the opposite of someone who is out for a general description, a coherent view (James *LT* 1993a: 228), useful information, technical lore (James *LT* 1993a: 160), or facts and figures (James *LT* 1993a: 167).

James Buzard calls James's frequent use of the word "picturesque" an addiction (1993: 196) that involves parody (1993: 225) of previous tourist accounts. Peter Rawlings points to the grotesque when he argues that James revels in pictures of "ugliness, deviation, decay, deformity, and ruin, in addition to things foreign and strange," which "are at the centre of ideas of the picturesque at the end of the eighteenth century" (2004: 176). This sense of the picturesque recalls John Ruskin's distinction between noble picturesque and surface picturesque in his essay on Turner (Rawlings 2004: 178). The grotesque signals an interest in the Ruskinian surface picturesque, which also tallies with James's critical attitude towards Ruskin, who prefers the other "noble" kind of picturesque (Rawlings 2004: 178). There is certainly a good amount of tragedy and brutality involved in the impressions James's picturesque scenes invoke, but it is also possible to account for these as part of James's interest in history.

For the sentimental tourist the picturesque scene provides the major point of interest, and he calls the visual input complete with an emotional effect, or an "impression" (James *LT* 1993a: 230, 190, and 130).<sup>4</sup> The sentimental tourist takes time to let his impressions of places sink in: he searches for picturesque spots, records their emotional effects, and seeks to come away with "a full impression" (James *LT* 1993a: 230). At the end of the note on Le Mans, there is an excellent example of how a happy impression of a place is created. After spending the day in town, James was sitting at a café before dinner, enjoying a typical French view, when he "felt a charm, a kind of sympathy, a sense of the completeness of French life and of the lightness and brightness of the social air, together with a desire to arrive at friendly judgments, to express a positive interest. I know not why this transcendental mood should have descended on me then and there" (James *LT* 1993a: 112).

Another kind of impression takes in not only the picturesqueness of a place, but also recreates a sense of the past connected to it. At Villeneuve, "the pictorial sweetness . . . made a particular impression on me . . . of the human composition of the Middle Ages" (James *LT* 1993a: 238–40).

Chambord is also suffused with history. The ruins of the castle create an impression of desolation inflicted on the place by a series of historical incidents from Revolution through Restoration to Republic. The view of the place is coupled with the story of the unfortunate Duke of Bordeaux, later Comte de Chambord, prospective king of France as Henry V. In 1870 France lost the Franco-Prussian War, Restoration seemed possible, and the Count of Chambord was offered the throne. He would have been accepted and ordained as king had he not written his letter demanding to use the Fleur de Lys instead of the Tricolor on July 5, 1871. He was never to be king after this, and the Third Republic was established. Instead of providing an informative punchline, James offers and a personal impression and a lesson of history:

[Chambord] spoke, with a muffled but audible voice, of the vanquished monarchy, which had been so strong, so splendid, but today had become a vision almost as fantastic as the cupolas and chimneys that rose before me. I thought, while I lingered there, of all the fine things it takes to make up such a monarchy; how one of them is the superfluity of mouldering, empty palaces. Chambord is touching – that is the best word for it; and if the hopes of another restoration are in the follies of the Republic, a little reflection on that eloquence of a ruin ought to put the Republic on its guard. A sentimental tourist may venture to remark that in the presence of all the haunted houses that appeal in this mystical manner to the retrospective imagination it cannot afford to be foolish.

(James *LT* 1993a: 57)

The palace reduced to a ruin reflects changes in French history. The Revolution scattered only the furnishings, but the real damage was inflicted during the Restoration and the Third Republic. The sentimental tourist forms an impression of the past glory of the Monarchy and the series of upheavals: the Monarchy was vanquished by the Revolution, the Revolution by Napoleon, Napoleon by the Restoration, and the Restoration by the Republic. This retrospective imagination cannot be content with trying to see what the past must have been like, but also considers how the past is relevant to the present time.

The picturesque method of *A Little Tour in France*, acknowledged by James both in his text of 1884 and in the Preface of 1900, opens up questions related to representation of history. A picturesque view that is colourful and charming provokes an imaginative engagement in the spectator, a moment of reflection or illumination. The analysis of impressions has revealed that the feelings produced are always impressions of the past initiated by mental pictures of architecture and linked to the present.

### Architecture as the memory of history

History usually comes alive for James in the form of architectural imagery. The examples of Nîmes and Chambord have already allowed a glimpse of this method. This section looks at the way history is represented in *A Little Tour* in order to find out how the architectural descriptions are related to the picturesque method. The question now is no longer how the picturesque method works but, more specifically, how the representations of the past are related to architectural images in the book.

