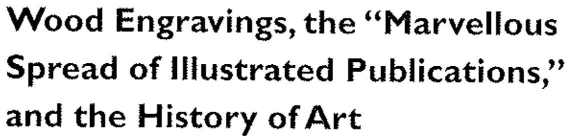

Wood Engravings, the "Marvellous Spread of Illustrated Publications," and the History of Art

Amy M. Von Lintel

MODERNISM / *modernity*
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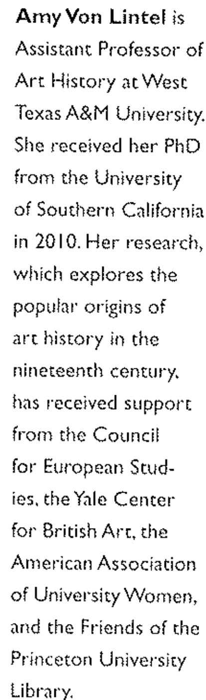
"Mechanical reproduction of a work of art," Walter Benjamin wrote in 1936, "represents something new."[1] For Benjamin, art became mechanically reproducible with the invention of the woodcut in the fifteenth century, and "reached an essentially new stage" in the nineteenth century when traditional means of artistic replication, such as the woodcut, the line engraving, and the etching, were "surpassed" by technologies that kept pace with modernity: first lithography, which "virtually implied the illustrated newspaper" in its ability to "keep pace with printing" and the rapid changes of everyday life; then photography, which freed the hand of the artist and relied on the more swiftly perceiving eye; and, finally, film, which captured images at the speed of speech.[2] Missing from this picture of art reproduction in its so-called "new stage" is the wood engraving. Notably, Benjamin does not connect the late-eighteenth-century resurgence of the wood engraving to its precursor, the woodcut, as a relief image that could keep pace with textual printing. Nor does he view the wood engraving as a technological contemporary of lithography, photography, and film, associated, as are these other media, with the rapidity, mobility, and mass culture of the modern age.[3]



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By contrast, more recent scholars of media history have recognized the particular modernity of wood engravings. Brian Maidment, for instance, has identified "the interdependence of the emergence of mass circulation popular literature and the rise of the commercial wood engraving" as one of the "key historical narratives" of the nineteenth century.[4] Unlike the earlier woodcut, with its rougher linearity and lack of detail, the wood

engraving produced finely detailed images that could be printed on the most advanced steam-powered presses simultaneously with relief type. Even more than the lithograph, wood engravings shaped the rise of the illustrated newspaper and the mass press.

Benjamin was not interested in the circulation of all imagery, of course. His essay focused specifically on the replication of works of art and has had a profound influence on the way art historians think about this history, including their tendency to overlook the wood engraving.[5] Borrowing insights from recent scholarship on media history, this essay argues that wood engravings—as the most common and affordable means of illustrating histories of art in the nineteenth century—played a unique and important role in the history of art history both as an academic discipline and as a subject of interest to general audiences. Even more than other printed and photographic media, wood engravings circulated images of visual art in the context of the written word. In so doing, they enabled the internationalization and popularization of art history. Publishers across a variety of national contexts exchanged wood-engraved illustrations for printing in art history books and art magazines, creating opportunities for cross-cultural audiences to learn art's history from identical imagery. The story of art history's emergence as an academic discipline during the nineteenth century will be familiar to many readers of *Modernism/modernity*.[6] In this same period, mass-market publishers deployed the technology of wood-engraved illustrations to produce a popular version of art history accessible for the self-education of audiences beyond the context of the university, the art academy, or the museum, a development that has not yet been recognized broadly, even in the discipline of art history. An advertisement in the London trade journal *Publishers' Circular* in 1874 summarizes this popularization: "the marvellous spread of illustrated publications has helped to plant a love for Art in the public mind."[7] This ad was written to promote one of the many affordable handbooks of art history illustrated with wood engravings that circulated internationally between 1860 and 1910: Nancy Bell's *Elementary History of Art*, a book that I will discuss in detail later in this essay.[8] More than any other medium, wood engravings enabled this "marvellous spread" of illustrated art histories, thereby encouraging an interest in art and art history among audiences beyond the academy.

To illuminate the importance of wood engravings for art history, I will focus on three firms that were central to this history: Louis Hachette of Paris, Sampson Low of London, and Charles Scribner's of New York. As well as producing a wide variety of general literature, these publishers developed a niche specialization in illustrated art histories. They worked in conjunction with one another to issue versions of the same art history books in their different national contexts. They exchanged wood-engraved illustrations of works of art in the form of electrotype plates that were easily shipped via railroad and steamship to be printed with a translated or reworked text. "The ease with which we can multiply [illustrated publications] by electros and *clichés*," declared the firm of Sampson Low as editors of the *Publishers' Circular* in 1876, "makes them saleable abroad, and also places works of beauty in the widest and cheapest possible way before the poorest of our fellow men."[9] This technology-based image exchange dramatically shaped the field of art history, as identical versions of famous works of art

in the context of similar historical narratives circulated across national and linguistic boundaries. An examination of the art history publications of Hachette, Sampson Low, and Scribner's reveals how the wood engraving both sustained the elite field of art history and brought it into the realm of modern popular culture. The kind of "cut and paste" methods of illustration used by these publishers position wood engravings as arguably the clipart or the jpegs of their era. From our twenty-first century perspective, as digital images have again revolutionized the global sharing of visual information, and as the practices of art history are now fundamentally shaped by the easy appropriation of pictures cut and pasted from the web, we might especially appreciate this earlier form of art replication for the cutting-edge advancement that it was.

But before discussing the art historical publications of Hachette, Sampson Low, and Scribner's, let me review some key developments in the rise of the wood engraving as a modern illustration technique and a means of art reproduction. This technique arguably emerged in the work of British author and illustrator Thomas Bewick, who initiated the widespread use of engraving tools on the harder end grain of the woodblock to produce detailed relief images in the 1790s.[10] Cutting relief images into blocks of wood to illustrate publications was a technique employed since the ninth century in China and the fifteenth century in Europe. Bewick's wood engravings modernized this technique, yielding a more sophisticated if still linear means of rendering images for publication. Bewick's *History of British Birds* (1797–1804) included detailed depictions of bird species located in picturesque landscape vignettes, which were integrated into the pages of text.

Bewick's method of wood engraving was soon deployed for illustrating histories of art. With the initial publication in London of the *Penny Magazine* in 1832, articles on art historical topics—from classical sculptures, to Gothic cathedrals, to Renaissance paintings—featured large and detailed wood engravings after famous works of art (fig. 1).[11] Bewick's pupil John Jackson led a workshop of wood engravers that produced the many hundreds of images for the *Penny Magazine*, with its groundbreaking output of 200,000 copies per week and unprecedentedly low price of a penny per issue. The *Penny Magazine* covered a wide range of topics, such as geography, literature, philosophy, and natural history. Its coverage of art historical subjects in particular—which featured art objects at least once per month, sometimes every week—introduced the study of art's history to hundreds of thousands of readers throughout the British Isles.[12]

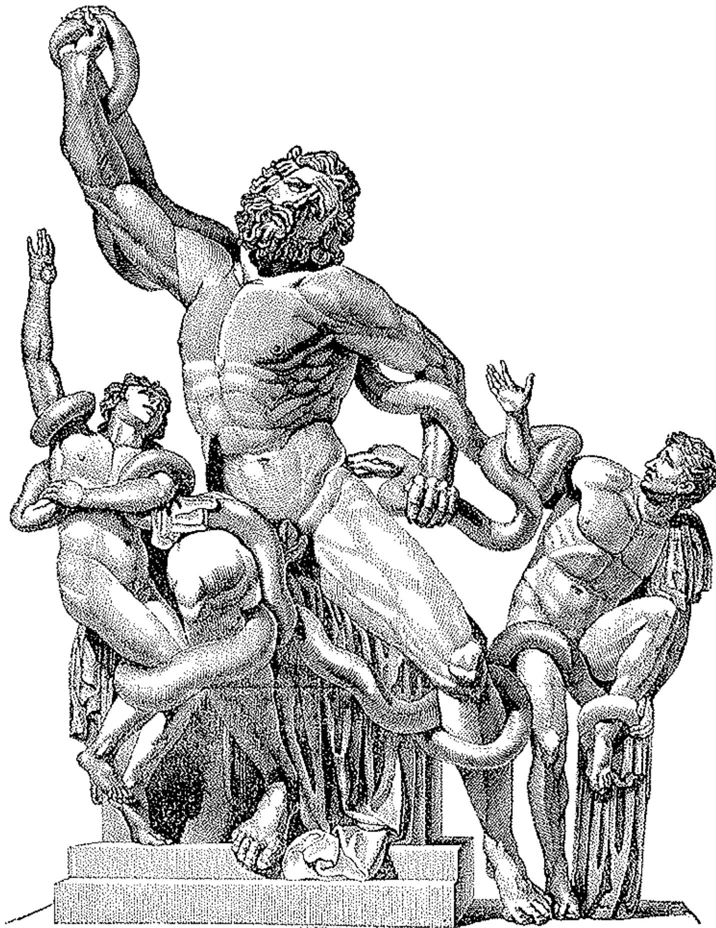
By the 1830s, the history of art had become a recognized discipline of study among specialized scholars, beginning with Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* from 1764, a publication that is generally seen as the first modern history of art.[13] This specialized study of art history continued to develop with the rise of academic programs in universities and art academies. The first such programs emerged in Germany in the 1830s; by 1900, art history courses were also being taught in universities in France, Italy, Britain, Switzerland, Austria, and the United States.[14] In such academic contexts, the history of art became the purview of educated elites.

In contrast, the *Penny Magazine* offered art history knowledge to an audience of non-specialists beyond the academy, instigating a popularization of the field of art

THE PENNY MAGAZINE
OF THE
Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.

39.] PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY. [NOVEMBER 10, 1832.

THE LAOCOON.



[The Group of the Laocoon, at Rome.]

The story of Laocoon is told by Virgil, and will form the best introduction to our notice of the celebrated group known by that name. The terrible fate of the unfortunate man and his children was brought upon them, according to the poet, by the father's disobedience to the will of Minerva: —

"Laocoon, Neptune's priest by lot that year,
With solemn pomp then sacrific'd a steer:
When, dreadful to behold, from sea we spied
Two serpents rank'd abreast the seas divide,
And smoothly sweep along the swelling tide.
Their flaming crests above the waves they show,
Their bellies seem to burn the seas below:
Their speckled tails advance to steer their course,
And on the sounding shore the flying billows force.
And now the strand, and now the plain they held,
Their ardent eyes with bloody streaks were fill'd:
Their nimble tongues they brandish'd as they cam.,
And lick'd their hissing jaws that sputter'd flame
We fled amaz'd: their destin'd way they take,
And to Laocoon and his children make:
And first around the tender boys they wind,
Then with their sharpen'd fangs their limbs and bodies grind.

