

摘 要

亨利·詹姆斯是现实主义向现代主义转型时期的英美文坛巨匠，其写作生涯横跨大半个世纪，写作题材包罗万象，包括小说、戏剧、游记、小说理论和文学评论。在十九世纪大众市场风起云涌，文学变成单纯的消费品之际，作为严肃作家的詹姆斯在他大量的作品创作中做出了自己的回应，并形成了詹姆斯独特的作者身份。本文结合詹姆斯的作品，探究构成其作家身份的主要要素，包括詹姆斯作为创作者、读者以及批评者的三重身份，并指出詹姆斯多元作者身份的构建本质上是文学共同体的构建。

本论文由五部分组成。第一章为绪论。第二章论述詹姆斯的创作理念，包括詹姆斯的艺术理想和两大重要小说理论。作为小说理论的奠基人，詹姆斯将小说归为艺术，进行严肃的艺术创作而非以娱乐读者为目的。第三章论述詹姆斯的读者观。在十九世纪的英美文学市场充斥的畅销书的现状之下，文学市场商业化蔚然成风，读者数量迅速壮大的同时带来了庸俗的阅读兴趣。詹姆斯坚持自己的艺术理想而不是向读者口味妥协。此章结合詹姆斯的作品《中年岁月》、《阿斯彭文稿》以及《地毯上的图案》探索詹姆斯心目中的理想读者。第四章分析詹姆斯的批评观。首先通过《名流之死》探讨了詹姆斯对当时的英美文学批评界中报刊、杂志与编辑采取故意诱导读者这种批评方式的不满，继而讨论了詹姆斯的批评思想，他认为文学批评应当给读者带来道德与智性的思考。第五章结论指出，詹姆斯多元写作身份的构建实际是对詹姆斯艺术共同体的构建。

作为创作者、读者和批评者，詹姆斯的多元写作身份使得他更具有对文学从创作、阅读到批评的整体意识。十九世纪末大众市场的形成对詹姆斯构成了挑战，同时也塑造了詹姆斯的文学共同体思想。读者是作者的受众，同时也处在批评家的巨大影响之下，读者和批评家又反作用于作者，三者息息相关、融为一体。当消费主义甚嚣尘上，文学作品成为追名逐利的附属品，创作者该如何写作？读者如何阅读？批评家如何批评，如何发挥批评的职能？詹姆斯给出了他的解答。在詹姆斯的创作理念中，既包含文学创作本身，又延申到创作的各种关系结构。深入理解詹姆斯的多元作者身份，以及艺术共同体的构建，可以更好的理解和把握詹姆斯的小说理论和创作实践，同时深刻地感受其思想给后人包括今天的我们带

来的榜样的力量。

关键词：亨利·詹姆斯；多元作者身份；创作者；读者；批评者

ABSTRACT

Henry James is regarded as a master of British and American literature during the transitional period from realism to modernism at the turn of the 20th century. Throughout the course of his more than 50-year writing career, James has produced a wide range of works, including novels, plays, travelogues, books on literary theory, and reviews. As the mass market underwent earth-shattering changes and literature has become mere product at the 19th century, James, as a serious writer, responded in his own way through the creation of a large number of works that together constitute James's unique authorship. This paper explores James's pluralistic authorship, including James's threefold identity as a writer, reader and critic in the context of his works. The establishment of James's pluralistic authorship is essentially the construction of his artistic community.

This paper consists of five parts. The first chapter is an introduction. The second chapter examines James's creative ideas, including his artistic ideals and two major novel theories. As a writer who lays a solid foundation for literary theories, James views the genre of the novel as art, and the creation of the novel as a serious work of art rather than serving the purpose of entertaining readers. The third chapter deals with James's view on reader. Under the situation that the British and American literary market in the nineteenth century flooded with bestsellers, the reading public develops a vulgar taste as a result of the commercialization of the literary market. James sticks to his artistic ideals rather than compromise with the tastes of the majority of readers at the time. This chapter explores James's ideal reader in the context of "The Middle Years", "The Aspen Papers", and "The Figure in the Carpet." The fourth chapter analyzes James's view on criticism. It explores James's dissatisfaction with the fact that newspapers, magazines and editors have misled readers in British and American literary criticism. This is analyzed through the interpretation of "The Death of the Lion." This chapter further discusses James's critical thought that literary criticism should bring moral and intellectual reflection to the reader. Chapter five offers a conclusion: the establishment of James's pluralistic authorship is essentially the construction of his artistic community.