In his accounts James manifests a definite interest in events of French history, two of which he finds fundamentally important. He writes that in France one encounters two great historical facts, “one is the Revolution and other is the German invasion” (James *LT* 1993a: 22). The difference between them hinges upon the traces they have left. The destruction of the Revolution remains visible. As James travels around, he encounters its horrible work first at Tours, where the entire Church of St. Martin was demolished by it (James *LT* 1993a: 32), and then at Blois, where the statue of Louis XII had been destroyed (James *LT* 1993a: 46). By Les Baux, viewing the shell of an abbey wiped out by the Revolution, James exclaims: “wherever one goes, in France, one meets, looking backward a little, the spectre of the great Revolution; and one meets it always in the shape of the destruction of something beautiful and precious. To make us forgive it at all, how much it also must have destroyed that was more hateful than itself!” (James *LT* 1993a: 226). He not only admires the church of Brou, as Matthew Arnold did, but also wonders how it survived the Revolution (James *LT* 1993a: 261, 266). At Arles, he is surprised that the Romanesque church has an uninjured porch with an embroidery of sculpture, the “one good mark for the French Revolution” (James *LT* 1993a: 220).

Another example of his view of the Revolution is articulated at Nantes, where a row of seventeenth-century houses reminds him of the executions of several hundred men and women who were thrown into the river to die. His imagination fills the eighteenth-century streets with the figures of those tortured by the Revolution:

The tall eighteenth-century house, full of the *air noble*, in France always reminds me of these dreadful years – of the street scenes of the Revolution. Superficially, the association is incongruous, for nothing could be more formal and decorous than the patent expression of these eligible residences. But whenever I have a vision of prisoners bound on tumblers that jolt slowly to the scaffold, of heads carried on pikes, of groups of heated *citoyennes* shaking their fists at closed coach-windows, I see in the background the well-ordered features of the architecture of the period.

(James *LT* 1993a: 122)

The “noble” city house reminds James of the atrocities of the Revolution that paradoxically resulted from ideas of the Enlightenment. For him this house functions as the memento of the Revolution’s brutality. In contrast to the Revolution, the marks of the second historical fact, the war in 1870, have disappeared. James admires the French nation’s ability to “dress her wounds” (James *LT* 1993a: 22) and go on. So while the Revolution has left traces of cultural rupture difficult to pass or renovate, the marks of the Franco-Prussian War have been cleared from view, as the French spirit to heal and gloss over ruptures prevails.

James also shows an interest in places as settings for famous historical events and in historical characters who inhabited those places. He admires the castle of Blois for “the palace is a course of French history” (James *LT* 1993a: 47), and Chenonceaux because it is “packed with history . . . of a private and sentimental kind” (James *LT* 1993a: 70). By private and sentimental history he means the life and loves of its famous proprietors: Francis I, Henry II, Diana of Poitiers, Catherine de’ Medici (James *LT* 1993a: 71). At Poitiers, he tells stories of Jeanne Darc [sic!], Charles VII, and the Black Prince (James *LT* 1993a: 138, 140), while looking in vain for a sign of the Battle of Poitiers. At Toulouse, he retells “one of the most interesting and touching episodes of the social history of the eighteenth century” (James *LT* 1993a: 158) when a Protestant father was accused of having killed his son who had Catholicized, and was tortured and executed. Voltaire investigated the case and pursued the reversal of judgement, and the father was cleared of charges posthumously (James *LT* 1993a: 159). One of James’s favourite historical characters seems to be Anne of Britain, whose life he encounters at several towns during his travels. For the first time, she is mentioned on account of the beautiful Renaissance tomb of her children at Saint Gatien of Tours (James *LT* 1993a: 28), then also at Nantes, where she was born, at Langeais, where she married her first husband Charles VIII, at Amboise, where she lost him, and at Blois, where she married her second husband, the good Louis XII, and where she herself died (James *LT* 1993a: 123).

