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Henry James's Fiction

陈 榕 著

亨利·詹姆斯小说中儿童的
物化现象

河南大学出版社

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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

亨利·詹姆斯小说中儿童的物化现象/陈榕著. —开封:河南大学出版社,2004.12

(解放军外国语学院英语博士文库.第二辑/程工主编)

ISBN 7-81091-291-7

I. 亨… II. 陈… III. 詹姆斯, H.-小说-文学研究-英文
IV. 1712.074

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2004)第 124947 号

书 名 亨利·詹姆斯小说中儿童的物化现象
作 者 陈 榕

出 版 人 王刘纯 责任编辑 薛巧玲
责任校对 何 雪 责任印制 苗 卉
装帧设计 张 胜·生生书房

出 版 河南大学出版社
地址:河南省开封市明伦街 85 号 邮编:475001
电话:0378-2864669(行管部) 0378-2825001(营销部)
网址:www.hupress.com E-mail:bangong@hupress.com

经 销 河南省新华书店
排 版 河南大学出版社印务公司
印 刷 河南第一新华印刷厂

版 次 2004 年 12 月第 1 版 印 次 2004 年 12 月第 1 次印刷
开 本 650mm×960mm 1/16 印 张 13.5
字 数 200 千字 印 数 2500 册

ISBN7-81091-291-7/I·229 定 价:23.00 元

(本书如有印装质量问题,请与河南大学出版社营销部联系调换)

序 言

“一年好景君须记，正是橙黄橘绿时。”对于一个教师，特别是老年教师来说，最大的愉悦和慰藉莫过于看到自己的学生茁壮成长，在教学和科研上做出了成绩。解放军外国语学院英语系决定建立“英语博士文库”，正是为了彰显一批青年学子在科研园地上辛勤耕耘结出的丰硕果实，将它们呈献给学界，接受检验，也让更多的读者能够分享到它们的甜美，繁荣学术创作，促进学术交流和学科建设。这是一件非常有意义的工作。因此，当“英语博士文库”的主编程工博士和本书作者陈榕博士约请我为本书写一篇序文时，我欣然命笔，一泄我心中的喜悦之情，表达我由衷的祝贺。

陈榕博士是我指导的第一位博士生。虽然我从事英语教学工作多年，但是我本人没有攻读过博士学位的经验。所以每走一步都是惴惴不安，如履薄冰。陈榕在选择博士论文题目时，就几经反复，踌躇再三。记得当初在她锁定亨利·詹姆斯作为研究对象时，我为之感到深深的疑虑。我在征询一些我国英美文学研究方面造诣很深的学者和专家意见时，便听到了迥然不同的声音。赞同和鼓励的有之，婉言相劝慎思，甚至劝阻的有之。实际上，两者深层的原因是颇为相似的。亨利·詹姆斯是这样一位艺术大师，

其著述浩瀚，思想深邃，艺术精湛。对他的研究，即令在西方经过几辈人的努力还存在着诸多歧义和难点，在国内外均被认为是一个高难领域。因此，在研究上要有所突破或创新，非下大功夫和苦功夫不可，要冒一定的风险。面对的选择是知难而进，或是知难而退。陈榕同志以一个年青人的勇气和对自已实力的信心，决心迎着困难上，开拓前进。无怪乎北京大学陶洁教授在读完了陈榕的论文后对于她勇挑重担、涉险开拓的精神深表赞赏，并指出作者的论文“在前人研究的基础上勇于探索，不断前进。尤其可贵的是，作者并不盲目迷信国外学者的已有论述，而是有自己的独立见解，敢于指出前人的不足，也敢于提出自己的看法”。

众所周知，一篇好的论文要有所突破，有所建树，在确定课题后，必须找到一个上佳的突破口。陈榕选择亨利·詹姆斯作品中的儿童形象作为切入点，对在商品经济社会中被物化、被商品化、被符号化的儿童所遭受的各种不幸进行细致的解读和分析，进而成功地将其接驳于詹姆斯含蓄而敏锐的政治意识，以及他对资本主义文化等级与道德体制的深邃批判。论文的大胆开掘使我们直面一个以前并不熟悉的詹姆斯，一个“对儿童这一弱势群体怀有直觉性的人文关怀”的詹姆斯。中国社会科学院外国文学研究所赵一凡先生对此倍加肯定，说：“此乃就微小问题做出了宏大文章。”