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Fig. 1. Page from *The Penny Magazine*, with illustration of the Laocoön sculptural group (1832), signed by John Jackson.

history that continued throughout the nineteenth century. More than the nationally oriented academic developments of the field, the popular publishing of art history came to be an international enterprise.[15] Charles Knight, publisher of the *Penny Magazine*, quickly began sharing stereotypes of the magazine's illustrations—including its many art history images—with publishers "in eleven different languages and countries," such as France, Germany, America, Holland, and Brazil.[16]

The stereotyping process involved taking a Plaster of Paris mold of the pages of relief type and the inserted wood-engraved illustrations.[17] This mold was then baked at an even temperature to prevent warping. It was next placed in a "casting box," where it was plunged into molten metal for about ten minutes. The mold was then destroyed, leaving behind the metal plate that exactly reproduced the texts and images from the mold. This metal plate could then be sent through the mail to other publishers who would remount the plate type-high on a wood block and use it to print exact copies of the original pages and illustrations.

Knight detailed this process for readers of the *Penny Magazine*, emphasizing the laborious and rather expensive process needed to produce an accurate stereotype.[18] But Knight also asserted that this initial labor and expense allowed for endless replication precluding the need to set new type or produce new wood engravings. Knight explained how this process enabled distribution and sales of the copies beyond his own needs. Not only did such distribution provide additional profit for Knight, it also allowed him to "assist foreign nations in the production of 'Penny Magazines,'" which Knight saw as having the positive benefit of encouraging peaceful international relations.[19] Knight's practice of sharing stereotypes with foreign publishers produced the kind of globally shared knowledge that arguably defines modern popular culture. And because Knight's *Penny Magazine* devoted such dedicated coverage to art historical subjects, this modern popular culture included an education in the history of art.

Knight's innovative practices of image exchange paved the way for a thriving international market of shared art history illustrations. And the introduction of electrotyping, which became the predominant technology by the mid-nineteenth century, further encouraged international networks of image exchange. Electrotyping provided an even more accurate reproduction of the original wood engravings and created more durable metal plates than the earlier stereotyping method.[20] After a wax mold was taken of the wood-engraved block, electrotyping employed an electric current to adhere a thin skin of molten metal, often steel for its durability, to the surface of the mold. As with stereotypes, this thin skin produced an exact replica of the original relief block that could be remounted on a new block of wood. Electrotypes, or "electros" as most often referred to by period publishers, made possible an even more rapid and efficient circulation of illustrations, including images reproducing works of art.

A leader in this international market for electrotypes was Paris publisher Louis Hachette et Cie. Founded in Paris in 1826, the firm of Hachette began issuing affordable histories of art illustrated with wood engravings in the 1860s; by 1870, it was circulating these images to foreign publishers through electrotype copies. By this time, Hachette had secured a veritable monopoly over the railroad bookstores across France,

making the firm arguably "the most powerful house of European publishing" with its distribution network that rivaled any in Europe.[21] Hachette designed several series of portable illustrated guides that catered specifically to railroad travelers, including the *Bibliothèque des Merveilles* beginning in the 1860s. The informative guides in the *Merveilles* series focused on the "wonders" of the world: the phenomena of nature, the inventions of science, and the masterworks of art history. The volumes of so-called "general knowledge" in the series included at least a dozen dedicated to art historical topics.[22] Hachette claimed that these volumes would be "as useful as they were attractive," would be printed in "a handy format" to fit easily "into the pocket or the travel bag," and would be offered at "a moderate price."[23] The firm sought to "turn the forced leisure and boredom of a long journey into a means for the pleasure and instruction of all."[24] By including art histories in the *Bibliothèque des Merveilles* series, Hachette took the history of art outside the specialized spheres of university classrooms and museum galleries and into the wider spaces of modern life.

The art history volumes of the *Bibliothèque des Merveilles*, moreover, introduced an unprecedented cheapness for art history books. They were issued as handbooks, with paper covers for the price of 2 francs (F) and with decorative cloth bindings for 3F per volume.[25] The books were printed in editions of 3000 to 7500 copies, an edition size that indicated a significant investment on the part of publishers and were undertaken for books that promised to sell well.[26] This edition size also enabled the printing of updated versions that responded to new developments and discoveries; the majority of the art history volumes saw continuous updating between 1860 and 1900. Hachette's art histories never reached the extreme end of affordable books for the masses in this period. Such books were normally printed in editions closer to 10,000 copies and were sold in paper covers for less than one franc or one American dollar. But the *Merveilles* art histories were also far from the expensive luxury editions of "art books," a period term that described well-made volumes with high quality illustrations. These art books were most often issued in limited printings of less than 500 copies, without the continuous reprinting seen with the *Merveilles* volumes, and they saw prices upwards of $10.00, often requiring sales by subscription.[27] For instance, Scribner's listed Owen Jones's *Grammar of Ornament* in 1881 at $35.00 in quarto format with 112 color lithographic plates.[28] Advertisements for such art books proclaimed them to be "profusely and exquisitely illustrated," "artistic and beautiful," and even "a work of art" themselves.[29] Care was taken to select quality paper, to employ decorative typeface and page layout, and to produce artistic illustrations. By contrast, popular art histories, such as Hachette's *Merveilles* volumes, lacked such concerns for expensive papers, designed types, and decorative illustrations. Printed on plain but durable paper with standard black inks for text and images alike, and with uninteresting but highly legible typeface, these books were not marketed as works of art. They were instead promoted as useful reference works. Hachette's popular art histories were issued as illustrated handbooks, a modern format for a new kind of reader. This format condensed a large amount of textual material and numerous black and white wood-engraved illustrations into a compact space, allowing the books to be portable and comfortably held in the

hand when reading.[30] Rather than lining the shelves of a gentleman's library, these new art history handbooks could be stored in a modest home and easily transported for reading "on the go."

The strong sales of Hachette's *Merveilles* art histories in France quickly prompted foreign translations of the books in English, Italian, Spanish, Russian, and Polish.[31] This series arguably reached the widest international audience of any art history books of the period, and all of these versions included copies of Hachette's original wood engravings printed within the text pages. Like Knight, Hachette saw the advantage of selling copies of its art history images to foreign firms, now drawing directly on electrotyping technology to mass-reproduce and distribute these illustrations. Two of the publishers that contracted with Hachette to issue these translations with the included electrotyped illustrations were Sampson Low and Scribner's.

Sampson Low was a London firm founded in 1819. Its importance among British publishers was solidified when it launched the trade journal *Publishers' Circular* in 1837. The firm issued a wide range of publications, with a special emphasis on illustrated general literature.[32] Charles Scribner's firm was founded in New York City in 1846, and soon after become one of the leading American publishers of the nineteenth century.[33] Beginning in the 1870s, Sampson Low issued versions of Hachette's *Merveilles* volumes on Italian painting, European painting, sculpture, engraving, and glassmaking, while Scribner's translated the same volumes in addition to Hachette's history of architecture.[34] Close business ties developed between Hachette, Sampson Low, and Scribner's. Advertisements for Sampson Low in the *Publishers' Circular* claimed that the firm received "Fast-Train Parcels…from the Continent twice a week," including numerous shipments from Hachette, while they also promoted Sampson Low as the "English agents" for Scribner's work.[35] Edward Marston, who joined Sampson Low as a partner in the 1850s, was the principal contact for Charles Welford, Scribner's permanent representative in London. Letters between Scribner and Welford mention Marston with monthly regularity. After joining Sampson Low in 1875, W. J. Rivington further solidified this transatlantic relationship with Scribner's, undertaking a trip to New York via steamship in 1880 to work with Charles Scribner in person. According to Scribner's letters, Rivington's visit mixed business with pleasure: Scribner describes his colleague's "pleasant" stay, which included a "little trip to Staten Island for a game of tennis," as well as enthusiastic talk of future business deals.[36] Such negotiations touched not only upon the expected bestselling novels but also upon the production and sales of popular art history books. Rivington, Scribner writes with evident excitement, spoke to him of a new edition of Nancy Bell's *Elementary History of Art*, which, when ready, he "must certainly have."[37] Bell's *Elementary History of Art*, published under the pseudonym of N. D'Anvers, constituted one of the first illustrated general surveys of art history, and the first authored by a woman, predating the now better-known work of Helen Gardner *Art Through the Ages* by half a century.

Both Sampson Low and Scribner's also forged close connections with Hachette in France. During the Franco-Prussian War and the Siege of Paris between 1870 and 1871, for example, Marston organized a fundraiser in London for French publishers

who had suffered economic hardship in the crisis; the 37,500 francs Marston raised were sent to Hachette in Paris for distribution.[38] Like Scribner's with Welford, Hachette installed a permanent representative, H. Kleinan, in London during this period. Indeed, London became a hub for international publishing at the time. If Scribner's conducted business with Hachette, for instance, that business occurred mainly in the British capital: the contracts regarding the *Merveilles* books between the French firm and the American firm clearly specified that the exchange of funds would take place in London and would use the British pound as the common currency.[39]

When they adapted Hachette's art history volumes for their own national markets, Sampson Low and Scribner's took the texts directly from the French and reused the same images. Hiring only a translator and typesetters to prepare the English texts proved more economical than paying authors and illustrators to compose entirely new works. With production costs minimized, the British and American publishers could sell the art history books to the public at the lowest possible prices, a practice that significantly shaped the market for popular art history. The American versions, for example, were listed at $1.50 per volume, which later lowered to $1.25 in 1872, and dropped to $1.00 in 1889.[40] Such lowering of prices often signified successful sales, as publishers needed to charge less to recuperate their costs and make a profit.

The borrowing from Hachette by Sampson Low and Scribner's, however, remained largely behind the scenes, as the British and American firms marketed their art history translations as essentially new publications. Scribner's packaged their versions within the newly designed series *Illustrated Library of Wonders*, which they marketed continuously for decades. Modeled from Hachette's *Bibliothèque des Merveilles*, the American series integrated art history volumes with books on scientific subjects as representing complementary fields of general knowledge. Popular versions of art's history, therefore, did not constitute a discrete discipline of study; rather they formed part of a broad spectrum of subjects for self-education that reached beyond the fields taught in primary and secondary schools. Readers interested in the historical development of art or the scientific phenomena of weather, for example, could only find access to these studies outside the classroom.

