THE AMERICAN NOVEL

剑桥美国小说新论·28
（英文影印版）

New Essays on

# The American

# 《美国人》新论

Martha Banta 编

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# 导　读

北京大学英语系教授　陶洁

近年来，美国文学在我国很受欢迎。大专院校英语系纷纷开设美国文学选读和专题课，学生从中学到的大部分内容是美国小说。不仅如此，在本科毕业论文、硕士论文或博士论文方面，学生所选题材也大多为关于某部美国小说或某个美国小说家。然而，我们的学生往往热衷理论而对作品或作家缺乏深入细致的了解和分析。他们往往先大谈理论规则，然后罗列一些例证，不能很好地把理论和文本融会贯通，恰如其分地结合在一起。在这种情况下，我们需要一些好的参考资料来帮助学生更好地认识和理解他们在阅读或研究的作品和作家。《剑桥美国小说新论》正是这样一套优秀的参考书。

这套丛书的负责人是曾经主编过《哥伦比亚美国文学史》的艾默里·埃利奥特教授，并且由英国剑桥大学出版社在上世纪80年代中期开始陆续出书，至今仍在发行并出版新书，目前已有五十多种，不仅出平装本还有精装本。一套书发行二十多年还有生命力，估计还会继续发行，主要因为它确实从学生的需要出发，深受他们和教师的喜爱。

《剑桥美国小说新论》的编排方式比较统一。根据主编制定的原则，每本书针对一部美国文学历史上有名望的大作家的一本经典小说，论述者都是研究这位作家的知名学者。开篇是一位权威专家的论述，主要论及作品的创作过程、出版历史、当年的评价以及小说发表以来不同时期的主要评论和阅读倾向。随后是四到五篇论述，从不同角度用不同的批评方法对作品进行分析和阐

释。这些文章并非信手拈来，而是专门为这套丛书撰写的，运用的理论都比较新，其中不乏颇有新意的真知灼见。书的最后是为学生进一步学习和研究而提供的参考书目。由此可见，编书的学者们为了帮助学生确实煞费苦心，努力做到尽善尽美。

这五十多种书有早期美国文学家库珀的《最后的莫希干人》，也有当代试验小说大师品钦的《拍卖第49号》和厄普代克那曾被《时代》杂志评为1923年以来100部最佳小说之一的《兔子，跑吧！》；有我们比较熟悉的麦尔维尔的《白鲸》，也有我们还不太了解的他的《漂亮水手》；有中国学生很喜欢的海明威的长篇小说《永别了，武器》，令人想不到的是还有一本论述他所有的短篇小说的集子。有些大作家如亨利·詹姆斯、威廉·福克纳等都有两三本作品入选，但它们都分别有专门的集子。丛书当然涉及已有定论的大作家，包括黑人和白人作家（可惜还没有华裔作家的作品），但也包括20世纪70年代妇女运动中发掘出来的如凯特·肖邦的《觉醒》和佐拉·尼尔·赫斯顿的《他们眼望上苍》，甚至还有我国读者很熟悉的斯托夫人的《汤姆叔叔的小屋》。当年这部小说曾经风靡美国，在全世界都有一定的影响，后来被贬为“政治宣传”作品，从此在美国文学史上销声匿迹。70年代后随着要求扩大文学经典中女性和少数族裔作家的呼声日益高涨，人们才开始重新评价这部作品，分析它对日后妇女作家的影响、对黑人形象的塑造，甚至它在美国文学的哥特式传统中的地位等等。

这样的例子还有很多，例如威廉·迪恩·豪威尔斯和他的《赛拉斯·拉帕姆的发迹》。以前人们只肯定他在发展现实主义文学和理论方面的贡献，对他的作品除了《赛拉斯·拉帕姆的发迹》评价都不太高。但在这本新论文集子里编者对已有定论进行挑战，强调豪威尔斯的小说、他的现实主义跟当时的社会经济文化现状有很大的关系。他的小说既有其文学形式，又是一种社会力量。另外一位19世纪新英格兰作家萨拉·奥尼·裘威特过去一向被看成是乡土作家，现在学者们用女性主义观点强调她的《尖枞树之乡》对美国文学的贡献，分析当年的种族、民族主义和文学市场