As a writer, a reader, and a critic, James's multiple writing identities give him broader understanding of literature as a whole, from creation to reading to criticism. The emergence of the mass market at the end of the nineteenth century both challenged James and shaped his idea of artistic community. The reader, as the author's audience, is also greatly influenced by the critic, who in turn influences the author, thus forming the intimate and integrated relationship between the three parties. When consumerism is in full swing and literature has become a by-product of the quest for fame and fortune, how should writers write? How are books read? How do critics express their criticism, and how might they do so more effectively to maximize the function of criticism? James offers his response. James's philosophy of creation encompasses literary creation itself and extends to the structure of the various relationships of creation with readers and critics. We can better comprehend James's literary theory and his works if we have a clearer comprehension of his pluralistic authorship and the construction of an artistic community. At the same time, we can clearly sense the influence of his beliefs, which serves as a model for current and future generations alike.

Keywords: Henry James; pluralistic authorship; writer; reader; critic

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to Henry James and His Literary Career

Henry James (1843-1916) is one of the most influential literary figures at the turn of the 20th century. Being a master at describing characters' inner mind, James is considered as a writer of "psychological realism", which paves his path to be one of the forerunners of modernism. Apart from his irreplaceable position as a novelist, James's theory of fiction and literary criticism are of great significance for the development and advancement of western literary theories. Philip Rahv terms him "America's greatest novelist", and the British critic F.R. Leavis demands: "what achievement in the art of fiction...can we point to in English as surpassing his?" (Day 184-185).

Henry James is born in a wealthy family in New York City. His father is a theologian and philosopher and his older brother William James is an eminent psychologist philosopher. During their childhood, they are widely exposed to world culture through the process of travelling back and forth across the Atlantic. Their father considers European high culture and education as requisites for their children to grow up wise and intellectual. James is greatly influenced by what he sees and hears in Europe. Besides, James starts reading classics of different countries from an early age. When James comes of age, he travels to European countries very often and gets acquainted with many famous writers such as Flaubert, Turgenev, Emerson, Hawthorn, who become James's friends later. As an American, James finally settled in England in 1876 and spent most of his time living in Europe for forty years. In 1915, just one year before his death, he decided to become a naturalized British citizen to dedicate himself to his adopted country facing World War I. James's experience in his childhood and interaction with European writers as well as his unique way of living have enormous impact on James's writing, criticism and characterization during his literary career.

Henry James's creating career lasts over half a century, producing 22 novels, 112

short stories, 7 plays, lots of critical essays and a good deal of correspondences. According to *Survey of Modern British Fiction*, James's whole literary career can be divided into three stages (Hou 40). The first stage starts from his first literary work in 1871 to 1885, during which James creates plenty of novels and novellas focusing on the theme of cultural conflict and integration, paying much attention to the cultural shock of American when facing European culture, thus becoming the pioneer of "international theme." The representative works of this period are *The American* (1875), *Daisy Miller* (1878), *The Europeans* (1878), *Washington Square* (1879) and *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), which are the most well-known novels of James. The second stage is from 1886 to 1901, when James attempts to write plays, which turns out to be a failure. However, it becomes the turning point of James's style. For one thing, he does much experiment on his writing technique in his novels, which is one of the reasons why his works can sometimes hard to comprehend. For another, he incorporates some elements of drama into novels, which has gained much success. The third stage from 1901 is considered as the mature period of his writing career. James becomes an exquisite observer of his characters, in an attempt to catch the feelings and emotions of his characters.

Apart from being a prolific writer of fiction, James makes tremendous contribution to the establishment of literary theory in the western world. His theories about writing can be found in his critical essays such as "The Art of Fiction", "The Future of the Novel", and the 18 Prefaces to his "New York Edition" novels collected in *The Art of the Novel: Critical prefaces* (1934), which has brought James insurmountable reputation in the history of Anglo-American literature. James's strong passion for writing is to demonstrate life. In "The Art of Fiction", James claims that "the only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to present life" (378). Life and art influence and interact with each other. James's emphasis on life and the impression of life is inseparable from the experience of his writing practice. Another unavoidable key word is "center of consciousness" when it comes to the literary theory of Henry James. The narrative method of the writer being an omniscient and omnipotent narrator is no longer good enough for James. Instead, James prefers to have one of his characters tell the story and reflect his inner thinking. By doing so, James no longer focuses on the description of outside description, but on the inner world of characters, which also manifests the trend of novel writing from objective portrayal to subject demonstration.