The promotional title page for Scribner's *Illustrated Library of Wonders* series reveals the complementary fascinations for readers inspired by both science and art (fig. 2). Surrounding the text of the series title, a circle of wonders begins with art objects such as Raphael's *Madonna of the Chair*, the *Apollo Belvedere* sculpture, and the head of an Assyrian Winged Bull, all piled up in front of recognizable works of architecture, from Pisa's "leaning tower," to a Corinthian column, to an Egyptian obelisk, to a dome much like St. Peter's in Rome, to the spire of a Gothic cathedral. The collection of recognizable references goes on to depict a hot air balloon, a telescope pointing to a shooting star, and a bolt of lightening striking down toward a lighthouse below. In the sweep of items filling this crowded image, the man-made beauty of art claims equal importance to the phenomena of physics, astronomy, and optics, collectively luring the curious reader to learn about the dynamic and diverse world.

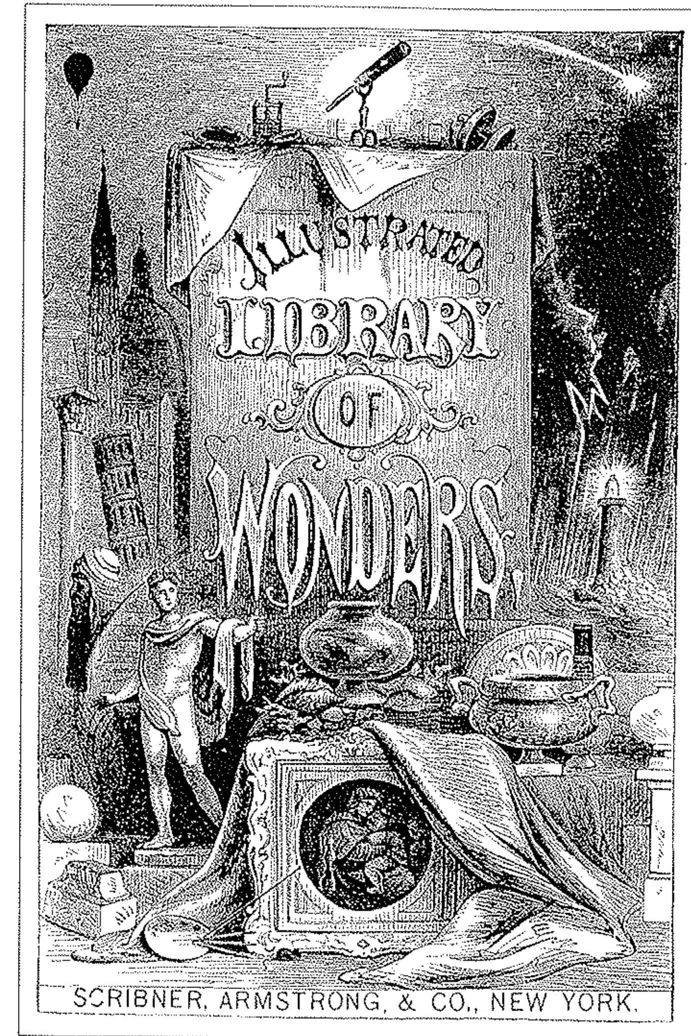

Fig. 2. Series title page for Scribner's *Illustrated Library of Wonders*, as printed in *Wonders of Sculpture* (1873).

The distinction between popular art history and art history as a subject of academic study can be seen in the catalogues of both Hachette and Scribner's. Hachette listed its *Merveilles* series not in the section of Education and Instruction (Enseignement), where school textbooks appeared, but under the separate "Useful Knowledge" category (Connaissances Utiles) marketed to general readers for self-education.[41] Scribner's likewise listed their *Illustrated Library of Wonders* volumes under "General Literature," separate from "School Text Books." Though Scribner's 1874 listing of Bell's *Elementary History of Art* promotes the book as being both "for use in schools" and "for self instruction," it is the second purpose that was more realizable at the time.[42] If these art histories found their way into a school context, it was as prize books for students to enhance their home libraries rather than as books used daily in the classroom.

Such prize books were often distributed at the end of the school year, and defined an important marketing category for publishers.[43] Art history proved a good choice for these prize books, as it constituted an attractive field for further learning beyond the required school curricula.

Just as Hachette's *Merveilles* series and its American translations joined books on art with volumes on science, Nancy Bell's *Elementary History of Art* similarly combined art history with other fields of general interest. The first edition of Bell's book was issued with a final chapter on the history of music. Although later editions of the book separated this music chapter into its own volume, advertisements continuously linked the histories of art and music as companion fields of useful knowledge and cultural development. This intersection of art history with other fields of general knowledge set popular art histories apart from more scholarly studies in the field, especially works authored by professional art historians in Germany.

German art histories published during this period also used wood engravings for their numerous illustrations and saw wide international circulation and translation. But they were rarely marketed in connection to other fields of general education; instead they were promoted internationally as studies in a newly distinct academic field. For example, Wilhelm Lübke's *Grundriss der Kunstgeschichte*, first published in Stuttgart in 1860, saw translation into English, French, Danish, Finnish, and Swedish.[44] Lübke taught as a professor at the Berlin Bauakademie from 1857 to 1861 and later held professorships at the Universities of Zurich, Stuttgart, and Karlsruhe. When the English version of Lübke's history of art was announced in Britain, advertisements and reviews emphasized the author's pedigree from respected German universities. Not surprisingly, Lübke's book sold in Britain for a much higher price than popular art histories: it was listed at 42 shillings, a price around four times as high as the translations of Hachette's *Merveilles* volumes and Nancy Bell's *Elementary History of Art*.[45] Lübke's art history was printed in two larger and denser volumes, not the single-volume handbook of the popular art histories. Similarly, Franz Kugler's illustrated *Handbook on the History of Painting* was offered in Britain in two volumes for 30 shillings in 1855; by the 1870s, the book had expanded to four volumes listed at 54s.[46] Kugler, like Lübke, was a respected German scholar of art history; he obtained one of the first teaching positions involving art history at the Berlin University in 1833 and published the earliest unillustrated general survey *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* in 1842, as well as later illustrated studies.[47] The art histories of both Lübke and Kugler appealed to students with a more specialized interest in art history who were willing and able to pay higher prices for the scholarship of academic art historians. Readers might graduate from the affordable introductory handbooks to these multi-volume, more comprehensive studies.

German art history publishers—such as Ebner und Seubert of Stuttgart, the publisher of numerous works by Lübke and Kugler—also participated in the international exchange of electrotyped illustrations alongside their French, British, and American colleagues. For example, arrangements were made between Ebner und Seubert and Smith, Elder and Co. in London for the purchase of 380 electrotypes of the illustrations in Lübke's *Grundriss der Kunstgeschichte*.[48] For this exchange, Smith, Elder paid

£100 to the German firm for the electros and the rights to print 1000 copies of Lübke's book in English. Compared to the £25 honorarium paid to Lübke and the £50 paid to Fanny Elizabeth Bunnètt for her translation services, this expense for electrotypes was significant. But with the list price of each copy of Lübke's book being 42 shillings, the London publishers stood to make a significant profit on their 1000 copies. Smith, Elder's translations of Lübke's art histories also saw several editions, signifying strong sales over several decades. Paying the flat £100 fee was much less expensive than producing hundreds of new wood engravings, especially when those images could be reused in future editions.

Ebner und Seubert sold electrotypes to other foreign publishers as well. Evidence of this can be seen in Bell's *Elementary History of Art*, where no less than 79 out of the 100 illustrations in Bell's 1874 first edition—including images of the Winged Bulls of ancient Assyria and the classical sculpture of *Laocoön*—were reused from Lübke's *Grundriss* (fig. 3). Bell even admits to the borrowing of these illustrations from a "'Guide to the History of Art' which has long been in use in German schools," though she never mentions Lübke's work by name.[49] Signatures of the German wood engravers displayed on some of the images in Bell's book also highlight this sharing of illustrations. Despite the identical copies of art works appearing in Bell's and Lübke's books, however, the two art histories circulated in different spheres. Not only did Lübke's book include a broader coverage of art history in its two larger volumes, it also traded on the respected name of its author, therefore fetching a higher price and appealing to a more sophisticated audience.

The price and format of popular art histories including the *Merveilles* volumes and Bell's *Elementary History of Art* are closer to the internationally circulating illustrated novels of Jules Verne, for example, than to the standard studies of German art history. For instance, Sampson Low offered Verne's *Fur Country* and *Twenty-thousand Leagues Under the Sea* in 1874, each with dozens of wood-engraved illustrations, as compact "ten-and-sixpenny volumes," the same price as Bell's *Elementary History of Art*.[50] Scribner's likewise offered Verne's novels for between $1.50 and $3.00, prices similar to its *Illustrated Library of Wonders* art history volumes.[51] Both firms advertised the Verne novels as "cheap editions" and "at a low price."[52] Though illustrations in the Verne books were promoted as making readers' "hair stand on end," thereby serving to entertain more than instruct, they can still be compared to affordable art histories with an educational purpose.[53] Their portable size, their format with plentiful illustrations, their relatively low price, and their market appeal for general readers, including children, correspond to the popular art histories offered by the same publishers. An advertisement for Sampson Low's *Illustrated Biographies of the Great Artists*, another series of affordable art history books announced in 1879 that continued for years, summarized the purpose of popular art histories for modern readers: "They afford just what a very large proportion of readers in these hurrying times wish to be provided with—a sort of concentrated food for the mind."[54] Rather than a reference book for the most serious students of art's history, these popular study guides offered a brief and manageable introduction to a field with growing general appeal.

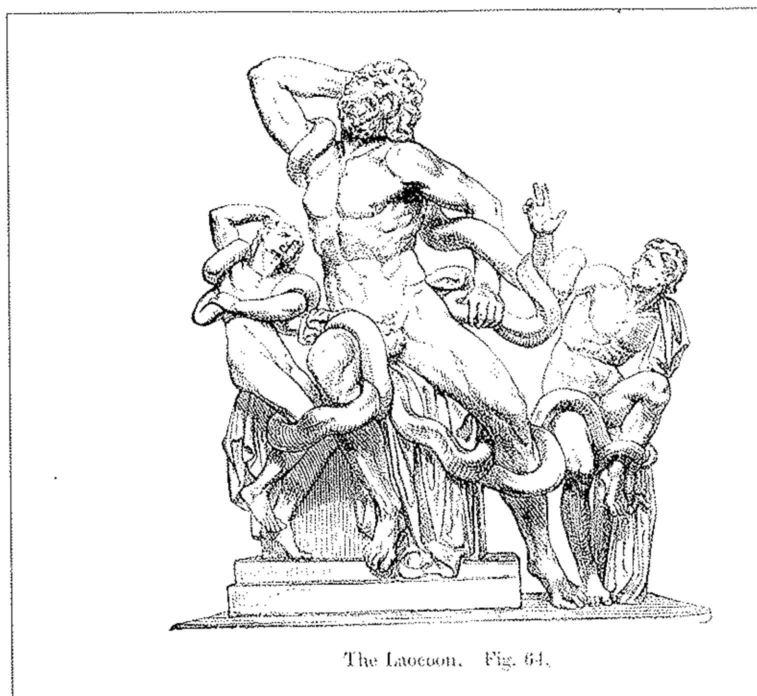

Fig. 3. Illustration of the *Laocoön* sculptural group, from Nancy Bell, *Elementary History of Art* (1874).

