

Abstracts

Tom Gretton (University College London),

Following the troops. Heroism, camp life, special correspondents and tourists in metropolitan magazine illustration, c. 1870-1890

This paper will look at the way some of the ‘small wars’ of the later nineteenth century were represented in pictures published in expensive metropolitan weekly newspapers. It will focus on British media, establishing that many of the same representational strategies and tactics held in journals published in Paris also. It will look both at heroism and at its implied other, the copious and detailed imagery of life on campaign: on the march, in camp, organising elephant races, recovering from wounds. It will look at aspects of the self-representation of war artists, and at the way these journals represented what they themselves had helped to promote, military tourism. Alongside this iconographic ambition, the paper will also discuss the modifications which the mode of representation of the illustrated magazines, repetitious and tending to fragment wholes, imposed on existing strategies of the representation either of heroism or of the everyday, but it will also demonstrate the persistence of concepts of reporting based not on the specification of fact and detail, but of the making and disposing of ideal types, and modes of thinking about heroism based not on the representation of action and violence, but on the contemplation of heroism’s aftermaths. In this context, the debt of reporting to the resources of the salon will be investigated.

The paper will characterise the media with which it deals as forming an intimate and inseparable part of the visual culture of the elite, giving clear evidence of a close and productive symbiosis between the representational strategies and tactics of easel painting bound for the salon, and worked-up drawings bound for the illustrated magazines. The coming of the weekly illustrated magazine in the 1840s makes it impossible to use the binary division between high art and popular imagery (always supposing that the binary has ever produced knowledge or understanding). High art was throughout the century one of the primary subject matters of the leading European illustrated newspapers; they were themselves expensive magazines aimed at elite audiences.

It will look at newspaper pictures produced in the last third of the century, and predominantly at work from the 1870s and 1880s.

Hollis Clayson (Northwestern University),

War and peace, heroines and trollops: tracking the journey of La Parisienne in the Parisian popular press

Among the social actors who populated the illustrated boulevard press in Paris, no figure was more clear-cut and stable, indeed hackneyed, than the attractive, young, cheeky, self-interested, and morally dubious Parisian woman. Or was “she”? This paper will focus upon the social and political conditions in which “she” was cast to play differing roles in the newsprint theatre of everyday life in the French capital. It will track the instances of her ideological recoding or re-purposing by following her uneven journey from trollop to heroine and back again. That the flirty, vacuous and duplicitous *parisienne* could be re-cast (in wartime) as the guarantor of societal stability and emblem par excellence of self-sacrifice was a major event in the print culture of the era.

The paper thus seeks to shine light upon the broad issue of the contingent nature of gender stereotypes in popular representation by looking here at a stretch of years that encompassed both peacetime and war. The representations in question are set upon the streets and boulevards of the French capital as well as in its spaces of art. This particular investigation will cover the final years of the Second Empire which saw a relaxation of press censorship, and the urgent and divisive events of The Terrible Year (1870-71) which spawned a massive ballooning of illustrated newspaper and broad sheet publication. The paper concludes in 1878, the occasion of the first post-war and 3rd Republic-sponsored *Exposition Universelle*, when, as the pundits said, “Paris was Herself Again.”

Jennifer Greenhill (Yale University),
Homer’s inscrutable humor

Heroism and reportage are perhaps the two defining features of Winslow Homer’s work during the American Civil War. The illustrations he produced for *Harper’s Weekly* were visual reports on the conditions of camp life, the highs and lows of the soldier’s experience, while the paintings he made codified the popular image of what heroism at the time meant: the veteran returning to his field, the Union officer in firm command of a group of Confederate rebels. My paper argues, however, that something else was at work in Homer’s art at this time: an impulse to question, even undermine these categories through a subtle, sardonic irony most palpably felt in the artist’s 1863 painting, *Playing Old Soldier*.

