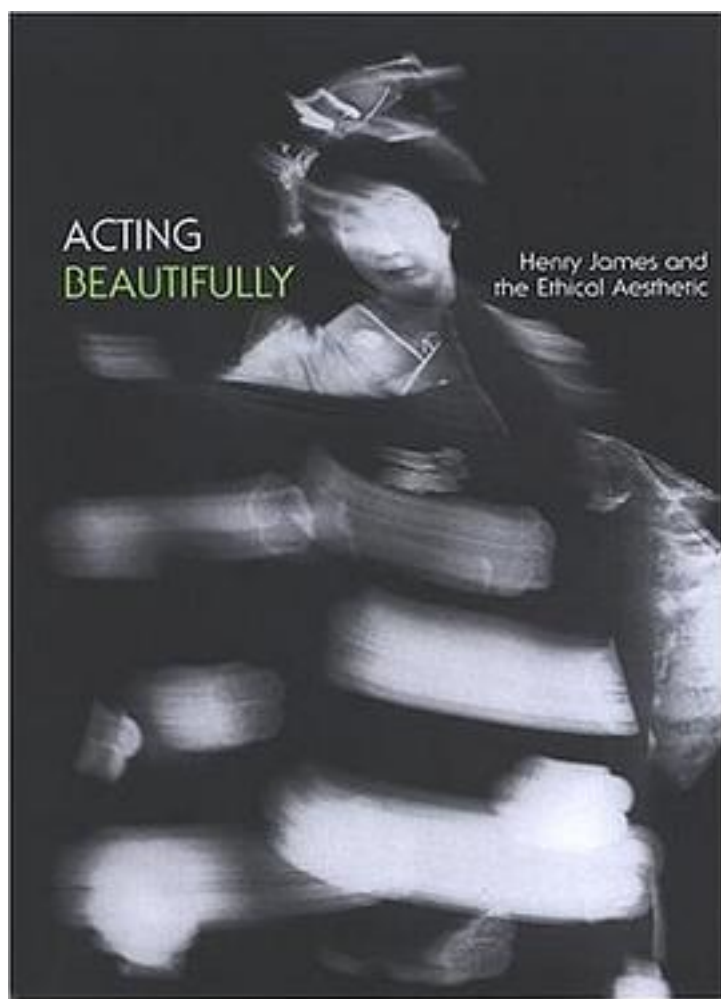


Acting Beautifully



SIGI JÖTTKANDT

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What is the matter with the women in Henry James? In *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and his short story "The Altar of the Dead," one woman returns to a monster of a husband, another dies rather than confront the truth of her lover's engagement, while yet another stakes her all on having a candle lit for a dead lover, only to promptly reject it. Exploring these strange choices, Sigi Jottkandt argues that the singularity of these acts lies in their ethical nature, and that the ethical principle involved cannot be divorced from the question of aesthetics. She combines close readings of James with suggestive tours through Kantian aesthetics and set theory to uncover the aesthetic underpinning of the Lacanian ethical act, which has been largely overlooked in the current drive to discover a Cartesian origin for the subject as the subject of science.

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