A strict separation between the more academic art histories of Lübke and Kugler and popular art histories is, however, misleading. Popular introductions to art's history often distilled and repurposed scholarly knowledge, including repeating many of the same art objects as a foundational art history canon. At times, as in Bell's *Elementary History of Art*, identical illustrations were recycled for popular audiences. Not only did this reuse of illustrations physically connect the high and low cultures of art history through their shared media, it also contributed to the very possibility of a popularly accessible art history. Recycling ready-made illustrations kept book prices much lower and brought them into different markets for consumers.

The authors of popular art histories—including such women as Nancy Bell and such French "men of letters" as Louis Viardot, who wrote several art history volumes for Hachette's *Merveilles* series—were often not formally trained as art historians, lacking the university education and academic pedigree of Lübke or Kugler. In addition to their art history writings, both Viardot and Bell produced other affordable books on a variety of topics. Viardot authored volumes on literature as well as art, while Bell produced introductory-level educational texts on science, music, geography, and art history. Both Viardot and Bell likewise offered their expertise as translators: Viardot translated the literary works of Cervantes, Gogol, and Pushkin, while Bell provided English versions of Verne's widely popular novels. Unlike the more focused disciplinary research produced by Lübke and Kugler throughout their careers as professional art historians, the writings of Viardot and Bell promoted art history as a field of popular scope alongside other branches of general education.

As art history educators, more than professional scholars, the authors of popular art histories avoided in-depth discussions of aesthetic theory in their writing, focusing instead on basic descriptions of canonical objects and their historical context. These authors often employed vivid language that responded directly to the included images, drawing on a text-image dialogue that could attract and maintain the attention of uninformed readers. For instance, in the section on the ruins of Egypt in the *Merveilles* history of architecture, the author André Lefèvre evocatively described the "black abyss" and "thick, suffocating air" inside the Pyramids, the Sphinx "devoured by the leprosy of time," and the "systematic forest" of the colonnades and obelisks at Thebes, a phrase which is made visually compelling in an nearby illustration of the Temple of Karnak (fig. 4).[55] In this image, the columns indeed seem to grow out of the barren earth like a grove of trees. While the crumbling stones of the peripheral temple walls evoke the destructive "leprosy of time" and the striking antiquity of the ruin, the organized rows of remaining columns speak to the sophistication of "systematic" architectural design produced by the ancient Egyptians.

This combined text-image approach to art history connected audiences with an historical past and with geographic locations around the world. Readers found the prehistoric monument of Stonehenge just pages away from the monuments of Egypt, the temples of Pre-Columbian Mexico and India, the ancient statues of Greece and Rome, and the frescos of Renaissance Italy. They gained an appreciation of these human creations as part of the history of civilization, which was considered appropriate knowledge for general audiences. The history of art came to be seen as part of an expanding world, where art objects were not confined by national contexts, but where the history of art encompassed increasingly global perspectives.

The close text-image relationship in affordable formats was only possible with wood-engraved illustrations. To be sure, all of the foreign versions of Hachette's *Merveilles* series, as well as Bell's *Elementary History of Art*, employed wood engravings for their numerous illustrations. Unlike the more expensive media also available at the time, including color lithographs, steel engravings, and photogravures, wood engravings offered an unrivaled cheapness for publishers and book buyers. A price comparison between wood engravings, halftones, and photogravures in the 1890s can illuminate the economic reasons publishers continued to chose wood engravings for cheaper art histories even into the final years of the century. Photogravures cost as much as $25.00 per image to produce, halftones between $5.00 and $7.00, and wood engravings as little as $1.50 per image.[56] Until photographic media could rival this cheapness, relief prints continued to appear in all of the most affordable publications.

The complex relationship of texts and images in modern published media has been most fruitfully explored in the work of Michel Melot and Ségolène Le Men.[57] Both Melot and Le Men have traced these relationships on a theoretical as well as a material level. While they point out the heterogeneity of text-image dialogues constructed in nineteenth-century publications—the confrontations, conflicts, and collaborations

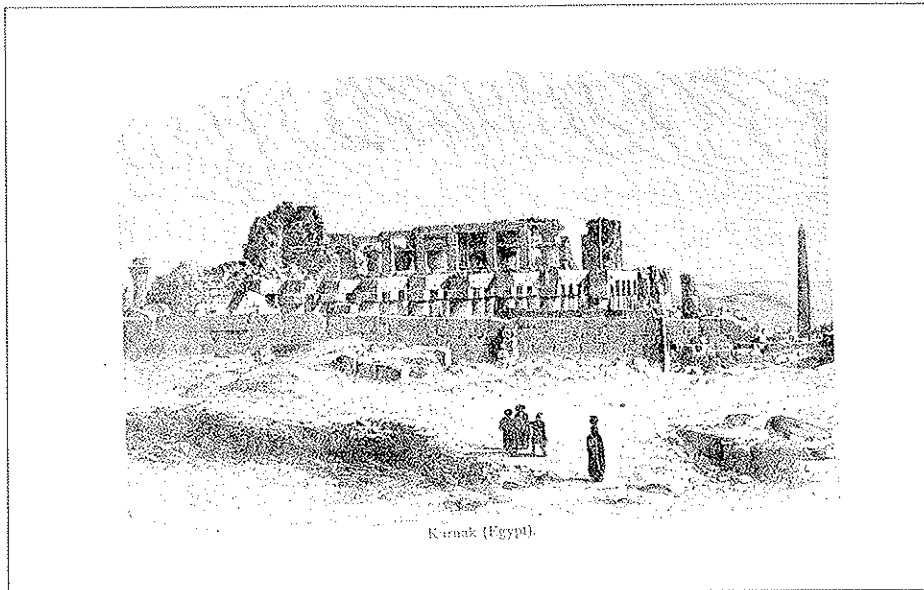

Fig. 4. Illustration of the Temple of Karnak, Egypt, from *Les Merveilles de l'architecture* (1865).

between texts and images, as well as the variety of functions they served in tandem—they also explore the material production and circulation of text-image formats. The studies of Melot and Le Men are often broad and generalizing; though they integrate wood engravings into the plethora of image-making media of the nineteenth century, and even appreciate the medium in its ability to reproduce works of art, their treatment of wood engravings in light of art and art history has been somewhat cursory. But their careful attention to the materiality of illustrations—how images are published in books and how these published books circulate in international contexts—is crucial for understanding the distribution of art history images in nineteenth-century publications.

Though wood engraving remained the most affordable illustration method even into the early 1900s, not all popular art histories avoided photomechanical media. Sampson Low's issued its *Wonders of European Art* and *Wonders of Sculpture* with autotype and carbon print illustrations in addition to the original wood engravings.[58] These tonal photographic prints with their striking deep and velvety blacks added a clear attraction to the volumes, but their production required pasting the new images onto pages that were later bound into the books. Not surprisingly, this elevated the price for the English translations. They were listed in the *Publishers' Circular* from 1870 at 12 shillings 6 pence (12s 6d), around eight times the price of the books in France or America.[59] Yet, this price still remained significantly cheaper than the art histories of Lübke, Kugler, and other German scholars.

Extant business contracts describing transactions between Hachette, Sampson Low, and Scribner's reveal the ongoing exchange of electrotyped copies of art history illustrations. With each steamer and rail shipment between these publishers, packages

of electros made their way across national boundaries. Not only did this exchange produce a steady stream of income for the producing firm, but the purchasing firm also saved on production costs, buying the copies at a flat rate instead of paying artists to manufacture new images. In contrast, when purchasing illustrations in other media, such as steel engravings or lithographs, the cost was higher, the number of copies was limited, and the purchasing publisher contracted the printing from the original firm. The finished prints would have been sent to the purchasing publisher to be bound into the printed books later.[60]

Because of this lucrative market for wood engravings and electrotypes, Hachette, Sampson Low, and Scribner's all employed veritable factories of wood engraving artists, including both designers and engravers, often referred to separately as "artists" and "cutters" at the time. According to an article in *La Presse* covering Hachette's display at the 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris, the firm employed 130 designers and 200 engravers.[61] The labor of these artists was so crucial to publishers that Scribner writes emotionally in 1880 about competing with the rival New York firm of Harper's for the best craftsmen. He describes how Harper's was "'tying up' all the artists they [could] control by promising them all the work they [could] do in condition of their working for no one else."[62] The competition for good illustrators was fierce, therefore, as illustrated literature based on the technology of wood engraving became a staple of international publishing.

In the business documents of Hachette, Sampson Low, and Scribner's, the topic of electros dominated negotiations, especially for art history books. For example, an 1870 contract between Hachette and Scribner's sets out the fixed price of 25 French centimes per square centimeter of the electros of any *Merveilles* volumes to be sent from Paris to New York upon request.[63] This cost for electros was the only money exchanged in order for Scribner's to begin printing its translations of Hachette's art histories. Hachette had paid each author of the series volumes, as well as the illustrators, a flat salary without the promise of royalties on sales, thereby enabling Hachette to sell freely the translation rights and electros.[64] This sharing of electrotypes between Hachette and Scribner's becomes visibly evident in the artists' signatures appearing on the images. American readers could plainly see the French names of Emile Thérond, Dieudonné-Auguste Lancelot, Hippolyte Chapuis, Eugène Meunier, Charles LaPlante, and Auguste Trichon, whose artistic designs and engravings produced the original images.[65] Though relatively inexpensive to manufacture and ship, electrotypes were still far from throwaway items; in their contract with Scribner's for the *Merveilles* translations, Hachette specified that any unused plates had to be shipped back to France by Scribner's uninjured so that they may be used for another customer.[66] In such business transactions, the exchange value of electrotypes was made clear to both negotiating parties.

