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Portraits of Henry James

Henry James created in his fiction memorable portraits of men, women, and children. He painted with words, and viewed traditional black-and-white book illustrations as an unfair and unnecessary competition to his verbal art. By the end of his life he had been won over to the art of photography; he arranged for photographic frontispieces in the New York Edition of his canon and participated, more or less willingly, in photographic sessions. It is my intention, within the allotted span of time, to take a look at a few of Henry James portraits, done in a variety of techniques, and to ponder the narratives they either encapsulate or trigger off.