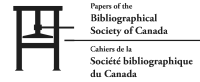


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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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REVIEWS

Alison Hedley, *Making Pictorial Print: Media Literacy and Mass Culture in British Magazines, 1885-1918*, “Studies in Book and Print Culture” (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), xii, 248 pp., CAD \$85.00 (Hardcover) ISBN 978-1-4875-0673-5, CAD \$85.00 (EPUB) ISBN 978-1-4875-3475-2, CAD \$85.00 (PDF) ISBN 978-1-4875-3474-5

Review by DAVID BUCHANAN
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By applying concepts from media theory and the digital humanities, *Making Pictorial Print* analyzes four popular late-Victorian magazines—the *Illustrated London News*, the *Graphic*, *Pearson’s Magazine*, and the *Strand*—as well as the scrapbook media crafted from their pages. Used as case studies, Alison Hedley’s analysis of these magazines demonstrates how publishers and advertisers created opportunities for nineteenth-century readers to engage in popular culture, thus also establishing a better understanding of the emergence of an early modern mass culture that informs new media cultures of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The book contains thirty-four black-and-white illustrations, an index supplement, an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion.

Hedley underpins her methodology with two “conceptual tenets” (7). Firstly, *print media literacy* enables readers to identify and interpret material production and technological conditions. Secondly, a *print technological imagination* functions individually and collectively to shape the subjective priorities of readers. Producers employed aesthetic strategies to attract and engage readers. Meanwhile, the interpretation of pictorial representations depended on a reader’s awareness of such strategies. Chapter one, “The *Illustrated London News*, Popular Illustrated Journalism, and the New Media Landscape, 1885-1907,” highlights the aesthetic and material processes

that enabled the “embrace of modern popular aesthetics” (28) by the *ILN*. Hedley points to a “shift from verbally oriented to visually oriented, multimodal storytelling” (28) and explains how “print media cross-pollinated with new media” (29). The argument is that the aesthetic composition of the *ILN* developed the reader’s self-awareness of a new means of mediating the news of the modern world. It “engaged readers’ technological imagination” and increased “their understanding of the illustrated magazine’s unique techniques of representing popular culture” (62). The use of statistical surveys and Hedley’s close reading persuasively outline the *ILN*’s defining characteristics.

Whereas the first chapter focuses on literary representation as part of an interactive reading process, a balance between formalist analysis and reader reception emerges differently in chapter two. “Imagining Consumer Culture: Reading Advertisements in the *Illustrated London News* and the *Graphic*, 1885-1906” concentrates on the role of advertising in “readers’ active participation in mass culture” (63). Hedley describes the *ILN* and the *Graphic* as able to “facilitate” (63), “encourage” (64), and “influence” (65) interpretation through aesthetic representation as well as the increased media literacy of readers, furthering the argument on increased media awareness from the first chapter. The reader takes on increasing practical importance as chapter two proceeds. For example, Hedley uses Michel de Certeau to theorize everyday reading practices as strategic and situational, stating that “It was ultimately up to readers to make meaning of advertisements” (78). The chapter concludes with the description of an anonymous scrapbook to demonstrate personal uses of the illustrated press. This back-and-forth between theorization and analysis, on the one hand, and reader reception and case study, on the other, continues as each chapter considers a new aspect of pictorial representation.

Following a brief introduction to Michel Foucault’s biopolitics, chapter three, “Imagining Subjectivity: Reading Data Visualizations in *Pearson’s Magazine*, 1896-1902,” considers how visual representations of data “facilitate readers’ understanding of population politics” (90). The focus

on how quantitative information shown as a picture changed reading practices draws attention to an innovative form of representation that is now taken for granted. As Hedley notes, her conclusions are “somewhat speculative” (113), but her descriptions of the emergence of graphical display in the periodical press generate knowledge of an important form of communication.

Chapters four and five turn from the close reading of pictorial representation to the use of and contributions to periodicals by readers. In chapter four, “Imagining Print Production: Making Scrapbook Media, c. 1830-1918,” Hedley contends that scrapbooks provide further evidence of new forms of engagement with popular print. Chapter five, “Imagining New Media Platforms: Taking Snapshots for the *Strand*, 1896-1918,” provides examples of how readers could contribute periodical content, such as by submitting photography. The *Strand* not only facilitated reader engagement in a general sense but encouraged active participation in the magazine’s production. Hedley broadens the scope of her history in two ways: first, by attending to readerly interventions; and second, the end of chapter five sets up a transition to twentieth and twenty-first-century mass-media engagement in “Conclusion: Victorian Media Literacies and the Genealogy of the Present,” which connects Victorian heritage to the contemporary digital media landscape through an emphasis on Instagram.

In *Making Pictorial Print*, Hedley describes how readers made meaning of periodicals and situates the history of pictorial design in print media as a direct forerunner of new electronic media in the twenty-first century. She provides extensive detail on emerging forms of pictorial representation—for example, the section on data visualizations successfully brings new forms of non-textual representation to life. The reliance on general theories of reading by De Certeau and others is useful. Yet, without direct evidence, it is impossible to say with certainty what the pictorial magazines in question invoked or how they conditioned a reader’s imagination. Hedley’s solution, in part, is a productive turn to readers’ scrapbook reinventions and photography submissions. These endeavours cannot wholly determine how people made sense of popular

Victorian periodicals, whether as individual readers or as a generalized reading population. Nevertheless, Hedley's case studies effectively counterbalance a common overreliance on the close reading approach and its related assumption that meaning is inherent in the text. Instead, she directs our attention to the fact that meaning depends on use.

Overall, Hedley's book offers a description of pictorial representation, a selective theorization of reading practices, and her rewarding attention to scrapbooks and photography as (in)direct evidence of reader reception. As such, her book is not only a history of pictorial representation in the periodical press of the late-nineteenth century; it is also conceptually self-reflexive, pointing to the difficulty of understanding how readers experienced visual material culture. In these ways, Hedley manages to expand our knowledge of a critical moment in the history of modern communication at a time when the awareness of production and reception practices is as important as ever.

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