Control over electrotypes offered other advantages for publishers, as the images were often used in publications beyond their original contracted purpose. Having purchased the *Merveilles* electrotypes from Hachette, Sampson Low also employed these illustrations in its numerous other art history books, such as Nancy Bell's *Elementary History of Art*. Bell's book was first issued in London by the Asher and Company in

1874. Although the details of this transaction remain unknown, Asher later sold the rights to Bell's publication, which were acquired by Sampson Low in the early 1880s. When Sampson Low published a revised edition of Bell's book in 1882, it dramatically expanded the number of illustrations in the book. For this expansion, Sampson Low re-appropriated the *Merveilles* electrotypes they had purchased from Hachette. By 1882, therefore, Bell's *Elementary History of Art* had become a hybrid of illustrations from German and French originals; copies of Lübke's images were combined with copies of Hachette's *Merveilles* images to produce a new English-language art history at a low cost.

Sampson Low also reused these images from Hachette in its series *Illustrated Biographies of the Great Artists.* In promoting this series, the firm specified their intention to recycle previously published images to keep costs low: "Cheapness of price being especially aimed at, the introduction of expensive new engravings will be unadvisable."[67] Each volume in this series was issued at 3 shillings 6 pence. Sampson Low additionally reused Hachette's electros in advertisements for its various art history publications; ads in the illustrated Christmas issues of the *Publishers' Circular* featured images of Jacques-Louis David's *Rape of the Sabine Women*, Masaccio's *Tribute Money*, and numerous classical sculptures, all taken from the French originals. The reappearance of these images as promotional illustrations reveals the diverse uses and commercial efficacy of wood-engraved art history images.

The publishers of art magazines, in addition to book publishers, also took advantage of the lucrative market of electrotype sales. The *Art Journal* in London, for instance, advertised a stock of around 25,000 "electrotypes of superior wood engravings" that "have appeared in that Journal and in other illustrated works issued by them" for the price of 9 pence per square inch.[68] The ad specified that the engraved woodblocks themselves were not for sale. The magazine publishers would have retained the original blocks for their own future use and for the production of more saleable electrotypes. The growing market for electrotypes of all variety of illustrations, including copies of works of art, also created a niche for companies that mediated between publishers in different countries and served as dealers of reusable illustrations. The English and Foreign Electrotype Agency offered a "very large stock of proofs of Foreign Electrotypes not yet used" in Britain.[69] The firm claimed to make available all wood engravings in every "department of Science and Art" as they immediately appeared on the continent.[70] Advertisements of this firm specified that the purchase of ready-made electrotypes "will admit of a very superior class of illustration at a trifling expense."[71] Such firms also guaranteed to the selling publishers that their buying clients can "be relied upon" not to resell the electrotypes for their own profit.[72] Electrotypes had become valuable commodities that merited the mediation and policing of dealers.

With the invention of metal-plate replication, wood engraving emerged as the most advanced illustration technology in the nineteenth century. The process quickly became associated with speed, mass production, and modernity. William Andrew Chatto explained this modernity in his treatise on wood engraving published in the *Illustrated London News* in 1844, describing how "the steam-press, a mighty engine,

multiplies [wood-engraved illustrations] by tens of thousands, almost with the rapidity of thought."[73] As a relief process, wood engraving streamlined the production of illustrated texts, especially with the introduction of steam-driven presses.

Today, historians of art and scholars of modernity remain most familiar with the progression of reproductive media described by Benjamin in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Wood-engraved reproductions of works of art have been ignored as the archaic precursors to the more successful technology of photography. For print historian William Ivins, wood engravings of works of art were "little more than travesties of the objects they purported to represent."[74] To be sure, the quality of wood engravings in reproducing art with mimetic accuracy is poor. But the images in popular art histories from the nineteenth century were not designed to assist the advanced connoisseur who desired highly detailed copies to study the individual style of the artist or to make definitive attributions of works of art. These reproductions were small, monochromatic, and resolutely linear, making such scholarly study impossible. The illustrations in these books served instead as didactic examples to inspire introductory learning in a manner that avoided scholarly dryness and detail. Their formats were meant to awaken interest in art history by attracting and informing readers. The linear nature of wood engravings also reinforced an emphasis on narrative in art history. Issues concerning paint handling, color, tonality, and composition would have been ill-served by small monochromatic illustrations, giving the verbal histories that unfolded around the art monuments more primacy than detailed formal discussions.

Publishers and consumers in the nineteenth century appreciated the distinct modernity of wood-engraved illustrations. Paris publisher Ambroise Firmin-Didot wrote in 1863 that wood engraving corresponded "marvelously" with the recent technological developments of electricity, railroads, and other forms of rapid communication, in contrast to the intaglio process of printmaking that was "too slow" in its production "to be sufficient for representing things instantaneously."[75] Where photography has become the medium most commonly associated with instantaneity by scholars of this period, it was in fact wood engraving that first brought rapidity, cheapness, widespread circulation—that is, modernity—to illustrated publishing. Publishers and their audiences also appreciated the importance of wood engravings for circulating works of art. An editorial in the *Publishers' Circular* in 1876 placed wood engraving together with photography as having "driven out" the more traditional media of line engravings, mezzotints, and etchings for copying art.[76] The article equates "the woodcutter" with the inventors of photography, "Messrs. Daguerre and Talbot," in their impact on art reproduction: "we must not forget that the wood engravers have done much, very much towards educating the public, promoting fine art, and supporting artists."[77]

The wood engravings appearing in the majority of nineteenth-century publications represented a commercial and industrial craft rather than works of high art, although groups of original artistic wood engravers did emerge at the end of the century; however, the boundaries between commercial productions and fine art were highly fluid in this period, and numerous aspiring studio artists found work creating designs for popular illustrations.[78] The most famous example of this situation is the French art-

ist Charles-François Daubigny. Before becoming successful as a Salon painter in the 1860s, Daubigny worked as a prolific illustrator of popular books.[79] Daubigny provided the drawings for illustrations in Hachette's railroad libraries, including the *Merveilles* histories of art. Appearing in *Les Merveilles de la sculpture*, for instance, was an intricately delineated view of a funeral monument then attributed to Renaissance artist Jean Cousin, complete with the moving detail of a grieving Diane de Poitiers leaning over her husband's body, which prominently displays the child-like signature of Daubigny at the lower left (fig. 5). These images by Daubigny highlight the artistic talent involved in the production of popular wood engravings.

In "The Painter of Modern Life" from 1863, which has since become a foundational text for art history, Charles Baudelaire recognized the importance of wood-engraved illustrations for the production of high art. Baudelaire's ideal modern artist was not a French academic history painter, who cloaked his figures in false historical costuming, but rather the illustrator of popular newspapers: Constantin Guys.[80] Guys' sketchwork for the *Illustrated London News* provided images of travel, urban life, and the Crimean War—in short, pictures of modern reality—for the paper's readers. Guys sent his sketches from Paris to London, where they were adapted by engravers into relief woodblocks, which were then printed on the paper's steam presses simultaneously with the text. Baudelaire highlighted Guys' role as an illustrator, a role that depended upon published wood engravings. Baudelaire advised artists to imitate illustrators in making everyday life a new inspiration for high art. The paintings of Manet and the Impressionists responded to Baudelaire's advice, using the same fashions and urban entertainments appearing in Guys' illustrations as the basis for their painted canvases. As Baudelaire's essay demonstrates, wood engravings formed a connective tissue between the spheres of high and low culture, of art and illustration.

Within the pages of popular art histories, the use of wood engravings further challenged a strict separation between high art and popular culture. On the one hand, the wood engravings were mass-produced, cheaply replicated, and widely circulated; they were commercial resources rather than precious works of art. On the other hand, these images reproduced some of the most precious and valued objects of world art. From the temples of Classical Greece, to the triumphal arches of Rome, to the paintings of Michelangelo, Titian, Rembrandt, and Velazquez, the collections of objects appearing in these early art histories remain revered in the field to this day. Indeed, they continue to populate introductory textbooks and classroom lectures, even across the shifts from wood engravings, to halftones, to offset lithographs, to photographic and now digital images. Before any other medium, wood engravings brought the art of art history into the popular culture of modernity. Through the exchange of electrotype illustrations, identical versions of these monuments of art history appeared in books seen by international audiences. Though far removed from their originals in art museums and remote geographic locations, these cheap copies made familiarity with original art a widely shared experience. In the late nineteenth century, the value of "cheap literature" and the popularization of knowledge continued to be debated. If Shakespeare is good at 5 shillings, an editorial in the *Publishers' Circular* asked, why is it not still good

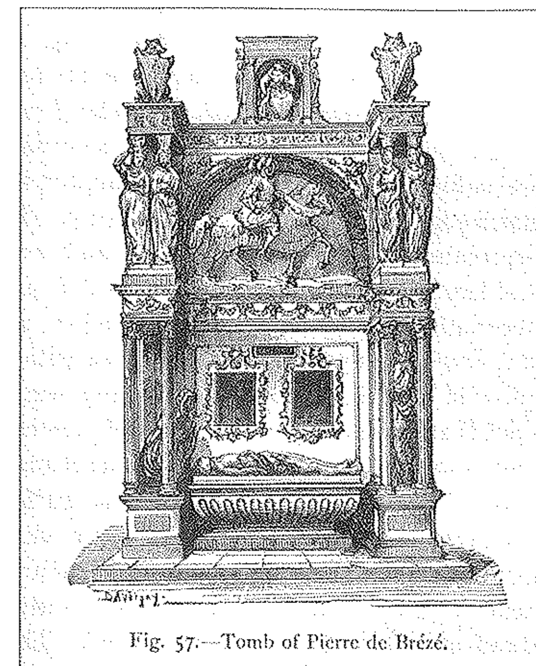

Fig. 5. Illustration of the funeral movement of Pierre de Bréze, then attributed to Jean Cousin, from *Les Merveilles* de la sculpture (1869), signed "Daubigny."

at 5 pence? Literate audiences wanted "small books upon great subjects," from the literature of Shakespeare to the masterpieces of art history.[81] Affordable and portable art histories illustrated with wood engravings, which depicted the most valued works of art history, gave the public exactly that.

But popular art histories did more than simply reproduce an already existing canon; in fact, they contributed to the very definition of that canon. While canons of recognized masterpieces were nothing new in the nineteenth century, popular art histories in this period solidified the notion of a single cross-cultural canon of art history. These books brought together art from a wide variety of museum collections and from locations around the world, thereby consolidating a more inclusive canon, which they circulated across national borders through their accessible formats. Hundreds of thousands of readers became aware of art's history through the same collections of texts and images. Art history's canons are often seen as a reflection of quality and artistic greatness, but they are just as much the product of repeated exposure through copies. Among art historians, the most recognized medium for the repeated exposure of canonical art has been photography. The history of art, in André Malraux's now famous words, has been seen as "the history of that which can be photographed."[82] A consensus of recent scholars likewise sees the birth of modern art history in the possibility of photographic reproduction.[83] Yet, art history is just as accurately the history of what can be illustrated.