陈榕在研究方法上，我认为也有可取之处，即她把文本分析和文学批评理论较好地结合起来。她在广泛地浏览詹姆斯的主要作品之后，根据确定的题目，选择了四个具有较强代表性的小说《日夜监视》、《〈贝尔特拉菲尔〉的作者》、《螺丝拧紧》和《梅西所知》。它们分别代表了詹姆斯各个创作时期有关儿童主题的作品。她对这几部作品都认真阅读，一遍不行再读一遍，直至较透彻地了解，乃至融会贯通。在此基础上，她又阅读了大量当代西方文论，特别是与本选题有关的一些批评方法论著，如后结构主

义、女性主义、后殖民主义等文论，用“凝视”、“异者”等概念贯串衔接，使全文的结构前后连贯，既展示作家的思想轨迹和表现艺术，也使论文有一个完整严谨的结构，“凝视”理论使论文平添了不少新意。

毋庸置疑，对于像陈榕这样的年青学者，面对亨利·詹姆斯这样的大家，在短短的两三年中要写出一本专著，实非一件易事。詹姆斯研究在国外已有近百年的历史，而在我国由于种种原因，一直处于一个滞后的状态。据有人统计，我国学术界对詹姆斯的研究，连同解放前最初的介绍算起，所发表的文章总计不过几十篇，而真正具有学术分量的就更少了。陈榕的论文无疑是对我国詹姆斯研究的一个推动，但总不免显得势单力薄。好在我记得陈榕在选定詹姆斯作为研究对象时说过：“正是因为他（詹姆斯）是一位可以倾注我们毕生精力进行学习研究的作家才吸引我，激励我。”我相信她一定会实践自己的承诺，为我国的詹姆斯研究、英美文学研究做出自己的贡献，结出更多的硕果。

姚乃强

2004年6月于洛阳

前 言

亨利·詹姆斯是一位多才多产的作家。他为后人所留下的丰厚的文学遗产，涵盖了戏剧、批评理论、随笔、传记和书信等多个文学领域，但最充分表现其精湛完美文学艺术造诣的则非小说创作莫属。在长达 50 年的写作生涯中，亨利·詹姆斯共创作了 22 部长篇小说和 112 个短篇小说。他的小说，主题深刻，人物塑造栩栩如生，语言风格独特，在叙述技巧上独具匠心，大胆突破。他在小说艺术上取得的斐然成就，使他被批评家推崇为英美文学史上“让人百读不厌”、“常读常新”的伟大作家之一。

中国的评论界一直关注着对亨利·詹姆斯这位艺术大师的介绍和研究。遗憾的是，长期以来，国内詹姆斯研究主要围绕着国际主义主题、道德主题以及詹氏写作风格等几个有限问题进行探讨。事实上，进入 20 世纪 80 年代，国际詹姆斯研究却已发生了新的转向，批评家们开始越来越多地通过理论的自觉运用，对詹氏作品中体现出的政治意识、性别身份、种族偏见、文化观等进行全面的考察，其深度和广度扩展到詹氏作品的各个方面。正是在这样的背景下，本书选择了詹姆斯小说中的儿童形象作为研究对象，希冀通过摆脱国内詹姆斯研究占主流地位的形式主义和结构主义方法论，与国际詹姆斯研究接轨，为我们更全面地理解亨

利·詹姆斯这位伟大的作家做出一些贡献。

本书论述的焦点是被国际詹姆斯研究所忽略的詹氏笔下的儿童形象。评论家对詹氏儿童的关注始于 20 世纪五六十年代“形式主义”占主导地位之时。根据理论出发点的不同，可以简单分为两大阵营：一方着重探讨儿童形象在亨利·詹姆斯小说中的主题意义，另一方则采用了心理分析的手法，探询作者创造儿童人物时的心理线索。以上两种解读基本主导了近 30 年来对詹氏儿童形象的研究。笔者则冀望通过对詹姆斯笔下典型儿童形象的再审视，唤醒人们对詹氏研究中这一相对滞后领域的全新关注。在对詹氏文本的选取上，笔者考虑以典型性与代表性为主，试图兼顾詹氏各个时期的作品。除了在引言中对詹姆斯的第一个短篇小说《错误的悲剧》进行简单的论述之外，本书的主体部分着重讨论了四个文本，即詹氏前期作品《日夜监视》、中期的代表作《〈贝尔特拉菲尔〉的作者》以及两部后期经典《螺丝拧紧》和《梅西所知》。笔者旨在通过对这四部典型作品的重新解读，揭示詹氏对儿童物化问题一以贯之的关注。

