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.

Miranda El-Rayess is Lecturer in Writing in the Liberal Studies Program at New York University in London, and Associate Lecturer in the Department of English and Comparative Literature at Goldsmiths, University of London. She has published articles on James in Critical Quarterly and Symbiosis, contributed a chapter to David McWhirter’s Henry James in Context (Cambridge, 2010) and reviewed works of literary criticism for the Times Literary Supplement. She is currently co-editing The Beast in the Jungle and Other Tales with Neil Reeve for the forthcoming Cambridge Edition of the Complete Fiction of Henry James.
For Janet El-Rayess
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MIRANDA EL-RAYESS