The exchange of wood-engraved illustrations in popular publishing provided the repeated exposure necessary to establish lasting standards of the field.

For much of the 1800s, the printing of photographs as illustrations in books and magazines remained costly, requiring non-mechanical printing separate from relief type; however, photography often formed the source material for wood engravers of popular art histories. For example, the wood engravings in Hachette's *Merveilles de l'architecture* that depicted the Parthenon and the Erechtheum in Athens cited the source of photographs by the firm Ferrier et Soulier in their captions. The designer of the wood engravings would have used these photographs as the basis of their illustrations. In many cases in this period, a photograph would have been directly printed onto the block before it was cut into a relief image by an engraver. It seems unlikely, though, that this was the case with the *Merveilles* volumes, since the images identified a designer along with the cutter. The photography-on-the-block method would have made this designer unnecessary. Other *Merveilles* art history images were likewise based on known photographs; the illustrations of the *Laocoön* sculpture and the *Venus de Milo* (fig. 6), for instance, were most likely taken from the photographs of Adolphe Braun, who specialized in art reproduction.[84] But in order to print these images alongside text in an affordable book, the photographs required conversion into wood-engraved blocks.

Nowhere is the mediating relationship between photographs and wood engravings clearer than in Gaston Tissandier's *Merveilles de la photographie*, published in Hachette's *Merveilles* series in 1874. Both a history of the medium of photography and a guide to its practice, the book was nonetheless illustrated with wood engravings. This print medium kept the cost of the book down while it also allowed for the inclusion of instructional diagramatic images impossible to procure with photographs. Even when discussing photography as an advanced technology of reproduction, wood engravings still served as the more efficient choice to illustrate such claims.

By the 1870s, the choices for photomechanical printing had increased exponentially, and the pages of the *Publishers' Circular* had become peppered with advertisements for heliotypes, woodburytypes, autotypes, and other *facsimile* techniques of reproducing fine art in the realm of publishing. However, the variety of choices did not entirely satisfy the editors of the journal. An unsigned editorial in 1871 states a dissatisfaction with photomechanical publishing: "When Mr. Woodbury or the Heliotype Company shall have invented a process by which the touch of the artist shall be secured, while the block or drawing shall be able to be worked with the type, then we may look to a closer union between literature and art."[85] Clearly, wood engravings did not provide the desired "touch of the artist," but they could still be "worked with the type" in ways that surpassed photomechanical methods. Only a few years later, however, an 1875 advertisement for Sampson Low's "New Works" claimed that the same photomechanical media had reached "great perfection," and advised "[a]rtists who complain of the way their work is rendered by the wood engravers" to "employ photography to reproduce their every touch."[86] Photomechanical media clearly had the advantage of mimesis capable of reproducing the artist's work without the mediation of the wood engraver's hand. But the presumed complaint of artists also highlights just how often works of art were translated into wood engravings for publication.

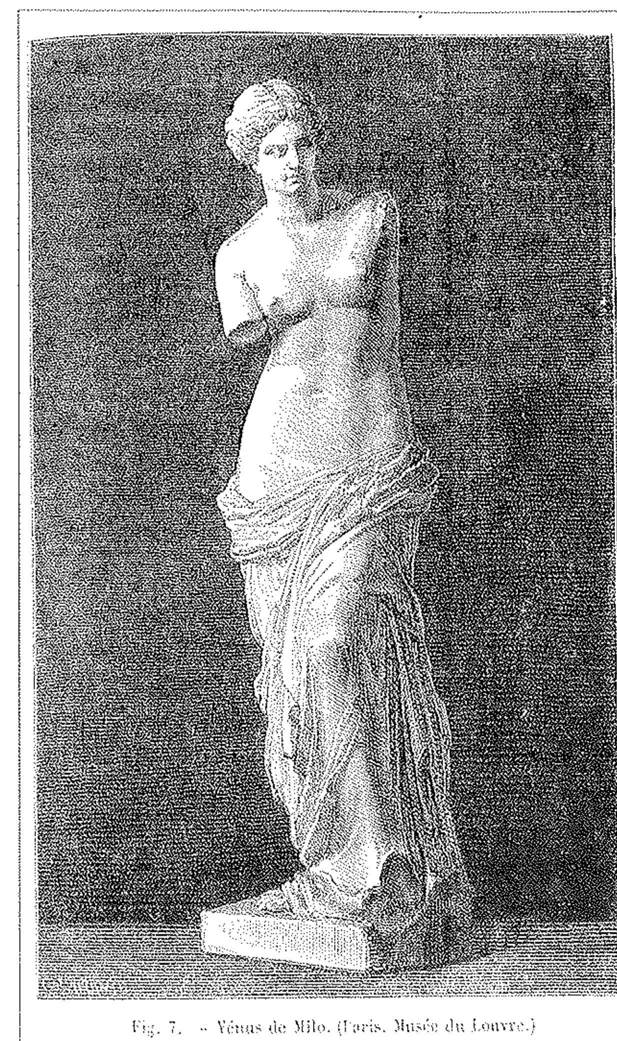

Fig. 6. Illustration of the *Venus de Milo*, from *Les Merveilles de la sculpture* (1869).

Even though Sampson Low chose to include reproductions in photomechanical media in their translations of Hachette's art histories, the firm still paid to purchase electrotypes from Hachette of the original wood engravings, which they also included in the volumes. This combination provided the novelty of more mimetic copies of featured works of art, while at the same time it kept prices low with the majority of the illustrations being printed alongside the text as wood engravings. The ongoing efficacy of wood-engraved illustrations in affordable art histories can also be seen in the 1889 edition of Nancy Bell's *Elementary History of Art*, where the preface author and publishers felt it necessary to explain the choice of illustration media to the reader: "Inexpensive forms of engraving have, owing to the low price of the work, been alone possible." The preface author then asserted the continued didactic usefulness of

wood engravings: "a mere indication of a painting can go a long way towards training the eye and mind to discriminate between the peculiarities of the various schools."[87] Such illustrations served an introductory purpose while keeping costs affordable for a wide audience. These images appeared again in the revised 1895 and 1906 editions of Bell's book, along with a new photomechanical frontispiece of an Egyptian temple accompanied by a caption advertising the "sun-pictures" of M. Bonfils. This balance between the humble but efficient images making up the body of the book and the lone eye-catching frontispiece reveals how the combination of wood engraving and photographic technologies shaped art history in this period more than photography alone.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the market for wood engravings operated as an industrial, large-scale, and international economy of goods. It still involved the craftsmanship of artists, but these artists worked collectively and collaboratively to produce the countless images required by the global publishing industry. For instance, more than thirty different artists contributed to Hachette's *Merveilles* art history volumes. Unlike Daubigny, whose name art historians now recognize because of his work as a successful painter, the majority of these nineteenth-century wood engravers are little-known today. Few of them specialized in copying works of art; rather, most produced illustrations for a wide range of popular publications, including science manuals, travel guides, religious books, and children's literature. The work of these artists across the genres of general literature further underscores the integration of popular art histories into the mass-market book industry.

The artists of these books, moreover, rarely claimed copyright on their images. Publishers contracted the illustrations from artists in a "work for hire" arrangement, with the understanding that the artist held no continual rights to their images. Hachette, for instance, paid no copyright fees to any artist of the *Merveilles* wood engravings. In the series contracts, the firm specified its exclusive control over the use of the images and no artists were named in these documents.[88] While this practice devalued the artistic contributions of wood engravers, it aided significantly to accelerate their circulation among international publishers. That Hachette could freely sell copies of the images without charging for artistic royalties kept the costs lower when selling to Sampson Low in Britain or Scribner's in America.

Another aspect of copyright law that enhanced the international sharing of art histories was the lack of a recognized international copyright law in America. In the late nineteenth century, American copyright was reserved for only American citizens, so any book by a foreign author could be reprinted in America without paying copyright fees or authors' royalties. According to an editorial in the *Publishers' Circular*, the lack of international copyright was a "smouldering question."[89] In contrast, most European countries honored international copyright in this period. For instance, the contracts between Hachette and Sampson Low for the *Merveilles* volumes included a translation fee, as the British firm had to pay for the right to publish in English, while the contracts between Hachette and Scribner's for the same volumes included no translation fee. "American publishers have waxed rich during the last half-century," lamented the same editorial, "upon the literary and artistic labour of British subjects."[90]

Though sales in America had little advantage for foreign authors, who received no royalties from the American market, they still held some benefits for European publishers. A major gain that European publishers sought in light of the current copyright law involved the lucrative sales of illustrations to American publishers. The same editorial in the *Publishers' Circular* explains how American publishers "buy largely our clichés and stereotypes, and thus enable our illustrated works and papers to give very large prices to artists." The editorial continues, claiming that the American publishers' "convenience" is "profit" for British publishers.[91] The American market demanded affordable art histories as much as the European markets, and foreign publishers sought to gain from meeting this demand through the sales of ready-made illustrations.

The medium of wood engraving has often been dismissed or overlooked as a "modern" means of art reproduction. Yet, nineteenth-century wood engravings revolutionized the replication of works of art in the context of the written word. The technology of wood engraving, and its mass reproduction through stereotypes and electrotypes, solidified the centrality of illustrations for art history before the rise of halftones, photographic slides, offset lithographs, and digital imagery. The economy and efficiency of publishing wood-engraved art illustrations made art history part of a popular culture that was shared across geographic, linguistic, and social boundaries. As publishers in a variety of national contexts continuously printed the same images of canonical works of art adjacent to similar art historical texts, art history gained an international profile as never before. At the same time, this widespread sharing of cheap illustrations of art objects brought an unprecedented affordability and accessibility to art history knowledge. A closer look at wood engravings in art history publications therefore sheds important light on alternative histories of art history, while it also invites new perspectives on the broader developments of modernity. Much like digital imagery today, wood engravings in the nineteenth century formed a crucial bridge between texts and images, between high art and popular culture, between academic and mass knowledge, and between the rare original and the mass-produced copy. In Benjamin's "age of mechanical reproduction," wood engravings shaped a distinctly modern and popular visual culture for the history of art.

Notes

1. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968; 2007), 218.

2. Ibid., 219.

3. While claiming that wood engravings were contemporary with film might seem like an incorrect assertion, wood engravings were still in use in affordable publications when motion pictures were invented in the 1890s. In other words, these two modern media overlapped for nearly two decades. Wood engravings largely disappeared from publications after 1910.

