



亨利·詹姆斯早期小说的
叙事空间研究

A Study of the Narrative Space in Henry James's Early Fiction

Fu Shuqin



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Preface

Doctor Fu Shuqin's dissertation "A Study of the Narrative Space in Henry James's Early Fiction" is going to be published. As her supervisor, I should congratulate her and I am delighted to accept her invitation to write a preface for the book. Her dissertation is among the best of all those under my supervision and I believe all James scholars will benefit from her critical insights on the issue being discussed.

Henry James is the greatest American writer after Hawthorne and Melville and he enjoyed great fame as a world-known critic and theorist. His works are best known for the international theme and his inner-world building power which greatly influenced modernist and postmodernist literature in the twentieth century. James studies abroad has a history of more than one hundred years, while in China, the studies started much later, and there is a scarce number of related findings and monographs in particular. Doctor Fu interpreted James's early fiction in her dissertation from a new perspective of spatial criticism and it will fill up the blank in this area of James studies in China.

Fu is a diligent and persistent young scholar with an independent and exploring mind. She has been doing research on Henry James for about ten years. She combined her previous research experiences with the newly risen spatial criticism and focused on the spatial issues in James's early fiction in her discussion. Taking Lefebvre's tripartite spatial theory as its theoretical guideline, the dissertation explores the narrative space of James's

early fiction on three levels: the architectural space at physical level, the individual psychological space at mental level and the globalized space at social level. It probes into the structure of cultural feelings, the construction of individual subjectivity as well as the theme of social globalization represented on each level in the selected novels. Meanwhile, the author also uses narrative theory to analyze the spatial skills employed by James and the interrelationship between the narrative and the space in these novels.

The dissertation is innovative in the following aspects. Firstly, the author interpreted James's canons from a new perspective. As a great writer, James has received much attention from the academic world and a variety of critical theories have been employed in the interpretation of his novels, including feminism, cultural criticism, archetypal criticism, psychoanalysis, structuralism, deconstructionism and gender studies. Therefore, it is difficult to find a new angle from which to approach the research on James. Fu took pains to bring up something new by probing into the spatial issues of James's early fiction. Based on spatial narratology and sociological theories concerned, she made a thorough analysis on the interrelationship between the spatial form and metaphors in these works through a close reading of the original novels. Secondly, the dissertation is an interdisciplinary study. The author's forceful argumentation from the perspectives of sociology, psychology, architecture and art bespeaks her strong consciousness of cross disciplinary study. Finally, the dissertation demonstrates the author's insightful reading of the ethical and social conflicts in the process of globalization in James's early fiction. By presenting James's implied solutions to the contradictions, the author highlights the realistic social significance of James's studies. The interpretation from the new per-

spective of space leads to different views about James. Traditionally, James was believed to have a preference to temporary dimension and cast no attention to space in his works or theories. However, Fu has proved in her dissertation that the opposite is true. She argues that James valued the spatial elements and used various spatial form skills in his writing. More examples of such new findings are waiting for readers to explore.

Fu is hosting the research program of “A Study of Henry James’s Novels from the Spatial Perspective” sponsored by the National Planning Office of Philosophy and Social Sciences. The dissertation is also a product of the program. The publication of the dissertation is the fruitful result of many years of hard work by Fu in Henry James studies. It marks a new starting point in Fu’s academic career. I should congratulate her on her success, and I also hope that she should achieve more in this field of research.

—Zhang Dingquan

Forward

Henry James (1843 – 1916) is one of the most distinguished novelists, stylists and critics in the field of English literature. In over fifty years of literary career, James created 22 novels, 112 short stories, 7 plays, a large number of critical essays and books. Voluminous findings have been achieved in the century-old James studies. A variety of literary critical theories are found stationed in James criticism including feminism, cultural studies, archetypal criticism, psychoanalysis, structuralism and deconstructionism. The author of this book gets plenty of insight and guidance from the achievements of previous James studies. However, it seems that previous Henry James studies does not show enough concern for the space issue in his novels and it turns into the cutting point of the present book. As the “spatial turn” in the twentieth-century receives increasing attention from the intellectual world, spatial criticism and spatial narrative become hot topics in literary studies. A number of scholars have tried their hand in the spatial interpretation of canonical writers and works and remarkable findings have been obtained. Thus, the author attempts to take a spatial reading of Henry James’s early novels in hope of getting something new.