Beside stories of historical characters, stories of authors and fictional characters accompany the descriptions of places to enhance the private nature of French history represented in *A Little Tour in France*. At the outset of his journey, James hunts Tours for locations connected to Balzac and to his characters from “Le Curé le Tours” (James *LT* 1993a: 25). James’s dislike of the lowly house in which Balzac was born is balanced by the assertion that Balzac was “a product of a soil into which a good deal of history had been trodden” (James *LT* 1993a: 22, 24), Balzac obviously being the plant growing out of this soil, bearing the fruit of books rich with history. Angoulême is another attractive place to visit for the sake of Balzac’s characters from *Les Illusion Perdues*, who, as James argues, “have not the

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vagueness of identity which is the misfortune of historical characters; they are real, supremely real, thanks to their affiliation to the great Balzac, who had invented an artificial reality which was . . . better than the real article” (James *LT* 1993a: 141). At Tarascon, he refers to Daudet, whose comic story about Provencal character rebellious against fact (James *LT* 1993a: 204) is set there. James reports the natives’ displeasure at Daudet’s representation of them, but he contends that Tarasconians were bright, easy, and amiably indifferent when he visited. For James, fictional figures add interest to buildings the same way as historical characters do.

In James’s discussions of past events and characters, architecture is introduced as the memory of the past. At Nîmes, James senses a wondrous antiquity of the air (James *LT* 1993a: 198) when he sees Roman ruins. He is reminded of the passing greatness of the Monarchy by the ruins of Chambord (James *LT* 1993a: 57), and he associates classical houses with Revolutionary anger at Nantes. This method is used systematically by James to represent a sense of history in his book. As in Chambord, at Arles, the Roman ruins give a voice to the past: the arena is filled with the sounds of the circus (James *LT* 1993a: 216), and the theatre is full of delicate intonations and cadences (James *LT* 1993a: 217). At Blois Castle, the sixteenth-century closes around the viewer as “the expressive faces of an age in which human passions lay so near the surface seem to peep out at you from the windows, from the balconies, from the . . . sculpture” (James *LT* 1993a: 46). James thus comments on the meaning architecture carries for him: “this *transcendent piece of architecture* is the most joyous utterance of the French Renaissance” (James *LT* 1993a: 46, emphasis mine). James’s picturesque scenes of French history provide impressions of historical facts, in which the visual input is provided by a building from the past. One could call it his “architectural method” of representing the past. The example of Nîmes offers revelations about the air of Gallo-Roman antiquity, as we have seen in the introduction, and the reports of James’s happy excursions to Carcassonne and Chenonceaux illustrate his “architectural method” further by his evocations of the French Middle Ages and of the French Renaissance.

James spends felicitous hours at Carcassonne, filled with a great emotion the sentimental tourist wishes to share. The medieval castle stands alone on its hill, a fantastic array of fortifications (James *LT* 1993a: 161–2). Looking for an impression, he walks around the walls and imagines that the ruins before the restorations by M. Viollet-le-Duc were more affecting, but at first writes forgivingly: “as we see it today it is a wonderful evocation; and if there is a great deal of new in the old, there is plenty of old in the new” (James *LT* 1993a: 163). His later comments are more scathing, and eventually he declares: “I prefer in every case the ruined, however ruined, to the reconstructed, however splendid. What is left is more precious than what is

added; one is history, the other is fiction; and I like the former the better of the two – it is so much more romantic” (James *LT* 1993a: 170).<sup>5</sup>

James calls Chenonceaux the architectural gem of Touraine. He knows that much has been written about it, but as a report seems obligatory, he sets out to convey his impressions (James *LT* 1993a: 68). The Renaissance façade and the attic impress him as some of the most “finished” (James *LT* 1993a: 70) in Touraine. He states that the place is neither a castle nor a palace, it is much rather a villa designed for a life of recreation. After describing the view of the palace from the gardens, James proceeds to tell the personal and sentimental history of the place: it was erected on the foundations of an old mill in 1515, became the property of Francis I, and his son Henry II gave it to Diana of Poitiers, his mistress. Upon the death of Henry II, his wife, Catherine de’ Medici, turned Diana out of doors. Catherine built the wing of the castle that “carries itself across the river” (James *LT* 1993a: 71). As James reports about different owners, he imagines the life of the villa in its best years:

The sixty years that preceded the Revolution were the golden age of fireside talk and of those amenities that proceed from the presence of women in whom the social art is both instinctive and acquired. The women of that period were, above all, good company; . . . Chenonceaux offered a perfect setting to free conversation; and infinite joyous discourse must have mingled with the liquid murmur of the Cher. . . . But I have wandered far from my story, which is simply a sketch of the surface of the place.