对她写作的影响。用封底宣传语言来说，这本集子对美国文学研究、女性主义批评理论和美国研究等方面都会引起很大的兴趣。

还有一本书似乎在我们国家很少有人提起过——亨利·罗思的《就说是睡着了》。此书在20世纪30年代曾经风靡一时，此后长期销声匿迹，60年代又再度受到推崇。现在这部小说则是上面提到的《时代》杂志100部优秀小说中的一部，被认为是上个世纪头50年里最为出色的美国犹太小说、最优秀的现代主义小说之一。评论家认为集子里的文章采用心理分析、社会历史主义等批评方法探讨了有关移民、族裔和文化归属等多方面的问题。

这套集子里还出现了令人信服的新论点。很长时间内海明威一直被认为是讨厌女人的大男子主义者。但在关于他的短篇小说的论述里，作者通过分析《在密执安北部》，令人信服地证明海明威其实对妇女充满同情。不仅如此，这一论断还瓦解了海明威在《太阳照样升起》中充分暴露他的厌女症的定论。

然而，作者们并不侈谈理论或玩弄理论名词，所有的论断都是既以一定的理论为基础，又对文本进行深入的分析；既把理论阐述得深入浅出，又把作品分析得丝丝入扣，让人不由得不信服。他们能够做到这一点完全是因为他们了解学生的水平和需要。

我认为《剑桥美国小说新论》是一套很好的参考书。北京大学出版社购买版权，出版这套书是个有益于外国文学研究教学的决定。

# Series Editor's Preface

In literary criticism the last twenty-five years have been particularly fruitful. Since the rise of the New Criticism in the 1950s, which focused attention of critics and readers upon the text itself – apart from history, biography, and society – there has emerged a wide variety of critical methods which have brought to literary works a rich diversity of perspectives: social, historical, political, psychological, economic, ideological, and philosophical. While attention to the text itself, as taught by the New Critics, remains at the core of contemporary interpretation, the widely shared assumption that works of art generate many different kinds of interpretation has opened up possibilities for new readings and new meanings.

Before this critical revolution, many American novels had come to be taken for granted by earlier generations of readers as having an established set of recognized interpretations. There was a sense among many students that the canon was established and that the larger thematic and interpretative issues had been decided. The task of the new reader was to examine the ways in which elements such as structure, style, and imagery contributed to each novel's acknowledged purpose. But recent criticism has brought these old assumptions into question and has thereby generated a wide variety of original, and often quite surprising, interpretations of the classics, as well as of rediscovered novels such as Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, which has only recently entered the canon of works that scholars and critics study and that teachers assign their students.

The aim of The American Novel Series is to provide students of American literature and culture with introductory critical guides to

American novels now widely read and studied. Each volume is devoted to a single novel and begins with an introduction by the volume editor, a distinguished authority on the text. The introduction presents details of the novel's composition, publication history, and contemporary reception, as well as a survey of the major critical trends and readings from first publication to the present. This overview is followed by four or five original essays, specifically commissioned from senior scholars of established reputation and from outstanding younger critics. Each essay presents a distinct point of view, and together they constitute a forum of interpretative methods and of the best contemporary ideas on each text.

It is our hope that these volumes will convey the vitality of current critical work in American literature, generate new insights and excitement for students of the American novel, and inspire new respect for and new perspectives upon these major literary texts.

Emory Elliott
Princeton University

# Contents

# 1

# Introduction

MARTHA BANTA

WHEN Henry James began work on *The American* in 1875, he was impelled by three interconnected needs, all to do with finding the "right forms." He had to give shape to his nascent career by driving it forward in the direction that would best enhance his reputation as a promising young writer; he had to decide what authorial perspective to take on the material he treated in his narrative and whether to guide it toward the literary genre of the romance (locus of the fanciful) or the novel (seat of the realist); he had to define to his own satisfaction what the American character was in relation, first, to the United States, which he perceived as essentially formless, and, second, to a foreign culture whose historical forms were all too rigidly in place.