The work depicts a lapse in heroism, a Union soldier faking illness in an attempt to get out of duty. But his gesture—sticking out his tongue for the camp surgeon examining him—complicates, even literally interrupts, this narrative by opening onto ironic counter-narratives about 1) the boundaries of polite decorum; 2) the conditions of humour in ‘high’ art during a time of war; 3) the artist as adolescent rebel and the fantasy that he could ever really be ‘anti-establishment’; 4) the limited effects of the iconoclastic act, the way it ultimately ends in resignation and compliance. Instead of simply bolstering period conceptions of heroism by picturing its opposite, Homer here augurs the disenchanting ironic posture that would make such easy polarities—and such naïve, romantic concepts—untenable by the time of World War I.

When he painted *Prisoners from the Front* in 1866—the work that made his name, that signalled to period critics that he was finally “serious”—Homer smoothed out the indeterminacies and challenges presented by the earlier picture to create an iconic image of heroism and ‘straight’ (if generic and idealized) reportage. Pitting the two paintings against one another—the one, all about ‘play’ and self-examination; the other, a sober renunciation of such apparently unproductive, self-indulgent meta-commentary—my paper teases out the stakes involved in this shift in Homer’s idiom and questions whether some vestige of the rhetoric of *Playing Old Soldier* remains in the later painting. A range of mass media imagery—from Thomas Nast’s illustrations for *Harper’s* to period joke books and playing cards—helps me to make my case.

Michael Leja (University of Pennsylvania),
Homer and the popular press

Winslow Homer effectively moved his paintings through a growing network of dealers, critics, and annual academic exhibitions in New York in the 1860s and 1870s. But at the same

time, and often with the same images, he sought to reach a broader public through print and reproductive image technologies. What can we learn from his adapted and re-used images about the conventions governing different media and his beliefs concerning the tastes of the audiences associated with those media?

David Tatham (Syracuse University),

American celebrity journalism and the comic weeklies, 1875-1890: Joseph Keppler and the artist as hero

The emergence in the post-Civil War years of American celebrity journalism as a subgenre of the vaunted New Journalism revitalized the fortunes of the nation's pictorial comic weekly magazines. Celebrity reportage supplied the weeklies with new targets and audiences, and installed new modes of criticism and draughtsmanship. The central figure in this development was *Puck's* founder and guiding spirit, the Vienna-trained artist Joseph Keppler (1838-1894). While Keppler's topical political cartoons established his and his magazine's reputation, his highly original treatment of such celebrities of the arts and religion as Sarah Bernhardt and Henry Ward Beecher may be seen as having transcended topicality to present, as a subtext, the artist as heroic figure—as a guardian of truth in an age of great folly. Such readings aside, these lithographs offer a particularly rewarding psycho-geographic tour of a little visited realm of late nineteenth century American pictorial art.

Thierry Gervais (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Société française de photographie),

Léon Gimpel's points of view: photo-journalist of the Belle Époque

Photo-journalism is rarely subjected to an historical examination of style as this is thought to interfere with the political message of the published image. Without dwelling on visual analysis, historians suggest that the expectations of the press concerning images have always been the same. An aesthetic approach to the forms used in press illustration reveals, on the contrary, that the photographers of the early 20th century were using various stylistic solutions to satisfy the iconographical needs of illustrated weekly journals. In his fight against competing agencies, Léon Gimpel chose to have one of the most original formal productions of the time. To differentiate himself from other photo journalists, he exploited in particular the bird's eye view. Gimpel's pictures are the result of this meeting of the iconographic needs of the newspaper "L'Illustration" with the audacity of an amateur photographer. They show the iconographic diversity of the practice of photo-journalism and the importance of the supposedly minor cultural productions in the construction of the visual culture of the Belle Époque.

Bruce Robertson (Los Angeles County Museum of Art),

Heroic Action and the Real in Winslow Homer's Sea Pictures

Beginning with *The Life Line* 1884, Winslow Homer discovered for his oil painting a monumental subject that would dominate the rest of his oeuvre: the heroic interaction of man and the sea. Homer exhibited the painting in the context of a demonstration he had witnessed,

off the shore of New Jersey; in other words, he was reporting something real. Yet in the same picture can be found the seeds of a curious subversion of heroic action: the male figure is anonymous and it is difficult to identify with his heroism. The action in *Life Line* is also interesting for its gendered nature, an increasingly prominent aspect of Homer's view of the world. By the end of Homer's career, it would appear that in this battle between man and sea, male and female, the sea wins decisively, both over humanity and for our attention. Heroism, it turns out, has its limits.