(James *LT* 1993a: 72–3)

He goes on describing the rooms and the view, and finally he offers the picture of Chenonceaux that pleases him: from the other side of the Cher, in the evening light. In James’s representation, the picturesque Renaissance villa is associated with the time of the French salons of the eighteenth century. No wonder that at the end of the day, enjoying a fine dinner at the little inn at Chenonceaux, the visitors “exchange remarks about the superior civilisation of France” (James *LT* 1993a: 74).

AuQ11 As part of his interest in architecture and history, James has an eye for tombs that record the memory of a person after death. He highlights two Renaissance tombs in particular, both ordered by Anne of B<sup>ny</sup>: one at Tours for her two children (James *LT* 1993a: 28), and the other at Nantes for her parents (James *LT* 1993a: 123). The figures of both tombs are realistically portrayed. Renaissance artists believed, James writes, that the marble image “protected . . . the memory” (James *LT* 1993a: 123) of the dead person. By contrast, a modern tomb presents a scepticism in this regard, as he

shows in his description of the tomb of general Lamorcière, defender of Pope Pius IX, commemorated by a pedantic work from 1876 (James *LT* 1993a: 124). Even when he describes tombs, James offers glimpses of the life of a past era.

In his architectural descriptions of places, James suffuses his images by his sense of French history. Relying on his picturesque method, he uses architecture as the visual starting point for his illuminations about the past, which I have named the “architectural method.” By using it, James exceeds the limits of his intended story, the sketch of the surface of places, and conveys his own sense of the historical and social relations of a past era, rich with beauty and blood, sweetness and suffering.

### **Senses of history in relation to national stereotypes (1884)**

In *A Little Tour* the peculiar interest in history is accompanied by a wincing interest in the present. Naturally, most of the remarks involve the French and Frenchness, but characteristics of other nations, including England, the United States, and Italy, are also mentioned. The historical perspective resurfaces in these remarks, and his contemporary age is compared to previous ones as sceptical, technical, and commodity oriented.

In his Preface James writes he is sorry his formative relation to France and the French remains absent in *A Little Tour*. It seems to me, however, that the book gives away quite a few clues about his relation to France. As the most important point, it is made clear that James loves the French: he adores French women, makes fun of French men, admires French civilization, and offers humorous metaphors for Frenchness. As a key point of his attraction, he keeps noticing the activities of modern French women, who need to be counted with, as there is “no branch of human activity in which they are not involved” (James *LT* 1993a: 82). They not only hire vehicles, they also work at inns, as conductresses of tramcars (James *LT* 1993a: 174), or even as portresses (James *LT* 1993a: 100). At Arles, he admires a *dame de comptoire*, a handsome robust Arlésienne in her forties, who gives change at a café with the dignity of “a Roman empress” (James *LT* 1993a: 214).

On the other hand, French men provoke his sense for satire. The doorkeeper at Carcassonne keeps prattling on to display his knowledge. For James, the doorkeeper represents a typical Frenchman:

a man of the people, . . . extremely intelligent, full of special knowledge and yet remaining of the people and showing his intelligence with a kind of ferocity, of defiance . . . a terrible pattern of a man, permeated in a high degree by civilisation yet untouched by the desire which

one finds in the Englishman in proportion as he rises in the world, to approximate the figure of a gentleman.

(James *LT* 1993a: 168)

James is troubled to find the prototype of the self-reliant, democratic *citoyen* of the Revolutionary streets in the guide's loud voice and volubility. He also shudders at meeting an engineer-like monk (James *LT* 1993a: 142), who reads "the 'Figaro'" seriously like an encyclical and whose answers are precise and dry. James criticizes the appearance of French men as well: he seldom meets a well-dressed French male, all come with muddy boots and unshaven beards (James *LT* 1993a: 149). Their manners amend these shortcomings though, as they are always excellent.

The French manners come from long years of tradition; they are an acquired social art. James reveals his adoration for French civilization during his transcendental mood at Le Mans. Listening to French conversation, he feels he is immersed in "a sense of the completeness of French life and of the lightness and brightness of the social air, together with the desire to arrive at friendly judgments, to express a positive interest" (James *LT* 1993a: 112). James remarks on French productivity, the "industry of the wonderful country which produces, above all, the agreeable things of life, and turns even its defeats and revolutions into gold" (James *LT* 1993a: 144). He makes a joke of comparing the French mind to good claret at Bordeaux, where he failed to find any good wine actually. He wishes to "pretend that there is a taste of sound Bordeaux in the happiest manifestations of that fine organ (the French mind), and that, correspondingly, there is a touch of French reason, French completeness, in a glass of Pontet-Canet" (James *LT* 1993a: 144) – yet he is unable to prove this analogy. Although there is a huge wine exhibition going on at the town, among the many bottles on show he finds not one he can taste. Moreover, considering that degustation is a highly idiosyncratic act, there would be no verification but illumination as a "result" of the analogy. The making of the French mind engages him at Tours already, where he finds statues of Rabelais and Descartes but not of Balzac, and comments that the two figures mark the two opposite poles to which the wondrous French mind has travelled, the sensible and the metaphysical, and half of Balzac's genius "looks in one direction and half in the other" (James *LT* 1993a: 24). James admires the versatility and also the unfathomable quality of the French mind.

