Henry James and the Writing of Race and Nation describes a new Henry James – a writer who, rather than fashioning himself as an iconic figure of high culture, tests his commitments in contest with emerging popular forms. Countering trends in cultural studies that have privileged the popular as a unique site of both cultural resistance and identity formation, Sara Blair argues for the importance of literary institutions to those processes in the years spanned by James's career. Beginning with an analysis of the links between racial theory in the 1870s, popular travel narrative, and James's early travel essays and reviews, Blair considers the complexities of his positionings within and against genteel, “Anglo-Saxon,” American, and other cultural frames. These gestures become central to James's literary performance, she argues, in his experiments with American realism, as he redirects its nation-building designs. Through detailed analyses of The Princess Casamassima, The Tragic Muse, and The American Scene, Blair evidences James's growing interest in newly definitive mass forms – including the popular press, photography, and visual culture – through which racial and national identities are being forged. Her book makes a powerful case for reading James and the high culture he shapes with a sense of sustained contradiction, even as she argues for the historical and ongoing importance of literary texts to the study of culture and cultural value.
HENRY JAMES AND THE WRITING OF RACE AND NATION
Henry James and the Writing of Race and Nation

Sara Blair
University of Virginia
For my mother and the memory of my father
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ABBREVIATIONS

The abbreviations listed below are used throughout the text and notes to refer to these editions. In the case of James's writings, I have chosen either editions that reflect original texts or those prior to his revisions, as appropriate.

James, Henry


LNT “Laugel’s Notes of Travel.” Nation 16 (February 27, 1873): 152.

Letters Henry James: Letters. Edited by Leon Edel. 4 vols. Cam-


Edel, Leon


Archival Materials

BSCP Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Oral History Project, Moving Images & Recorded Sound Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

NYPL DC New York Public Library, Photography Division, Stereographs, Dennis Collection.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Like most literary scholars, I suspect, in this most genealogical of industries, I have long looked forward to the moment of acknowledgment. I nonetheless feel somewhat overwhelmed by the recollection of the many debts I’ve accrued beyond those of everyday scholarly activity.

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