4. Brian Maidment, *Reading Popular Prints, 1790–1870* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), 16. See also Laurel Brake, *Print in Transition 1850–1910: Studies in Media and Book History* (New York: Palgrave, 2001) and Alexis Weedon, *Victorian Publishing: The Economics of Book Production for a Mass Market, 1836–1916* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003).

5. The literature on art reproduction is now vast, especially considering the media of line engravings, lithographs, plaster casts, and photographs. In contrast, the wood engraving has generally fallen

outside of the purview of art historians. On line engravings and lithographs, see Stephen Bann, *Parallel Lines: Printmakers, Painters, and Photographers in Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). On plaster casts, see Rune Fredericksen and Eckart Marchand, eds., *Plaster Casts: Making, Collecting, and Displaying from Antiquity to the Present* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010). On photographs, see Robert S. Nelson, "The Slide Lecture, or the Work of Art 'History' in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 3 (2000): 414–34; Frederick N. Bohrer, "Photographic Perspectives: Photography and the Institutional Formation of Art History," in *Art History and Its Institutions: Foundations of a Discipline* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 246–59; Helene E. Roberts, "Preface," in *Art History Through the Camera's Lens* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1995); Wolfgang M. Freitag, "Early Uses of Photography in the History of Art," *Art Journal* 39, no. 2 (1979–80): 117–23; Trevor Fawcett, "Graphic versus Photographic in the Nineteenth-Century Reproduction," *Art History*, 9, no. 2 (1986): 185–212; and Anthony J. Hamber, "'A Higher Branch of the Art': Photographing the Fine Arts in England, 1839–1880* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1996).

6. See, for instance, Heinrich Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte als Institution: Studien zur Geschichte einer Disziplin* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979); Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Dan Karlholm, *Art of Illusion: The Representation of Art History in Nineteenth-Century Germany and Beyond* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2006); Lyne Therrien, *L'Histoire de l'art en France: Genèse d'un discipline universitaire* (Paris: Editions du CTHS, 1998); Craig Hugh Smyth and Peter M. Lukehart, *The Early Years of Art History in the United States: Notes and Essays on Departments, Teaching, and Scholars* (Princeton: Department of Art and Archaeology, 1993); and Nikolaus Pevsner, "An Un-English Activity? Reflections on Not Teaching Art History," *The Listener*, 30 Oct. 1952, 715–16.

7. *Publishers' Circular*, 16 Sept. 1874, 624.

8. Nancy Bell (as N. D'Anvers), *Elementary History of Art* (London: Asher, 1874; New York: Scribner, Welford, and Armstrong, 1875). Later editions were published by Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington beginning in 1882. Both Sampson Low and Scribner's continued to reissue the book with revisions until 1906.

9. *Publishers' Circular*, 18 Dec. 1876, 1183. Publishers, both French-speaking and English-speaking, often referred to electrotypes as "clichés."

10. Bewick's first books published with wood engravings include *A General History of Quadrupeds* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Hodgson, Beilby, and Bewick, 1790) and *History of British Birds* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Hodgson, Beilby, and Bewick, 1797–1804). On Bewick, see John Jackson and William Andrew Chatto, *A Treatise on Wood Engraving: Historical and Practical* (London: Charles Knight and Co., 1839), 559–609; Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner, "The Romantic Vignette and Thomas Bewick," in *Romanticism and Realism: The Mythology of Nineteenth-Century Art* (New York: Viking, 1984), 73–96; Iain Bain, *Thomas Bewick: An Illustrated Record of his Life and Work* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: The Laing Gallery, 1979); John Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Farrar Straus, and Giroux, 1997), 499–531; and Remi Blachon, *La Gravure sur bois au XIXe siècle: l'âge du bois debout* (Paris: Les Editions de l'Amateur, 2001), 22–27.

11. On the *Penny Magazine* and art history, see Patricia Anderson, *The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture, 1790–1860* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) and chapter one of my unpublished dissertation "Surveying the Field: The Popular Origins of Art History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France," (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2010).

12. The general consensus is that the magazine reached at least one million actual readers in 1830s Britain. This total can be compared to more literary magazines, such as the *Quarterly Review*, which had a circulation of 7000, or the radical working class journal *The Poor Man's Guardian*, which had at most 15,000. See Anderson, *The Printed Image*, 80 and Scott Boyce Bennett, "The Editorial Character and Readership of the Penny Magazine: An Analysis," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 17, no. 4 (1984): 128.

13. Johann Joachim Winckelmann was the librarian and antiquarian scholar of Cardinal Albani in Rome from 1758, then the Prefect of Papal Antiquities from 1763. His *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (1764) was widely acclaimed, was soon translated from German into French, Italian, and English, and became one of the most influential art history books ever published and arguably the

first history of art. See especially Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

14. Franz Kugler was one of the first professional art historians appointed to an academic teaching position in his field. He taught art history at the University of Berlin starting in 1833 and was appointed professor at the Academy of Art in Berlin in 1835. On the academic development of art history in nineteenth-century Germany, see especially Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte* and Karlholm, *Art of Illusion*, 22n19 and 226. Not all of the programs of art history founded before 1900 trained professional art historians. The Slade Professorships in Britain—which employed art historians at Oxford, Cambridge, and the University of London from the 1870s—were general lectureships for undergraduate students rather than professional programs of art history. See Pevsner as in note 6.

15. On the "heavy national connotations" of academic art history in Germany, see Karlhom, *Art of Illusion*, 84–89. He writes: "General art history—the unification of the parts of art; the United Nations of the art world, made in Germany—is not only the cultural achievement of a brave and diligent nation, that is, nationally biased, but is in itself an allegorical model for a pressing political task. An important aspect of the rhetorical frame of art history in general is thus a thinly veiled Germanic dream of power" (86).

16. "At this period, 1836, the 'Penny Magazine' was producing a revolution in popular Art throughout the world. Stereotype casts of its best cuts were supplied by me for the illustration of publications of a similar character, which appeared in eleven different languages and countries...Germany—France—Holland—Livonia (in Russian and German)—Bohemia (Sclavonic)—Italy—Ionian Islands (modern Greek)—Sweden—Norway—Spanish America—the Brazils." See Knight, *Passages of a Working Life During Half a Century*, vol. 2 (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1864–5), 223–24. This same list of foreign countries, with the United States following "the Brazils," also appears in Charles Knight, *The Old Printer and the Modern Press* (London: John Murray, 1854), 258–9.

17. On this process, see "The Commercial History of a Penny Magazine, no. 3: Compositors' Work and Stereotyping," *Penny Magazine*, monthly supplement, 31 Oct. to 30 Nov. 1833, 470.

18. Ibid., 470–71.

19. Ibid., 471.

20. The electroplating process was invented between 1836 and 1838. On the development of electrotyping, see Michel Melot, Antony Griffiths, Richard S. Field, and André Béguin, eds., *Prints: History of an Art* (New York: Rizzoli, 1981), 104; Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 206; and Rob Banham, "The Industrialization of the Book, 1800–1970," in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 280. Stereotyping continued to be used later in the century, but not for illustrations. As Scribner explains, "stereos" are "of the text" while "electros" were "cuts inserted as usual in works with wood cut illustrations." See notation dated 2 Dec. 1880; Archives of Charles Scribner's Sons [hereafter cited as CSS], 8A/723/V6; Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

21. Jean-Yves Mollier, *L'Argent et les lettres: Histoire du capitalisme d'édition, 1880–1920* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), 123. See also Jean Mistler, *La Librarie Hachette de 1826 à nos jours* (Paris: Hachette, 1964); *Hachette, année 150: La Librairie Hachette de 1826–1976* (Paris: Hachette, 1977), 18–21; Elisabeth Parinet, "Les bibliothèques de gare, un nouveau réseau pour le livre," *Romantisme* 80, no. 2 (1993): 95–106; Isabelle Olivero, *L'Invention de la collection: De la diffusion de la littérature et des savoirs à la formation du citoyen au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine, 1999), 208–11; David Finkelstein, "The Globalization of the Book 1800–1970," in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, eds. Eliot and Rose, 332–33; and Eileen DeMarco, *Reading and Riding: Hachette's Railroad Bookstore Network in Nineteenth-Century France* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2006).

22. The titles and first editions of the Merveilles art books include the following: André Lefèvre, *Les Merveilles de l'architecture* (1865); Louis Viardot, *Les Merveilles de la peinture* (vol. 1 on the Italian schools, 1868 and vol. 2 on the European schools, 1869); Viardot, *Les Merveilles de la sculpture* (1869); Albert Jacquemart, *Les Merveilles de la céramique* (3 vols., 1866–69); Alexandre Sauzay, *La*

Verrerie depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à nos jours (1868); Georges Duplessis, *Les Merveilles de la gravure* (1869); Ferdinand Lastreyie du Saillant, *Histoire de l'orfèvrerie depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à nos jours* (1875); Albert Castel, *Les Tapisseries* (1876); Joachim Menant, *Ninive et Babylone* (1888); Henri Bouchot, *Jacques Callot: Sa vie, son oeuvre, et ses continuateurs* (1889); and Edmond Pottier, *Les Statuettes de terre cuite dans l'antiquité* (1890).

23. *Hachette, année 150*, 18. Translations from the French are mine unless otherwise noted.

24. Ibid.

25. The approximate cost for a loaf of bread in this period was a little less than one franc, so we might reasonably compare this price to the cost of two or three loaves of bread.

26. The publication announcement for the *Bibliothèque des Merveilles* states that the series volumes, "étant imprimé à quelques milliers d'exemplaires seulement pour chaque édition, il sera facile de les tenir incessamment au courant de tous les progrès des sciences et des arts." This loose announcement was inserted into the 1867 volume of Hachette catalogues at the archives of Hachette at the Institut Mémoires de l'Edition Contemporaine (hereafter cited as IMEC) in Caen, France. Other scholars have suggested between 5000 and 7500 for the *Merveilles* edition sizes, especially regarding the science volumes. See Marie-Laure Aurenche, *Edouard Charton et l'invention du Magasin pittoresque, 1830–1870* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2002), 432n70; Annie Lagarde-Fouquet and Christian Lagarde, *Edouard Charton (1807–1890) et le combat contre l'ignorance* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2006), 145; and Valérie Tesnière, "Le Livre de science en France au XIX siècle," *Romantisme* 80, no. 2 (1993): 73 and 77n17.

27. In Britain, similar art books, including Bell and Daldy's photographic volumes of the works of Hogarth and Velazquez, saw prices upwards of £5, or 100 shillings (1£=20s). See *Publishers' Circular*, 8 Dec. 1871, 842.