Comparisons of Americans, English, and Italians frame James's comments about the French. At Bourges, a small café triggers a comparison of generalizations about the French, the English, and the Americans (US). A French café comes with a *materfamilias* who presides over the spot as she sits under the mirror behind the *comptoir*, giving change, doling out

sugar, in this case even darning a stocking. The English public house or the commercial room serve for selling whiskey and smoking pipes and possess no homey feature. For James, French lads with cigarettes at cafés appear less brutal and heavy than English lads with their pipes at pubs (James *LT* 1993a: 106). The architectural image of the café appears a much more civilized spot than a pub or a saloon, James concludes. In a similar vein, cathedrals also provide a setting to start a comparison: a cathedral town in France can be dull, expressionless and ugly like Bourges (James *LT* 1993a: 104), but in Italy a cathedral city is always charming, while in England it can be sleepy but is surely “mellow.” James introduces his generalizations connected to the sights he sees: as he loves gradations when he compares cathedrals (James *LT* 1993a: 122), so does he compare national characteristics.

However strong James’s devotion to the French may be, Italian landscapes and architecture function as his supreme examples for the picturesque. He is reminded of the Italian side of the Alps as he goes South by gradations (James *LT* 1993a: 127), his love of the South is connected with his feelings for Italy. Excellent Pisan views and Siena brickwork come to his mind at Toulouse (James *LT* 1993a: 150, 158). He is aware of this “habit of constantly referring to the landscape of Italy as if that were the measure of the beauty of every other” (James *LT* 1993a: 148) and regards it the idle habit of an idle tourist, part of the sentimental project.

James’s chatty reports on diverse senses of the past are complemented by isolated and sour comments on modern times. His visit to the Exhibition at Bordeaux is a good example. The show displays technological advancement and the mass production of wine; the boxes and pyramids of wine are meant for the eyes only, and not for individual consumption (James *LT* 1993a: 144). All articles on display are new, mass produced, smart – and for James, useless (James *LT* 1993a: 145). The only human element in the whole affair he notices are the Caribbean Indians on display,<sup>6</sup> who are not new, not smiling, but look “ancient, indifferent, terribly bored” (James *LT* 1993a: 146). This is the privileged spectator’s direct look at the colonial native that is very rare in James, whose “aggressive” spectatorship is usually understood in terms of his grasping, all-determining imaginative vision (Rawlings 2009: 182). At Bourges, he is impressed by the house of Jacques Coeur, the “medieval capitalist” (James *LT* 1993a: 97): it is enormous and must have seemed vulgar at the time it was erected (James *LT* 1993a: 100). A comparative hint at Cornelius Vanderbilt’s house (at Biltmore) recalls James’s critical representation of its vast emptiness in *The American Scene* (Kovács 2014: 78–9; Luria 1997: 300).

As a summary of his attitude to modern times, the account of his visit to a faience artist’s small factory and shop at Blois speaks volumes of what he dislikes in the present. “As we all know, this is an age of prose, of

machinery, of wholesale production, of coarse and hasty processes” (James *LT* 1993a: 49), he writes. To this he prefers what he sees at the small factory: the shop looks like a parlor, the storeroom like a household, the salesman like a landlord; there is “the sense of a less eager activity and a greater search for perfection . . . without the smoke, the bustle, the ugliness of so much of our modern industry” (James *LT* 1993a: 49). It is easy to spot James’s architectural method in this picture, in which the implied image of the modern factory functions as the trace of the modern era and the bustle of modern “industry” refers to both factory and general attitude.

On the basis of these remarks one can claim that the other tourist James professes not to write for in the Preface is the modern tourist, who is information oriented, practical, and interested in technical lore. In all the above asides an opposition is created between modern times and the past, and it is easy to make out from them a sense of nostalgia for times past that can be imagined through the architectural method. At the same time, the retrospective imagination “cannot afford to be foolish” and remain blind to the fact that there is no more possibility for political restoration than for cultural de-modernization of his time.