It was mid-1876 by the time James completed his story of Christopher Newman, the freewheeling American millionaire abroad in the Paris where James had felt himself at odds. While James was busy raising questions about where habits of independence and self-reliance got a man like Newman and pursuing his unofficial exposition of the meaning of "the American," his compatriots were gathering back home in Philadelphia to celebrate the one-hundredth anniversary of the nation's severance from the Old World in 1776. Many were responding with patriotic pride to the lavishly stocked exhibition halls of the 1876 centennial, which appeared to give credence to the belief that the United States had come very far very fast over the past century – as a growing political power, as the catalyst for astonishing technological achievements, and as the champion of a democratic culture. The good people across the ocean from James were flushed with self-congratulation as they passed through the official displays, finding

there affirmation of the national unity they liked to think that the North had snatched from the jaws of hell during the Civil War concluded ten years earlier. The American types described in the news media of the day were pleased to observe that the overt making of big wars had been replaced by the making and spending of big money and the enhancement of a peaceful, prosperous, and virtuous society.

In order for such assertions of national pride to be made, blind eyes had to be turned upon the kinds of warfare still in evidence from coast to coast: in the Reconstruction South, where newly emancipated blacks struggled to hold on to their meager gains in civil affairs in spite of the ominous light cast on the night skies by burning crosses lit by the Ku Klux Klan; in the western territories, where sweeps against the resisting Indian tribes were made (not always successfully, as General George Custer's debacle at Little Big Horn demonstrated) by army troops ordered to free the lands for white development; in the ornate boardrooms and smoky back rooms of the eastern power brokers, whose self-interested manipulations of the Crédit Mobilier and the Tweed Ring stole large sums of money from the shareholders of the Union Pacific Railroad and the treasury of New York City; in the railroad yards and coal mines banding the industrial states on the eve of the bloody strikes that would warn of anarchic social elements on the loose; in the silver fields of Nevada, where the excitement of flush times was followed by overnight busts and panics, both financial and psychological. Yes, on the American side of the Atlantic, the citizenry had either to acknowledge or to ignore the fact that it was well-nigh impossible to bring the official images of the progressive, unified, contented American character endorsed by the Philadelphia centennial to line with the ever-present expressions – sometimes violent, usually disquieting – of the random nature of American life.

Removed from these battlefronts back in the United States as he may have been, James's multifold search for necessary forms deeply involved him in his own campaign to wrest order out of confusion. At the same time, he needed to advance his career as a writer by selecting the fictional form that would satisfy his readers as well as the high literary standards he had already set for himself.

To bring about this double coup, James also had to push ahead with what turned out to be his lifelong search to determine what it means to be an American writing about the primary American types. By being alert to the aims and accomplishments of this thirty-two-year-old writer, we gain a history that places *The American* within its cultural and social context and in relation to the arc of James's development as a major American author.

## 1

In 1875 Henry James was in Paris and on his own. At thirty-two he was no longer the Small Boy later portrayed in the first volume of his memoirs as one who had been trundled about Europe during the 1840s and 1850s; he was no longer the direct object of his father's well-intentioned but whimsical experiments in an education that was meant to be vague enough to protect the five James children from achieving any kind of conventional success. James in 1875 was still, however, the junior Henry James and would sign himself thus until his father's death in 1883. He was still tied to the strings of a parental allowance that allowed his nature insufficient economic and emotional play. He could not call himself his own man until he attained the full financial independence that would come about only when his writings supported him entirely.