28. See Price List of Charles Scribner's Sons Publications; 1881; CSS, 5/673.

29. See the advertisement for Clarence Cook's *House Beautiful* in Scribner's Armstrong & Co.'s List of New Books; 1878 Jan; CSS, 5/672. The book was printed in quarto format and listed at $7.50.

30. On the modernity of the handbook format, see Isabelle Olivero, *L'Invention de la collection: de la diffusion de la littérature et des savoirs à la formation du citoyen au XIXe siècle*, In Octavo (Paris: Institut Mémoirs de l'Edition Contemporaine, 1999) and Karlhom, 26–27 and 149–53.

31. The Spanish *Biblioteca de las Maravillas* was published by Hachette starting in the 1860s; the Italian *Biblioteca della Meraviglie* was published in Milan by Fratelli Treves in the 1870s; the sculpture volume was translated into Russian in St. Petersburg in 1871; and the architecture volume was published in Polish in Warsaw in 1873.

32. It seems likely that the archives and papers of Sampson Low were destroyed during the bombings of London in WWII. Some evidence remains within the archives of Hachette at IMEC and Scribner's Sons at Princeton University, given the continuous business Sampson Low did with these two firms. For one of the few published descriptions of the firm's history, see Ernest Chesneau, "Les Grands éditeurs anglais," *Le Livre* 6 (1885): 182–87.

33. The firm was founded by Charles Scribner I along with Isaac D. Baker as "Baker & Scribner" in 1846 and lasted until 1984. Scribner acquired the company after Baker's death in 1851, renaming it "Charles Scribner & Company." Scribner I passed away in 1871, when the firm transferred to his son John Blair Scribner. In 1872, John Blair Scribner, Andrew C. Armstrong, and Charles Welford formed the partnership named "Scribner, Welford, & Armstrong." The other son, Charles Scribner II, joined the firm in 1875. By 1878, the firm had been renamed again to "Charles Scribner's Sons." Scribner I and II, along with numerous other family members, attended Princeton University, where the collected archives of the firm are housed today. On this history, see the illustrated chronology published online through the Princeton University website: http://library.princeton.edu/libraries/firestone/rbsc/aids/scribner/index.html.

34. Sampson Low published *Wonders of Italian Art* (1870); *Marvels of Glass-making in All Ages* (1870); *Wonders of European Art* (1871); *Wonders of Engraving* (1871); and *Wonders of Sculpture* (1872). Scribner's published *Wonders of Architecture* (1870); *Wonders of Italian Art* (1870); *Wonders of Glass-making in All Ages* (1870); *Wonders of European Art* (1871); *Wonders of Engraving* (1871); *Wonders of Sculpture* (1873). On these books, see advertisements for these books in the *Publishers' Circular*, 8 Dec. 1870, illustrated supplement, 69 and in the catalogs of Scribner's; 1869–1899; CSS, 5/672–673.

35. *Publishers' Circular*, 17 Jan. 1874, 51 and 8 Dec. 1875, 980.

36. Charles Scribner to Charles Welford; 24 Sept. 1880; CSS, 15F/969.

37. Ibid.

38. Chesneau, "Les Grands éditeurs anglais," 182–7.

39. Contract between Hachette and Scribner; 27 Sept. 1870; CSS, 14F/868/13.

40. On these prices, see the catalogs of Scribner's; 1869–1899; CSS, 5/672–673.

41. See Hachette's catalogues at IMEC, such as *Extrait du catalogue des livres reliés pour les distributions de prix*, June 1867, 8.

42. Price List of Scribner, Armstrong, & Co.'s Publications; 1874; CSS, 5/672.

43. On prize books as a publishing category, see Mollier, *L'Argent et les lettres*, 129.

44. Karlholm, *Art of Illusion*, 29–30 and 99–100.

45. *Publishers' Circular*, 8 Dec. 1871, 841.

46. See the price list included in the post-text material of James Fergusson, *The Illustrated Handbook of Architecture* (London: John Murray, 1855), as well as the price lists for Murray in *Publishers' Circular* from 1875.

47. On Kugler's reputation as an art historian, see Karlholm, *Art of Illusion*, especially 22n19, 37, 62, and 226.

48. On these exchanges, see Smith, Elder and Co. albums of publication arrangements and copyright agreements, John Murray Archive (JMA), National Library of Scotland, MS. 43194, 99 and 120 and MS. 43139, contract signed 11 Nov. 1864.

49. Bell, "Introduction," *Elementary History of Art* (London: Asher, 1874), vii.

50. *Publishers' Circular*, 17 Jan. 1874, 47 and 1 Apr. 1874, 222.

51. Price List of Scribner, Armstrong, & Co.'s Publications; 1875; CSS, 5/672.

52. Ibid. and *Publishers' Circular*, 17 Jan. 1874, 47.

53. *Publishers' Circular*, 17 Jan. 1874, 47.

54. *Publishers' Circular*, 2 Feb. 1880, 95. The ad reproduced an excerpt from a review of the series in the *Times* from 22 Jan. 1880.

55. Lefèvre, *Merveilles de l'architecture*, (1865), 26–30.

56. See CSS, 8A/723/V11.

57. See, for instance, Michel Melot, *The Art of Illustration* (New York: Rizzoli, 1984); "Le Texte et l'image," in *Histoire de l'edition française*, vol. 3, ed. Roger Chartier and Henri-Jean Martin (Paris: Promodis, 1985), 287–311; and Melot, Antony Griffiths, Richard S. Field, and André Béguin, eds., *Prints: History of an Art* (New York: Rizzoli, 1981); Ségolène Samson-Le Men, "Quant au livre illustré..." *Revue de l'art* 44 (1979): 85–106; Ségolène Le Men, "Book Illustration," in *Artistic Relations: Literature and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century France*, ed. Peter Collier and Robert Lethbridge (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 94–110; Le Men, "Printmaking as Metaphor for Translation: Philippe Burty and the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* in the Second Empire," in Michael R. Orwicz, ed., *Art Criticism and its Institutions in Nineteenth-Century France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 88–108; Le Men, "Introduction," in *L'Illustration: Essais d'iconographie*, eds. Le Men and Caracciolo (Paris: Klincksieck, 1999), 9–17; and "Trois regards sur le *Laocoön*: la caricature selon Daumier, la photographie selon Braun, le livre d'histoire de l'art selon Ivins," in *Le Laocoön: Histoire et réception*, ed. Elisabeth Décultot, Jacques Le Rider, and François Queyrel (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003), 195–220. For a discussion of text-image relationships in published art histories from nineteenth-century Germany, see also Karlholm, 90 and 114–25.

58. On photomechanical reproduction in this period, see Gerry Beegan, *The Mass Image: A Social History of Photomechanical Reproduction in Victorian London* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

59. *Publishers' Circular*, 8 Dec. 1870, illustrated supplement, 69 and 77.

60. See the contract signed 17 Oct. 1867 for an English translation of Jules Gouffé's *Livre de cuisine* in IMEC file HAC 59.1. This contract specified that the right of translation would cost £40,

the *clichés* of wood engravings would cost £48, and the plates of chromolithographs—limited to 16 plates in sets of 1000—would cost £251. The chromolithographs were to be printed by Hachette.

61. Louis Énault, "Les Livres de la Maison Hachette," *La Presse* (Paris), 21 Sept. 1867.

62. Scribner to Welford: 9 July 1880; CCS. 15F/969.

63. Contract between Hachette and Scribner; 27 Sept. 1870; CSS. 14F/868/13.

64. See contracts in IMEC file HAC 1.46.

65. On these and other wood engravers who contributed to popular art histories, see Blachon, *La Gravure sur bois au XIXe siècles*, and Appendix 2 of my dissertation, "Surveying the Field."

66. Contract between Hachette and Scribner; 27 Sept. 1870; CSS. 14F/868/13.

67. *Publishers' Circular*, 17 Mar. 1879, 226.

68. *Publishers' Circular*, 2 Feb. 1874, 86.

69. *Publishers' Circular*, 1 Sept. 1874, 606.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

73. William Andrew Chatto, "Wood-Engraving: The History and Practice," *Illustrated London News* 4, no. 113 (29 June 1844): 425.

74. William M. Ivins, Jr., *Prints and Visual Communication* (1953; Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1969), 39.

75. Amboise Firmin-Didot, *Essai typographique et bibliographique sur l'histoire de la gravure sur bois* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1863), 288–89.

76. *Publishers' Circular*, 18 Dec. 1876, 1183

77. Ibid.

78. On these movements, see Pierre Gusman, *La Gravure sur bois en France au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Editions Albert Morancé, 1929), 42–48.

79. On Daubigny's work as an illustrator, see Madeleine Fidell-Beaufort, "The Graphic Art of Charles-François Daubigny" (PhD diss., New York University, 1974); Fidell-Beaufort and Janine Bailly-Herzberg, *Daubigny* (Paris: Geoffroy-Dechaume, 1975); and Michel Melot, "A Painter Between Two Worlds: Charles-François Daubigny," in *The Impressionist Print* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 17–20.

80. Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," in *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, trans. P. E. Charvet (London: Penguin Books, 1972), 390–435.

81. *Publishers' Circular*, 6 Dec. 1880, 1264.

82. André Malraux, "Museum without Walls," in *Voices of Silence*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1953), 30.

83. See Nelson, Bohrer, Roberts, Freitag, Fawcett, and Hamber, as in note 5, as well as Ivan Gaskell, *Vermeer's Wager: Speculations on Art History, Theory, and Art Museums* (London: Reaktion, 2000), 16; Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte als Institution*, 149–60; H. B. Leighton, "The Lantern Slide in Art History," *History of Photography* 8, no. 2 (1984): 107–18; and Elizabeth Anne McCauley, "Art Reproduction for the Masses," in *Industrial Madness: Commercial Photography in Paris, 1848–1871* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 265–300.

84. Le Men, "Trois regards sur le *Laocoön*, 195–220.

85. *Publishers' Circular*, 8 Dec. 1871, 806.

86. *Publishers' Circular*, 8 Dec. 1875, 967.

87. F.C., "Preface to the Third Edition," in Bell, *Elementary History of Art*, 3rd ed., (1889), vi.

88. See contracts in IMEC file HAC 1.46, which disclose that Hachette held the rights to the images. For instance, the contract for Jean Pierre Moyner's *Le Théâtre Vu Derrière la Rideaux* dated 1872, which specified that although the author designed the illustrations for the volume, these illustrations were the property of Hachette et Cie, who "pourront en disposer comme bon leur semblera."

89. *Publishers' Circular*, 1 Apr. 1874, 201.

90. Ibid, 202. Here the author of the editorial is quoting a Mr. Beeton.

91. Ibid.