HENRY JAMES AND THE CULTURE OF CONSUMPTION

This book explores Henry James’s imaginative engagements with the burgeoning consumer culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, focusing on his hitherto neglected fascination with shops and the shopping experience. Examining a wide range of the author’s fiction and nonfiction in the context of developments such as the rise of the department store, the growing public presence of women shoppers and shop workers, and the increasing sophistication of commodity display and advertising, the book argues that consumer desire constitutes an integral part of James’s understanding of modern subjectivity. It also demonstrates that the structures and strategies of commodity culture are deeply embedded in his style, aesthetic and conception of authorship. The study offers new readings of familiar and less familiar texts and includes a wealth of original historical documentation that has been gleaned from contemporary newspapers, periodicals, advertising manuals, sales catalogs and guidebooks.

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For Janet El-Rayess
HENRY JAMES AND THE CULTURE OF CONSUMPTION

MIRANDA EL-RAYESS
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To begin at the beginning, I would like to thank Janet El-Rayess for introducing me to the subtleties of Fleda Vetch, and for nurturing my interest in James to this day. I have been inexpressibly grateful for her attentive reading and listening and her encouragement. Zuhair El-Rayess has also been unfailingly supportive, often helping with historical details. Hugh Stevens has provided invaluable advice and support at every stage of the project, and I have also benefited greatly from Barbara Hardy’s generous interest and immense knowledge. The careful reading and insightful suggestions and criticisms of Rachel Bowlby, Ian F. A. Bell, Angus Wrenn, Richard Salmon and my anonymous reader at Cambridge University Press have made this a better book, and their enthusiasm has helped sustain my confidence in it. Henry Woudhuysen, Ardis Butterfield, Sarah Wintle and Anthony Cummins have also read sections of my work and made useful comments. The experience of researching and writing the book would not have been the same without the company of Oliver Herford, who has taught me so much, and with whom I have enjoyed talking over ideas. Thanks also to Juliette Atkinson for help with French translations and getting hold of French criticism, Matthew Taunton for his urban and suburban insights, and Anna Wells, who has been a kind and generous friend through fraught periods. Jeremy Mynott and Diane Speakman have given excellent advice on numerous occasions.

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Note on Texts and Abbreviations

For the James critic, the decision of which editions and texts to use is rarely easy. In the case of the fiction, there is often a periodical text, an American first book edition and an English first book edition (often revised from the serial), and the 1907–1909 New York Edition to choose from. As this study examines James’s writing in its historical context and is concerned with the development of his imaginative engagement with shopping and commodity culture, I have elected to use as my main texts the English first book editions rather than the New York Edition. Where reliable modern editions of these texts exist, I have referred to these for ease of access. (Leon Edel’s edition of The Complete Tales reprints the first reliable book text.) In the case of The American, the first authorised English book edition (1879) was published two years after the first American edition (1877), but as William Spengemann points out, the former is ‘the earliest version that James is known to have seen in proof’ (AM 29) and is therefore preferable. Philip Horne’s edition of The Portrait of a Lady is on the basis of the second English book edition (1882), but as Horne explains, this was produced ‘using one of the moulds made by the printers in 1881’ before the introduction of errors that occurred in preparing the three-volume first English edition of 1881 (PL xliv). Given my interest in James’s revisions to this novel, another advantage of the 1882 edition is that James revised from this text for the New York Edition (Horne, Revision 44). In all other instances, I have worked from the original English first book editions.

For James’s literary criticism, I have found it convenient to refer to the Library of America collected edition. Although this edition uses the last text revised by James, most of the works that I have cited with any frequency, including the prefaces to the New York Edition, were not revised or republished during James’s lifetime. In examining essays that were revised and republished, I have been alert to the variant texts. On the other hand, in the case of the travel essays I cite, there is usually a gap of five or six years between magazine and book publication, and given that my discussions of these pieces are particularly period specific, I have judged it best to use the magazine texts.
Where I have diverged from these editions in order to examine James’s revisions, I have made this clear in my discussion. Unless otherwise indicated, dates given in the body of the text refer to the work’s first publication rather than the particular text I am citing (in many cases they are the same).

The following abbreviations refer to works by Henry James cited most frequently:

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Edition Details</th>
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<td>SP</td>
<td>The Spoils of Poynton</td>
<td>London: William Heinemann, 1897.</td>
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