James had been a practicing writer since 1864. Over the next eleven years he produced a series of literary reviews, the fictional romances that appeared in 1875 under the collective title of *A Passionate Pilgrim and Other Tales,* and the travel pieces (also published in 1875) published as *Transatlantic Sketches.* His first big work – the novel *Roderick Hudson,* which he had commenced in Florence in 1873 and completed at his parents' home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, during the winter of 1874–5 – was appearing in the *Atlantic Monthly* as a serial at the time he recrossed the ocean to arrive in Paris in November 1875 – returning, in fact, to Europe for good. He had chosen his special vocation in 1864; now he chose the continent where he must manifest his fate as an American writer living abroad. "My choice is the old world – my choice, my need, my life," he wrote in his notebooks of 1881. "God knows that I have now no time to waste," he was still

cautioning himself six years after that disembarkment of November 1875, as he would continue to admonish himself until his death in 1916.[1]

The pressures upon James to make his literary mark must have seemed especially arduous in 1875. Active as he had been in producing his reviews, travel sketches, apprentice tales, and first novel, he knew he could not pause for a moment if he were to keep himself financially afloat. Before coming to France he had made arrangements with Whitelaw Reid of the *New York Tribune* to contribute a series of letters appraising the Parisian scene, but he was gently released from his assignment by the summer of 1876 after twenty letters and payments from Reid amounting to $400. His reports on Paris, couched in the descriptive style he had developed for his earlier magazine pieces, proved unsuitable for the *Tribune*'s journalistic needs. He had not yet found the form appropriate for audiences other than those of *The Nation* and the *Atlantic Monthly*, with which he was familiar. James had never thought to place all of his professional eggs in Reid's basket, however. He was in Paris not three weeks when he sent a letter to F. P. Church, the editor of *The Galaxy*, proposing a novel-length serial under the title of *The American*. When *The Galaxy* did not respond to his suggestion, he immediately entered into a contractual agreement with William Dean Howells, editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*. Howells eagerly cleared the way for his magazine to receive the rights to the story James had momentarily laid aside as the result of the disappointing silence on the part of *The Galaxy*.[2]

James had been chastened and depressed by a letter of January 1876 from his mother that called him to task for his "extravagance" and the financial drain he was causing his father, in spite of the fact that he had sent the $200 derived from the sale of *Transatlantic Sketches* directly home to Cambridge. James's response had been to press ahead to deliver two short romances, "Crawford's Consistency" and "The Ghostly Rental," to *Scribner's Magazine* for a fee of $300. It was a great relief to him, therefore, to settle with Howells on the placement of *The American*, even though he was still far short of its completion when it first began to appear in the *Atlantic Monthly* in June 1876.

Though *The American* would run for twelve months and fetch

James $1,350 – enough to support him through 1876 – Leon Edel's biography details his continuing scramble during 1877; working at an accelerated pace, he produced ten essays for *The Galaxy,* three for *Lippincott's,* and still others for *The Nation* after his move to London at the end of 1876.[3] In the meantime, James was seeing *The American* through its *Atlantic Monthly* serialization and its first publication as a book in April 1877 under the imprint of James R. Osgood of Boston. Like most authors in the days before the international copyright law went into effect in 1891, James had to stand by without legal recourse as unauthorized editions appeared in London in 1877 and Germany in 1877 and 1878. An authorized London edition (slightly altered from the Osgood text) was published by Macmillan in 1879, followed later by the inclusion of *The American* in Macmillan's collection of James's novels in 1883. The final appearance of the novel during James's lifetime came in 1907, featured as the second volume of Scribners New York Edition of James's major works.[4] The consequences of *that* edition – heavily revised by James in 1905 – are a story in itself and one that will be treated later in this introduction, as will the implications of James's conversion of the novel into a stage play in 1892 for the controversies that followed the compositional evolution of Christopher Newman's story.