Tim Barringer (Yale University),
Livingstone and the lion: heroism, empire and illustration

The paper will focus on the representation of the male body in the contact zones of empire. It opens with two plates representing David Livingstone's encounter with a lion. In the first, from Livingstone's *Missionary Travels* (1857), the lion is stopped from devouring the Scotsman only by the intervention of one of Livingstone's party, an African who shoots the lion with a gun. By the turn of the century, however, representations of the now-iconic event in school textbooks depict Livingstone himself defeating the lion single-handedly. This juxtaposition dramatises the mythologising which took place within popular illustration under the sign of reportage. The missionary, the explorer and the soldier provide three tropes of the male body in the contact zone, each of which was widely dispersed through the media of graphic journalism and wood-engraved book illustration. This paper will examine examples of all three, noting the ways in which the operation of the stereotype (as discussed by Homi Bhabha in 'The Other Question') follows the same patterns in relation to the heroic body of the imperial male subject as in the depiction of 'others'. In each case, the excess of the visual rhetoric aims, but fails, to obscure the vulnerability and sense of crisis which perpetually surrounded the historical figures whom the illustrations claim to represent, and the entire project of a heroic imperial masculine identity. A final move will indicate the ways in which these tropes of imperial masculinity were taken up, and modified, by sculptors and history painters in late Victorian England.

David Fraser Jenkins (Independent scholar),
The real as the critic of the heroic: Thomas Eakins's 'William Rush carving his allegorical figure of the Schuylkill River': 1876-7

Thomas Eakins's exceptional painting re-creates the workshop of the sculptor William Rush as it was in 1809, while Rush was carving a monument for the centre of Philadelphia. It is always correctly assumed that Eakins intended to show off the best kind of American artist. But in the terms of this symposium on Winslow Homer, the notions of 'heroism' and 'reportage' expose the contradictions within the painting - the impossible studio, the unreal allegory and the forgotten hero of American art history. Eakins is in addition seen here making a play of the relation between reality and imagination, and his realist technique is used in differing degrees within this scene. The contrast between this painting and Dutch art of the seventeenth century, which was recommended in Paris while Eakins studied there, points to the way in which his representation denies the possibility of symbolism. This studio painting is a demonstration of this principle, while showing the potential of plain depiction, which Eakins was to use with such force in portraiture. In an epilogue, Eakins in 1908 returned to the subject, in the guise of a farewell to his art.

David Peters Corbett (University of York),

Meditation and heroic realism in Winslow Homer's Prout's Neck Seascapes

Winslow Homer's long series of paintings of the Atlantic seascape made at Prout's Neck on the coast of Maine from the early 1880s to his death contains examples of high dramatic action (*The Life Line*, 1884; *The Gulf Stream*, 1899) and of exemplary and evocative human activity which is often mysterious and emotionally highly-charged (*A Summer Night*, 1990). To this extent they fit easily into the familiar reading of Homer as the 'dramatist' whose major interest was in the evocation of intense action or psychological tension through an American realist tradition. This reading has often been extended to deal with the many late marines that depict the setting without human presence, a view lucidly summarised as early as 1944 by the art historian Lloyd Goodrich who wrote that Homer 'had always been a storyteller. Dramatic action was what interested him, and this the sea supplied to take the place of human action'. The sea from this perspective becomes, in Wayne Craven's words, 'an heroic struggle of primeval forces of nature' which stands in for the tempestuous undercurrents of emotional tension and release in Homer's depiction of human interaction. I am interested in exploring the extent to which the presence and absence of humanity within the seascape represents an internal dialogue within Homer's art between the heroic and a principle of counter-heroism, as well as what such a resistance to the heroic might signify historically. Thoreau in *Walden* already wrote of the water as an eye, 'looking into which the beholder measures the depths of his own nature', and throughout the nineteenth-century history of American landscape water is imagined as the mirror of the isolated self, the solitary individual, whose contemplative nature is reflected mysteriously back in the glassy or agitated waters of the river, lake or ocean on which they boat or into which they gaze. The paper reads Homer's seascapes within this tradition and through them seeks to assess the place of both the dramatic and heroic in his late art. At issue will be the extent to which high drama and the popular imaging of the contemporary circumstances of modern life are inflected or revised within Homer's work by other, more meditative, elements. The role of witness to the social and human and the status of record and documentation are given a new meaning by placing Homer's work in another and distinct tradition to the realist and by the dialogue between the two.