As a prolific writer who leads the way in artistic form and the innovation of writing technique, his works also include a wealth of literary criticism. Except for Nathaniel Hawthorne, a series of prefaces to the New York edition of his fiction, and the numerous reviews and essays he never collects, James produces four volumes of literary criticism and theory, notably: *French Poets and Novelists* (1878), *Partial Portraits* (1888), *Essays in London and Elsewhere* (1893), and *Notes on Novelists* (1914). Most of these material are published previously in journals such as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The Nation*. In the aspect of literary criticism, James is influenced by the English poet and critic Mathew Arnold and finally he happened to hold the same view with Ivan Turgenev, which is the idea that one should keep a balance between moral and aesthetic demands. His sense of morality, however, is no conventional or rule-bound that delivers didactic education, but the intelligence inside a writer's brain, from which readers can draw the pleasure of beauty-appreciation and the higher level of knowledge and experience.

1.2 Literature Review at Home and Abroad

1.2.1 Literature Review at Home

According to the literature search of online databases in CNKI, Henry James has been the subject of 840 domestic studies, including monographs and journals. Thirty-six of the total forty checkable themes in the subject distribution are concerning James's works and character analysis, while other four are about James's novel theory. The development of domestic Jamesian study is relatively late. It began to gain momentum in the late 1990s and expanded quickly in the early 2000s, peaking in 2014.

Henry James's life and works were first introduced into China in 1929. The first academic commentary that truly explores the characteristics of James's literary creation from the perspective of artistic technique of novel was in 1947 by Xiao Qian, which was of great significance for the later domestic James study at the time. However, there are no much progress until 1990s, before which are some sporadic comments about James's works. Even facing the only limited translated novels and novellas, readers in China find the lengthy style and ambiguous theme too complicated to understand, thus taking little interest in them. Entering 1990s, with the emergence of various western

literary movements and the vigorous development of domestic literary theory, domestic studies of James has officially entered the academic stage, showing a diversified trend of research scope and criticism methods, which I will discuss in the following two aspects.

1) Interpretation of works

From the papers of major domestic academic journals, most of the interpretation of James's literary works focuses on his famous novel, *The Portrait of a Lady*, accounting for nearly one fifth of domestic James studies. The research perspectives of it include cultural study, which predominates among these investigations, followed by psycho-cognitive study, ethical and moral study, and storytelling techniques study. One of the researchers concentrating on James's cultural theme is Cui Shaoyuan. In his article "A Study of European and American Culture in Henry James's International-Themed Novels" (2002). Cui explores the international theme in Henry James's three novels and discusses James's attitude toward European and American culture as expressed in *The Portrait of a Lady* from the perspective of "refined culture." Dai Xianmei publishes "Pain • Knowledge • Responsibility—On the Ending of *The Portrait of a Lady*" (2008), considering "pain," "knowledge," and "responsibility" as three keywords of the novel, while taking Rome as a metaphor for European civilization to analyze the psychological motivation of Isabel to return to her terrible marriage. They put much emphasis on revealing the inherent contradictions of the character from a historical and cultural perspective. Chen Li explains the richness of *The Portrait of a Lady* from the perspective of character psychological thoughts in "Isabel's View on Freedom — On Henry James's *The Portrait of A Lady*" (2002). It is innovative to explore character's inner mind and pursuit, showing the critical attitude of Chinese scholars. Chen Huiliang's "On the Structure of *The Portrait of a Lady*" published in 1995 expounded the metaphorical structure of the story of Eden in the work from the perspective of mythological prototype criticism. Although not deeply discussing the intrinsic connection of this mythological pattern prototype to the overall structure of the work, this new perspective of research represents the methodological exploration of James work in a new era. There are also researchers who expounds the aesthetic significance of this work from the perspective of narrative metaphor. Wang Yanwen, for instance, in "The Narrative Function of Metaphors in *The Portrait of a Lady*" (2009), explores how

these metaphors become an organism and carefully designed by James for the novel structure from the prototype images of the garden, the ancient house, the moon and the ancient city of Rome.