Rising in the 1970s – 80s, spatial criticism has greatly influenced other disciplines of humanities and arts. One of the pioneers of spatial theory Henri Lefebvre asserts in his groundbreaking work *The Production of Space* that (*social*) space is a (*social*) product and he examines the property of

space from three dimensions: physical, mental and social. With the reference of Lefebvre's theory, the author divides the narrative space of James's early fiction into three levels: architectural space at physical level, individual psychological space at mental level and globalized space at social level. Meanwhile, with the guidance of narrative theory, this book also analyzes the spatial skills presented in James's early works and the interrelationship between the narrative and the space in these novels.

The book is composed of an introduction, 3 major chapters and a conclusion.

The first part introduces briefly and comments on James studies both at home and abroad as well as the applicability of spatial theory to James's fiction. Overseas James criticism is generally divided into four phases and each of them is differently characterized. Current James studies takes on a cross-disciplinary trend with a special interest in the costumes and music in James's works. Domestic James studies started comparatively much later with the focus on James's modernity and cultural conflicts in his works. The previous studies display a neglect of the spatial issue in James's fiction. The theory of spatial narrative refreshes literary study by shifting the focus on time to space. The most representative one is Joseph Frank's spatial form theory which overthrows the traditional chronological narrative and establishes a totally new mode of time-space in literature. The introduction ends with the scope and method of the book. Centering on the narrative skill and spatial implication, this book adopts a dialectic methodology to probe into the physical, mental and social space as well as the spatial skills in James's early fiction. It is a study of both texts and the writer's mind.

The first chapter focuses on the architectural narrative in *The Portrait*

of a Lady, analyzing the symbolic meaning of various houses in the novel and James's cultural stance reflected in the depiction of these buildings. The fictional buildings disclose the cultural differences between the New and Old Worlds. Meanwhile, James got inspiration from his narrative of architecture to liken the novel to a "house", which he assumed to have "not one window, but a million" and through different "windows", we can see different "human scenes". In this way, James's literary practice interacts effectively and productively with his literary theories. In terms of narrative skills, James reconstructs the time-space mode by spatializing time and highlighting space in the novel, which foretells the advent of modern literature.

In the second chapter, the author resorts to Lefebvre's arguments about mental space, Foucault's spatial theory, feminism and gender studies theories to analyze the heroines' construction of subjectivity in *Washington Square* and *The Portrait of a Lady*. In the orderly, bright, domestic space of her household and the terrifying, chaotic and wild space of the Alps, Catherine grows from a docile girl who is absolutely obedient to her father and faithful to her lover to a rebellious woman who fights against patriarchy, male chauvinism and industrialism. It is in her resistance that Catherine establishes her own subjectivity. Isabel in *The Portrait of a Lady* spends her childhood in the old house at Albany which contributes partially to her contradictory character. She is in frenzy pursuit for freedom and meanwhile clings to traditional social forms. In the foreign space of Europe, Isabel becomes an outsider and is gazed by others. Under the gaze of others, she keeps examining herself and finally constructs successfully her own subjectivity through identification with social form. James displays subtle changes of the complicated individual psychology with the skill of

center consciousness and time-freezing. Both skills are a challenge against the linear narrative of traditional literature. The complex individual mental space in these novels contains a vivid record of women's life in the second half of the 19th century that was fraught with social and psychological pressure and their painful fight for an independent subjectivity. This record also reflects James's thoughts about the relations between self and other, self and society.