长期以来，亨利·詹姆斯一直被塑造成一位只关心艺术与美的孤芳自赏的艺术大师，但是纵观他作品中的儿童受害者，我们不难发现，亨利·詹姆斯远非一位“超政治”的作家，他对儿童这一弱势群体怀有直觉性的人文关怀。詹氏笔下的儿童是成人物化的牺牲品。而成人对儿童的物化则是通过两种形式来完成的：一是“商品化”，一是“符号化”。詹姆斯笔下的儿童绝大部分是受害者。他们不是被利用，就是被当做可以随便抛弃的附属品，甚至他们的基本生命权也不能得到应有的尊重。他们表面上被拔高到高于生活、美于生活的地位，但是由于他们被标定为成人世界所渴望的“纯真”和“无知”的象征，其本身作为主体的丰富性和复杂性实际已经被消解成为一个简单的非黑即白的符号。透过詹氏笔下的儿童受害者，我们可以看到詹氏对他所植根的 19

世纪后半叶资本主义父权社会意识形态的尖锐抨击。亨利·詹姆斯像他同代的批判现实主义作家狄更斯等一样，认识到了资本主义社会儿童所受到的剥削。但他的批判性比他同时代的作家更加深入。他在文本中清晰地揭示出儿童痛苦的根源不仅仅存在于充满了动荡因素的资本主义外部社会，更植根于“家庭”这个父权社会基本单元的内部，植根于无所不在的将“异者”物化的社会意识形态之中。

在论述的操作和切入点的选择上，本书试图借鉴当代理论发展的最新成果，以对詹氏作品的文本分析为基础，同时参考了社会学的相关文献，采用了女性主义、后结构主义、心理分析、文化批评等作为理论支撑，从多角度阐述了詹姆斯对儿童物化的批判。本书中的“儿童”不仅仅是一个简单的生理概念，它更属于文化范畴。“儿童”在某种意义上看，是成人社会中的“异者”。隐藏在成人对儿童形象象征性解读的背后的是儿童作为真实存在的主体性的沦丧。笔者采用了“凝视”（the gaze）理论作为贯串本书的链接。“凝视”是父权社会的产物，作为权力社会深层次等级模式的有效运作机制之一，“凝视”已被广泛地应用于强势群体对弱势群体的压制。在詹氏作品中，“凝视”具体表现为成人视野中儿童的物化：詹氏儿童分别被置于“审美凝视”、“诊断式凝视”和“全景敞开式凝视”之下；他们的反抗则表现为“逃离凝视”。

由于本人还是学术研究道路上的初行者，无论是从理论的角度还是从具体的文本批评实践上看，本书都难免存在着纰漏。恳请学术前辈和同仁不吝指正。

陈 榕

2004年6月

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Chapter One Introduction

In February 1864, in the second issue of the year of the *Continental Monthly*, an obscure periodical which only managed to survive for two years, came an unsigned story entitled *A Tragedy of Error*. This is a story of adultery and murder. Hortense Berner, who is deeply involved in a triangle love affair, hires a boatman to drown her husband when he returns from an oversea business trip. The plan backfires when the boatman mistakes her lover as her husband. With little merit to recommend itself, this melodramatic tale is the literary debut of Henry James,¹ who was 21 years old then and who was going to become the great master of American literature with a prolific literary career spanning over 50 years, which leaves us 22 novels,² 112 short stories, seven plays, numerous essays and a large number of lively correspondences.

The background of *A Tragedy of Error* is set in a French seaport. As her lover refuses to comply with her, Hortense Berner has to venture to the residence of the fishermen by herself in order to look for the right man to execute the cold-blood murder. There she becomes a “mute spectator” of a little drama: a small boy, carrying a

milk jug in its arms, is stopped by its uncle, a brutal ruffian. Whereas the boy is reluctant to follow the man's order of handing him the milk, the man drags it forward, "running his disengaged hand into the infant's frowsy mop of hair and shaking its head until it staggered", and grabs the jug out of the boy's hands.³ It is by witnessing the man's bullying of the helpless boy that Hortense is convinced that the boatman is her best choice because he is capable of the forthcoming cruelty.