## Conclusion

James’s travel writing about France shows a particular concern with historical places, names, and events. However, this interest does not simply consist of learning facts about the past. James takes on the position of the sentimental tourist and he reconstructs data he chooses in the form of personal impressions of the past through his retrospective imagination. In *A Little Tour* James is seeking to produce a string of verbalized picturesque impressions of rural and small-town French scenes. These scenes illustrate a historical quality of “Frenchness” that usually escapes travellers who identify France with Paris. For James, mental pictures capture visual impressions of senses of the French past at specific locations. These locations are sometimes natural but mainly architectural. James is especially fond of representing non-restored ruins at the twilight hour that evoke a feeling and a sense of the past and also allow for the work of imaginative processing. This method of associating a building with the sense of the past was named James’s “architectural method.” James likes to reimagine three historical eras and their architectural traces in particular: the Gallo-Roman, the French Middle Ages, and the French Renaissance. He dislikes every trace of the French Revolution, which he usually captures in the form of what buildings it destroyed. The reason for this attitude is James’s interest in French cultural continuity the Revolution disrupted. For James, the memory of French cultural continuity is most evident in visual culture, especially in

architecture. The picturesque impressions of *A Little Tour* constitute emotionally touching, both happy and frightening, personal mental images in verbalized form that serve to create diverse impressions of senses of the French past for the traveller. The impressions of the past form a sharp contrast with James's impressions of his own technologically oriented faceless modern culture. The project of the sentimental tourist is to allow its readers picturesque glimpses of the continuity of French civilization which can prevail among uniformizing processes of modernization.

## Notes

- 1 *A Little Tour* could be compared to *The American* or *The Ambassadors* because of the similar rural French scenes, but it could also be read along with *Italian Hours* because of the similarity of perspective and evaluation, or with *The American Scene* because of comparable themes: the South, the past, and the role of buildings.
- 2 James described his strategies of the creative process in his essays as sensual data through imaginative reprocessing verbalized in a narrative perspective that gives the scene new, morally motivated, meanings, see Ágnes Zsófia Kovács, 2006, *The Function of the Imagination in the Writings of Henry James: The Production of a Civilized Experience*, Lewiston: Mellen: 213–14.
- 3 The connection between historical continuity and architectural traditions is pointed out in Edith Wharton's travel pieces on France as well. In 1908, Wharton published *A Motor Flight through France* where she explained and showed the work of French historical continuity in elements of the built environment in small-town France. Wharton had definitely read James on France, actually travelled with him in rural France in her motor car, and eventually produced her own narrative version of French continuity in 1908. Then, in 1915, Wharton published her *Fighting France*, a string of reports on her visits to the front lines in France at the beginning of the Great War. These accounts report the threat to French historical continuity the war brings, especially through minute visual representations of ruined architecture. So in the wartime, Wharton went on using her architectural language of continuity, but instead of celebrating sights, her tone became concerned and sometimes alarming, a feature that later earned her piece the name "war propaganda." For details see Ágnes Zsófia Kovács, "Edith Wharton's Vision of Continuity in Wartime France," *Neohelicon*, vol. 44, no. 2, 545–58. DOI:10.1007/s11059-017-0391-z.
- 4 James relates to the ideas of the Paterian Aesthetic Movement ambivalently, with criticism and engagement at the same time, see Aladár Sarbu (2010), "The Lure of Lacedaemon: A Note on Pater and Modernism," *Publicationes Universitatis Miskolciensis*, vol. 15, no. 2: 71.
- 5 In his picturesque scenes of the past, James prefers to present architectural ruins than fully renovated buildings and always asserts his dislike for renovations. He finds Marmontier "edited" (James *LT* 1993a: 38), vulgar and mechanical (39). At Blois the restorations of Renaissance chateau chills the imagination (42, 43), it is overdone, too colorful, too fresh (47). At Angers the restoration seems disagreeable, the place has been done up (114). The only good restoration he mentions is at Amboise, where excrescence is being removed (61). Carcassonne itself looks

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too perfect (160), as it has been converted from an irresponsible old town into a conscious museum specimen (162). In contrast, Aigues-Mortes has not been renovated and it impresses James as miraculous (194).

- 6 Bordeaux was the second biggest port and ship-manufacturing city after Marseille, the centre for the trade with the French colonies in the Caribbean from the seventeenth century on (Ziéglé and Garrigou 1998: 17–18).

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