The third chapter is centered on the narrative of globalized social space. Lefebvre contends that social space is the production and reproduction of social relations. Sociologist Roland Robertson argues that globalization is "the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" and that the thirty years in the interval of James's two versions of *The American* belongs to the third phase of globalization. Based on these assumptions, this chapter analyzes the two texts of *The American* published in 1877 and 1907 respectively and reveals that James has depicted what is typical of a globalized society: strong sense of commercial exchange, interwoven economic and cultural relations and constant moral conflicts. All these work together to create totally new interrelationships between individuals, between different cultures and societies. The most striking contrast of the two versions lies in James's attitude toward the cultural differences and moral conflicts. While in the first edition James laid much emphasis on the differences, in the second version, he cast prominent importance to the mutual acceptance or interactions of different cultures. As to the moral conflicts, James suggested a harmonious solution, which sheds light on us to solve conflicts in the globalized context. Meanwhile, with the employment of the spatial skill of pictorialism, James bridges in his writing the gap between literature as a temporal art and painting as a spatial art, thus opening up a

new direction for literature.

The book concludes that James's narrative space is multi-faceted and meaningful. For one thing, the spatial movement of the characters draws a cross-national route, starting from America and arriving in the European countries. For another, the narrative space is essentially a social map, which directs to not only myriads of objective social phenomena ranging from the fall of British aristocracy to the rise of plutocracy, from Euro – American cultural differences to the commercial exchange in globalized contexts, but the subjective, conflicting and changeable mental world of individuals. The narrative space in James's fiction is also a symbolic system and a spatial metaphor. On one hand, it displays the cultural implication embedded in houses of different styles, character's construction of subjectivity and harmonious solution to cultural and moral conflicts; on the other hand, it also shows that James, as a writer of strong sense of morality and social responsibility, has made great efforts in creating improved interrelationships between humans and between cultures, that is, building a harmonious globalized society. The great success of James's narrative space lies in its fusion of spatial philosophy with spatial form. Finally, it points out the weaknesses of the book and the author's earnest hope for insightful advice from experts all over the nation.

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Introduction

0.1 A Review of Henry James Studies

Henry James (1843 – 1916) is a distinguished novelist, dramatist and literary critic. Throughout his odd – 50 – year writing career, James published nearly 22 novels (including the posthumously, unfinished novels but excluding novellas, some of which were initially published as single novels), 7 plays and a galaxy of literary criticisms and letters. Henry James is eminent and influential in the world of literature thanks not only to his huge quantity of his works but to his contribution to fiction writing. Looking back to the 19th and forward to the 20th century novel writing, James builds a bridge to connect the traditional realistic and modern even postmodern literature. Virginia Woolf claimed in an essay on fiction, “The books of Henry James are in truth the bridge upon which we cross the classic novel which is perfect of its kind to that other form of literature which if names have any importance should someday be christened anew—the modern novel, the novel of the 20th century” (qtd. in Raphael 126). Being

recognized as the precursor of formal architectonics and psychological realism and a master of highly complex but rich prose style, James becomes a primary focus and ever-lasting topic of literary criticism in the world.

However, it is not a smooth way for James to gain his literary reputation. Both overseas and domestic James criticism experienced some major shifts in evaluating his writing as will be introduced in the following two subsections.

0. 1. 1 Henry James Studies abroad

Overseas Henry James studies has a history of more than one hundred years during which critics went through some primary shifts of attention with a general tendency from aesthetic study to social criticism.

Generally speaking, James studies abroad can be divided into four phases. The first phase covers the 50 – odd years of Henry James's writing career. The domestic comments were wide as polar asunder. A group of critics with great appreciating power bestowed high praise on James's works. W. D. Howells, as the representative wrote on James's work :

In richness of expression and splendor of literary performance, we may compare him with the greatest, and find none greater than he; —No writer has a style more distinctively his own than Mr. James, and few have the abundance and felicity of his vocabulary; the precision with which he fits the word to the thought is exquisite; his phrase is generous and ample (qtd. in Grad 31 –2).