A Tragedy of Error is a story in lack of originality: copying the French style of romance and melodrama, it's too pale an imitation of George Sand and Balzac. Yet James's characterization is acknowledged by the Jamesians to have a sparkle of ingenuity; the image of the boatman as a rascal is brought into sharp relief in his short but violent confrontation with his little nephew.⁴

What the Jamesians fail to mention, however, is Henry James's vivid rendering of the boatman's helpless nephew, who indeed offers the reader the very first glimpse of Henry James's fictional children. There is an aspect in the apprentice piece that is of great importance in the light of the author's subsequent treatment of childhood in fiction. It foreshadows a continuity in Henry James's deep concern over the children as the victims of circumstances and being betrayed by the adults who should offer them protection and love. This boy in *A Tragedy of Error* is the first child victim in James's fiction: an "it", sensitive, vulnerable, bullied and muted, subject to neglect and cruelty, too weak to revolt.

In the 1860s, within fourteen stories Henry James had published, at least five of them contain child victims. Besides the boy in *A Tragedy of Error* who is abused by its uncle, in *My Friend Bingham*

(1867), *A Problem* (1868), *Osborne's Revenge* (1868) and *Gabrielle De Bergerac* (1869), two children die, and the other two suffer from neglect. This is only a start. In Henry James's works of the 1870s, readers can see how Master Eustace in *Master Eustace* (1871), an illegitimate child, is spoilt by his mother's overindulgence and denied a separate identity from her by her suffocating love. In *Daisy Miller: A Study*, readers will find young Daisy and her mischievous brother Randolph wandering in Europe, whose father is preoccupied with his lucrative business in America and whose mother, though accompanying them, is too weak and self-indulgent to offer them enough affection and guide. As to the children of the 1880s, one of the most tragic is Pansy Osmond in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). This dainty flower who is brought up in a convent like a prisoner is nothing but a treasured piece of her father's art collection. In James's later period come more memorable children. There are Maisie Farange in *What Maisie Knew* (1897), Miles and Flora in *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) and Fernanda Brookenham in *The Awkward Age* (1899), to name but a few.⁵ If readers are willing to expand their view and take into account those adults bearing the scars of childhood, they could find another long list of characters: Miss Diamond in *The Ghostly Rental* (1876), Catherine Sloper in *Washington Square* (1880), Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of A Lady* (1881), Verena Tarrant in *The Bostonians* (1886), Tina Bordereau in *The Aspern Papers* (1888), Flora Saunt in *Glasses* (1898), and Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove* (1902). In a word, Henry James's fictional world presents a large album of children exposed to rigid morality, vulgarity, adult sexuality, neurotic obsession, exploitation, manipulation, and even physical abuses and violent death.⁶

The height of critical attention given to James's children came in the 1960s when New Criticism and Freudian psychoanalysis were in a great vogue. One dominant interpretation that has guided literary readings of James's children for years is offered by Leon Edel, whose five-volume biography of the master is considered the landmark of Jamesian studies. According to Edel, the recurrent appearance of neglected and abused children in Henry James's fiction of the 1890s manifests a regression into childhood feelings as James struggled to recover from the burden of defeat and personal humiliation involved in his theatrical failure. "James performed imaginative self-therapy" by assuming the disguise of a female child. It allows the novelist to "express awareness of the self's vulnerability and pleasure in the possibility of transcending weakness".⁷

Another widely accepted interpretation of Henry James's fictional children is closely connected with James's identity theme: the international theme. Henry James is most often celebrated for inventing "the international novel", the subject of which treats the confrontation of the unsophisticated American characters with the labyrinth of European culture. In James's fiction, the cultural clashes have been elevated onto a cosmic platform. Embedded in them is the deep structure of universal dialectical themes: innocence versus experience, nature versus art, freedom versus cultivation. Though all the novels and novellas of James's innocent-child phase are localized to England and none of them treats the celebrated international theme which James explores in his early works and again in his major phase,⁸ children and young women are considered by Jamesians the counterparts to the naïve and vulnerable Americans abroad; and parents, ghosts and a gilded but corrupt adult society are like the