James's other novels including his later works, novellas and short stories also gradually attract the attention of scholars. In "The Battle for Culture and Power in *Daisy Miller*" (2009), Chen Rong employs the concept of "field" used by French sociologist to describe the relationship between power and capital in social life, and focuses on analyzing the power relationship in the field of European and American expatriates in the story. This unique perspective deepens the understanding of James's international theme and cultural conflict. The theme of marriage of *The Golden Bowl*, the stylistic characteristics of *The Ambassador*, and the method of presenting character consciousness in *The Wings of the Dove* all begin to enter the field of research, effectively expanding the previous critical understanding of James's late works. As for James's short stories, Mao Liang innovatively analyzes James's two reading mode of readers in James's two short stories in "Ethical imagination of literary reading patterns: Henry James's "The Aspern Papers" and "The Figure in the Carpet" (2007). Mao draws the conclusion that when the reading public focuses not on the literary works itself, but on the personal life or the highly dramatic image of the writer, then literary reading will inevitably become the conspirator of market-oriented literary consumerism.

A distinctive diversity in the 21st century is reflected in the approach to James as the study of James becomes more in-depth. In "Choice Beyond Freedom—Interpretation of *The Portrait of a Lady* from Existentialism" (2016), Chen Ying shows that Isabel's marriage tragedy is actually a tragedy of his notion of freedom from the perspective of existentialism, particularly Sartre's existentialist view of freedom. In "Marcher's Construction of Homosexual Masculinities in *The Beast in the Jungle*" (2018), Zhang Xiaona and Chen Li bravely explore the protagonist's journey of self-discovery as a gay man, as well as his spiritual sorrow and inner struggle as a minority person in this process, using Cornell's theory of masculinity. In "The Visitor's Growth in the Travel: Study on Henry James's *The Ambassadors* from Journey Narrative" (2021), Cai Peishan argues that James blames the protagonist for his uncertainty regarding cultural stifling and the meaning of life. he not only discusses cultural conflicts and the question of moral values but also emphasizes the process of

self-growth in the work. It is clear that Henry James's academic work is moving ever-closer to the ideal principles of civilization and modernity.

2) Examination of James's theories

Except for the interpretation of James's novels, domestic scholars also pay some attention to the close relationship between James's literary works and his views on novel writing, taking James's contribution to the modern theory of British and American novels as the starting point to organize and distinguish his art of fiction. Chen Mingyao's "Innovation on Henry James's Artistic Technique" (1999) discusses James's role as a vital juncture in the course of British and American novels from tradition to modernness. In 2001, Shanghai Foreign Language Education Publishing House published *A History of Criticism of English Fiction* by Yin Qiping, Gao Fen and Tong Yanping, with one chapter discussing James's theoretical contribution and elaborating on core terms such as James's view on fiction and point of view. In 2005, Shen Dan, Han Jiaming, and Wang Liya together published *Narrative Theory of English and American Novels*, mainly introducing James's contribution to modern theories of British and American novels in the sixth chapter. Wang Liya analysis the relationship between the "dramatic" technique embodied in James's novel practice and the theory of modern British and American novels, highlighting James's important position as the founder of modern novel theory. In 2006, Dai Xiangmei published her book *Between Tradition and Modernness: Henry James's Theory of Fiction*. Dai elaborates in detail the process of how James makes a bold modern innovation on the basis of inheriting the traditional literary forms, fully showing the transformation process of western modern literature from the tradition to the modern present. This is the first monograph in China that interprets James's novel theory from the perspective of literary influence, representing a major progress of the domestic study of James's novel theory. In 2020, Chen Qiuhong published her monograph *A study on Poetics of Henry James*, exploring "Jamesian" through a review of James's drama creation and drama theory and analysis of his language, theme and his concepts of novel writing.

From the above, we can see that literary works and theories of novel writing are the longest and most prevalent direction of domestic studies of Henry James. Researchers mainly focus on the interpretation of James's works and examination of his literary

theories. James's theoretical innovation in creation has been the subject of extensive inquiry in the theory study of James, and it has shown to be highly fruitful. However, scholars are more concerned with the exploration of writing itself, that is, the innovation of creative techniques, while less concerned with the aspect of the reader and James as a critic. As a serious writer who does not seem to have solid support from his readers, James's relationship with the literary marketplace in his time and James's view on the reader have received insufficient attention. Incorporating James's literary theories into his works while considering the great influence of the market on James's writing technique and concept, comprehensively studying James as a writer, a reader and a critic in the context of the 19th century has remained to be a blank gap to a great extent, which is the driving force of my research.