While James was in Paris commencing work on *The American,* he had more on his mind than the very real need to ensure his financial stability and to place his writings before the public in short order. He was in the midst of an evaluation of the general relation of Americans to French culture and an assessment of the significance to his own art of the Parisian literary scene represented by Gustave Flaubert, Alphonse Daudet, Émile Zola, Edmond de Goncourt, and Guy de Maupassant, as well as by Ivan Turgenev, the visiting Russian; he was also absorbing the lessons afforded by the nighttime spectacles of the Paris theater, which, some suggest, directly influenced the plot of *The American* and certainly lay behind the choices he later made in the development of his "scenic" art.[5]

In the end, Honoré de Balzac proved to be James's man rather than Flaubert or Maupassant; and also Turgenev, the writer who led James to commit himself to what one critic calls "that human-

ist-aesthetic cosmopolitanism, that freedom from 'our Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, conventional morality' which he had so admired in Turgenev."[6] Incidentally, it was Turgenev who had first introduced James to Flaubert in December 1875, but by May 1876 James was writing Howells about his withdrawal from the group of French writers. "I have seen almost nothing of the literary fraternity, and there are fifty reasons why I should not become intimate with them. I don't like their wares, and they don't like any others; and besides, they are not *accuelillants*. Turgenev is worth the whole heap of them."[7] The casual immorality condoned by the Flaubertian circle, the petty animosities of its members toward those who did not fully concur with their methods, the enginelike way in which they produced volumes of "limited perfection," and the seeming coldness and deadness of their hearts repelled James. The broad expansiveness of spirit he had found in Balzac's and Turgenev's writings was what James now realized he was after. *Cosmopolitanism,* in short.



What an odd position James found himself in, therefore, during the twelve months he spent in Paris delving deeper into his story of the American abroad. "I am turning into an old, and very contented Parisian," he informed Howells in a letter of May 1876.[8] "I feel as if I had struck roots into the Parisian soil, and were likely to let them grow tangled and tenacious there." Yet, he admitted, "Of pure Parisianism I see absolutely nothing." At the time, when expressing his feelings to Howells, James put a good face on the fact that he had no accepted place in French society and had denied himself the possibility of becoming allied with the newest French literary camp. Simply to be in Paris gave cheer, he asserted; Paris assured "that one can arrange one's life here exactly as one pleases – that there are facilities for every kind of habit and taste, and that everything is accepted and understood." This acute observer of the city's spectacle appreciated the fact that Paris was "a sort of painted background which keeps shifting and changing, and which is always there, to be looked at when you please, and to be most easily and comfortably ignored when you don't."

In 1875–6 James could liken himself to a member of a great audience enjoying the theatricality the city so brilliantly provided, but looking back from the vantage point of 1881, he admitted in

the privacy of his notebooks that he had not much cared for the sense of estrangement he had experienced five years before.[9] Alone, because distanced from the parochialism of the French scene; alone, because he claimed no entrée into the French social world; alone, because as an American abroad he had to depend upon "the little American 'set' – the American village encamped *en plein Paris.*" James admitted that his compatriots "knew up to a certain point their Paris," but he judged their existence there to be "ineffably tiresome and unprofitable." He was constantly beset by the type of American woman whom he was to represent (somewhat more sympathetically) as Mrs. Tristram in *The American:* the kind who took upon herself "the right to judge" his movements. James felt trapped by "the detestable *American* Paris." He could not possess the French Paris, and he was increasingly annoyed by those Americans who tried to possess him as part of "their Paris." Realizing, "moreover, that I should be an eternal outsider," he decided "to abandon my plans of indefinite residence, take flight to London and settle there as best I could." So James departed for England in November 1876, one year after his arrival in Paris. Even though the early chapters of *The American* had already began to appear in the *Atlantic Monthly* in June 1876, the final portions of the story were still unfinished when he crossed the English Channel. Indeed, James was still corresponding with Howells concerning the developments of the narrative through March 1877.

The twelve months that had launched the story of Christopher Newman's confrontation with the "walls" of Parisian society marked a difficult period during which James himself had had to come to terms with those elements – internal as well as external – that seemed to prevent him from becoming the cosmopolitan man he urgently desired to be. Still, he had made several important discoveries: The parochialism he detested characterized the French literary clique as well as the tight little world of "the American 'set' "; this same incapacity for cultural and personal breadth also existed, he would argue in *The American,* within the well-guarded minds and imprisoned lives of the aristocratic French society represented by the Bellegarde family.

Certain of the literary problems James had in forming his portrayal of Americans in relation to Parisian life arose from the fact