Europe of the early fictions. When a child ventures into the adult world, what arises is the dichotomy of American naivety and the Old World sophistication, which in certain sense symbolizes the universal morality play of innocence versus experience.⁹

Ever since the 1980s, with the publication of many a substantial work, a trend of "reassessment" in Henry James studies has been witnessed.¹⁰ Under the spotlight of fresh critical perspectives applied, a new Henry James who was deeply interpolated in his times emerged from the ivory tower of his art.¹¹ Nevertheless, even though Henry James's works are rich in images of children and childhood, no revisionist effort has ever been spent in reconsidering his fictional children as a whole in the light of new critical pedagogies.¹² So far as Jamesian children are concerned, the most authoritative work on the subject is still Muriel Shine's *The Fictional Children of Henry James* published in 1969, which offers a detailed evolutionary account of James's children, but is too descriptive to keep a penetrating critical focus. This destitution of critical enthusiasm does not mean that the child image in James's fiction is a topic fully explored and exhausted; nor does it indicate that James's depiction is so one-dimensional that it cannot foster fruitful readings any more. On the contrary, it reflects a critical blind spot in Jamesian studies, whose origin lies in the traditional stereotyped criticism of children in literature in general.

Since the book is on the child image in Henry James's fiction, first of all, I need to clarify the concept of the child I adopt in my criticism. What I refer to in my work is not child in the biological sense, but child as a social construction. The word "child", in our ordinary sense, generally refers to a young human being of either sex,

from pre-birth to the completion of physical development. On the surface, it seems to be closely defined by corresponding biological features. Philippe Aries's landmark work *Centuries of Childhood*, however, totally deconstructed such a "common sense" assumption of child as a natural entity. According to Aries's pioneering study, the concept of childhood as applied in our society did not exist in earlier times. In the Middle Ages there was only the distinction between infant and adult.¹³ Once a child passed his infancy, he was initiated into the world of adults. A child at the age of six or seven was considered mature enough to be treated like an adult: he could be dressed like adults, inherit property and issue order at his own household. The children were indeed some miniature adults. Not until the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th centuries did the modern concept of childhood come into being with the rise of modern family and new education system. Medieval schools were characterized by random mixed of ages and lack of strict gradation in curricular. Once the children went to school they were thought to be entering the adult world. But the 17th century pedagogues reformed the educational institutions. Schools were considered to be the territory where children were educated for potential adulthood. Students over 20 were pushed out of school. Boys were separated according to age and the curriculum was organized and graded according to difficulty of subject matters. According to Aries, the major point that distinguished modern schools from medieval ones was to what extent personal liberty was modified by school principle. This new discipline system applied in the modern schools, which included whipping and organized spying, created the original concept of childhood subordination. In Aries's view, "[t]he concept of those

separate nature of childhood, of its difference from the world of adults began with the elementary concept of its weakness, which brought it down to the level of the lowest social strata."¹⁴ For Aries, the 17th century priests and moralists, as they saw children as "fragile creatures of God who needed to be both safeguarded and reformed",¹⁵ contributed most to the development of the new concept of childhood. In the discovery and invention of childhood, conformity and passivity were set up as the dominant traits. The rigidity of personal liberty, self-restraint and self-denial, order and submission gradually substituted independence and freedom. The miniature adult of the Middle Ages has become the dependent child of today.

Philippe Aries's work on the discovery of childhood situates the modern child's coming into being with the development of industrial societies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; child was seen to vary as structure once liberated from the label of biological phenomena. In contemporary sociology, the cultural constructiveness ingrained in the modern concept of family and child has been widely accepted. Sociologists point out that in our society children and persons over 65 have many similarities in status. Both belong to age-segregated groups, which are defined and stereotyped by the dominant middle group; both are often poor and lack influence on the decision-making apparatus; both are continually reminded of their non-productive roles in society. Children become another "discriminated group",¹⁶ taking on the qualities of minority group members and submitting to adult's power and construction.

Power and manipulation are not only the modes that dominate the relations between adults and children in reality; they are also deeply entangled in the adult's representation of child in literature.