1.2.2 Literature Review Abroad

James studies in western criticism basically keep the same pace with James's writing career since 1960s, which has been a history of almost 160 years. As a critic, literary theorist as well as one of the most important writers in English literature, Henry James has drawn the attention of an increasingly large amount of literary critics. Hocks says in his study of James criticism that "the criticism of Henry James has been among the most prolific in the academy, with its dizzying variety of approaches and counterapproaches as well as every hue of mixture in between, making the narrative of its history inevitably salutary" (Hocks 3). Literary works of Henry James are not recognized by the general public during the first forty years of his writing career in the 19th century because of his wordiness and psychological description, while he already gets his reputation as a master in literature owing to the affirmation of his famous contemporaries especially Eliot, Pound and Howells towards his artistic value and technique innovation. Until the turn of the 20th century, studies on James has become systematic through the efforts of academic critics. Through collection and collation of the research related to the theme, the James studies abroad mainly fall into the following four parts.

1) Examination of works

Studies on James's literary works starts when James publishes his first novel *Roderick Hudson* (1875). A bunch of literary criticism of James's works are about theme and characterization. "International theme" has always been the focus of James's works both during the early and last period of his writing career, in which he displays the sharp contrast between American innocence and European complexity. In *Henry James's American girl* published in 1984, Fowler gives us a full image of American girls facing totally different cultural and social codes between America and Europe. Shanna studies the international theme in five James novels: *The American*, *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), *The Ambassadors* (1903), *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904) in his book *The International Fiction of Henry James* (1979). In The "'Internationalism' of *The Golden Bowl*" (1956), Christof Wegelin discusses the canon of James's international novel and believes that this work is a symbolization of a union of America and Europe which could be achieved only when American purged itself of irresponsibility towards Europe.

Studies on James's work reaches a new climax as New Criticism gained popularity in the literary world because James happens to have the same view with those critics in terms of the organic structure of a literary text, which brings new concepts to interpret James's works. "Point of view" is one of the most discussed ideas. James discards the traditional omniscient point of view by restricting the plots from the characters' perspectives. Percy Lubbock codifies James's use of Strether's point of view in *The Ambassadors* as the most artistic way of "showing" a story. (61)

Entering the mid 1970s comes to a whole new stage of the Jamesian studies. A variety of postmodernist critical theories are employed in James studies such as psychoanalysis and feminism. At the same time, culture, race together with morals became the central topics. Fetterley analyzes James's *The Bostonians* in *The Resisting Reader* (1980) and takes the feminist approach to sharply reproach the fact that the patriarchal system disguises itself and takes effect through some socially accepted forms such as love and marriage. Apart from the methods mentioned above, other approaches like deconstruction, archetypal criticism, and cultural studies are also employed in the interpretation of James's works. From the late 1980s, critics have been rereading James's novels by stressing the power of society in the reconstruction of sex and gender identities. In *The Theoretical Dimensions of Henry James* (1984), Rowe examines James from the perspectives of the psychology of literary influence, feminism,

Marxism, psychoanalysis, literary phenomenology and impressionism, and reader-response criticism, transforming a literary monument into the telling point of intersection for modern critical theories. In *The Other Henry James* (1998), Rowe considers the writer's sexuality as a key point to explore the mysteries and the dark side of his later works. Martha Banta contends that "there is little or nothing in Henry James's mind that is not about social relations between women and men, and every issue is ultimately gendered" (Banta 21).

Entering the 21st century, criticism on James's works turns to a different direction to explore transgressive consciousness and text writing. In *Questioning the Master: Gender and Sexuality in Henry James's Writing* (2000), Peggy McCormack explains James's novel by putting forward that daring and radical representations of transgressive desires and marginalized sexual identities are contained in James's writing. By combining the techniques of textual criticism and the insights of close reading, Michael offers us new perspectives on two of Henry James's major novels *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Ambassadors* in *Generous mistakes : incidents of error in Henry James* (2017). In *Masculine Domination in Henry James's Novels* published in 2020, Schniedermann provides a systematic relational analysis into the specifically Jamesian method of narrating the socio-psychological, embodies responses to masculine power and oppression through close reading of three novels *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl*.