Andre Dombrowski (Smith College),

Cézanne's war-time fashions: mass culture and the painting of modern life

In the late 1860s and early 1870s, when Manet, Monet and Renoir made painting explicitly the ally and spokesperson of the new leisure industry, Cézanne proposed—in scenes of murders, orgies, loaded interiors and eroticized copies after fashion plates—a deliberately contrary view of the surface texture and spontaneity in modern life. The "heroism of modern life" has too often been equated with the fleeting, the superficial and the blasé—the putative texture of urban and suburban sociability—leaving little room for Cézanne's more psychological and expressive counter-proposals. Pictures that do not turn on the improvised quality of leisure, the exchange of money, or the pathos of a newly emerging social uniformity, but probe for deeper emotional meanings, are often relegated to the realm of the primordially passionate. Indeed, even when appropriating the very terms of the painting of modern life—in choosing to copy in paint three fashion plates from the widely circulated Parisian fashion journal *La Mode illustrée*—Cézanne did so in order to countermand his

colleagues' disengaged focus on the surface of things and turned his sources into loaded historical narratives.

My paper will situate Cézanne's re-definition of modern life painting firmly within the artistic climate of the years around 1870, emphasizing in particular his use and understanding of popular culture. I will discuss his series of fashion plate copies, done in 1871 or shortly thereafter, and the changes—iconographically, psychologically, semantically—he introduced to his sources. In this series, Cézanne tested avant-garde painting's cultural and historical adaptability in a time of national crisis. For Cézanne, tellingly, chose two fashion plates that were published on July 3rd and 31st of 1870, shortly before and after the outbreak of the war on July 19th, 1870. The third plate was published on May 7th of 1871, two weeks before the start of the Commune's bloody week. One of the important changes Cézanne made when painting the fashion prints—a fact gone unnoticed in the literature to date—was to insert a tricolour in one.

On the basis of a careful reading of the journal *La Mode illustrée*, its other fashion plates and contents, as well as the advice it gave to the bourgeois woman on sartorial display in times of war, I will investigate the paintings in relation to the forms and representations of bourgeois patriotism circulating in 1870/71. Central to this debate will be the role fashion played in the recent national debacles, to which the added tricolour alludes. Cézanne's fashion paintings revel in the instantaneity and cultural immediacy of fashion, but they also present to the realm of mass culture a pictorial analysis more apt and profound than the illustrations themselves were willing and able to offer.

André Gunthert (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Société française de photographie),

The heroism of the poor: photography and the invention of new accounts of ordinary life

A portrait must be heroic - or not exist at all, according to Baudelaire, signifying that photography is excluded from the realm of legitimate representation. Nonetheless, the emergence in the 1880s of a photographic trend directed towards the capture of real life and reportage, was to serve the interests of the portrayal of the rising bourgeoisie. In an entertaining format, tourist, sporting or scientific images become an experimental area of self-representation for a class that had previously only borrowed the codes employed by the aristocracy. By progressively cutting loose from the dramatic models of engraved illustrations, photography acts as witness to a world in which contrasts are less clearly marked. A "heroism of the poor" makes its appearance as a component of the iconography of modern journalism that has as its main characteristic to shift the center of interest from the way in which the image represents to what is being represented - from the convention-ruled towards the natural. It is in these conditions that a magazine can finally run the headline: "We are in the picture" - we, the new heroes of the modern world, the everyday heroes.