2) Literary theories

In "The Art of Fiction", James elaborates a set of relatively comprehensive literary theories when writing a literary work, which lays a solid foundation for modern literary criticism. Criticism on his literary theories started when Lubbock collected and systematically illustrated his artistic technique in 1957 and he became an unavoidable figure in famous narrative works. In *The Craft of Fiction*, Percy Lubbock, an English writer and critic also a friend of James, inherits and develops James's artistic technique. This book is considered as "the poetics of the novel based on Henry James's creating and theory practice" (Wellek and Warren 252), incorporating James's aesthetic thoughts about literary writing. Booth writes in his *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1983):

Lubbock's account is clearer and more systematic than James's. He gives us a neat and helpful scheme of relationships among the terms panorama, picture, drama, and scene. (24-25)

The Rhetoric of Fiction has been considered as a classic of western literary theory. It systematically and critically considers the prevailing views about novel writing and combed through the evolution process of literary techniques and theories, thus establishing a set of classic modern literary theory. Booth critically points out that the method of "showing" rather than "telling" that James and his follower Lubbock strongly advocates may be right, while it brings up more questions than it can answer. As for the view of authorial objectivity or impersonality that James appreciates adopted in Flaubert's novels, Booth gives his opinion from the perspective of morality that "though the author can to some extent choose his disguises, he can never choose to disappear" (20). E.M. Forster names seven elements vital to a novel, which are story, people, plot, fantasy, prophecy, pattern, and rhythm, discussing the creating technique especially James's writing pattern and pace in *Aspects of The Novel* (1985). In *The Art of Fiction* (1993), David Lodge explores James's point of view, narrative perspective, dramatization, mystery of grotesque, and the art of a ending for a novel, comprehensively analyzing James's art of writing in a simple and understandable way. In *Reading Narrative* (1998), Miller explores James's writing technique especially his organic theory, arguing that James "gives masterly expression to the demands made on the author of a literary text, or at least on one who shares James's commitment to the ideology of shapely or organic aesthetic form" (91).

In terms of James's literary creation, some researchers have noticed the relationship between his writing career and the marketplace. Marcia Jacobson probes into James's relation with the literary marketplace in his work *Henry James and the Mass Market* (1983) and focuses on elements of plot and character in James's works. Jacobson eventually draws the conclusion that the reason why Henry James adopts a totally indifferent attitude towards the popular opinion in his later years is because he is frustrated by the market and James actually has a high expectation from the market. Jacobson gives us a provocative survey of popular taste in this period. In Anesko's study *Friction with the Market : Henry James and the Profession of Authorship* published in 1986, he argues for the beneficial influence of market conditions on James's work. Anesko aims to show in the book how the friction James encountered in

his relations with publishers shapes his behavior as a professional writer with works to place and how the concerns engendered by such friction helps shape his work itself. Anesko observes that “the shape of his career parallels the transformation of literature’s status in the culture at large” (“Friction with the Market” 33). Jacobson and Anesko try to give an outside explanation for James’s writing career and attitude from the analysis of external marketplace and exterior circumstances, but they do not give us the ultimate and inherent reason for James’s disappointment about the market and the formation of his career.

3) James’s life, biography, correspondence

During the 20th century, an increasingly large amount of scholars emerged to give a panoramic collection and analysis of James’s life and letters, which become first-hand valuable information of James study and also laid the solid foundation for James being a unique master in the history of British and American literature. English writer and critic Percy Lubbock edits and publishes *The Letters of Henry James* (1920). P·R· Blackmore’s *The Art of the Novel* (1934) collects James’s New York prefaces. In 1951, the British biographer F·W·Dupee wrote a biography *Henry James*. The famous American James biographer Leon Edel edits and publishes a five-volume *The life of Henry James* (1977), *Selected Letters of Henry James* (1956), etc. F.O.Matthiessen published *Henry James: The Major Phase* in 1944, and *Henry James’s Notes* in 1947. *Henry James Encyclopedia* (1989) is a collection of James’s study by Robert L. Gale, a reference guidebook for a very convenient study of James, providing James studies with complete literature and reference more than ever in James research reviews and works. Kenneth Graham’s *Henry James: a Literary Life* (1995) gives a clear description of James’s life, literary creation and development of thought. In *Letters, Fictions, Lives: Henry James and William Dean Howells*, edited in 1997, Anesko gives a careful reading and analysis of 151 letters exploring between the two masters of James and William Dean Howells about literary criticism. Lyndall Gordon’s *A Private Life of Henry James: Two Women and His Art* (1999) tells the story of James’s cousin Millie Temple and Mrs. Constance Fenimore W. Woolson, a female friend of middle-aged James in Europe, which provide unique creative material to and have great influence on him exploring the description of intellectual ladies in his literary works. These letters and biographies provide detailed information on James research and establish James’s

position in the British and American literary world.

After entering the 21st century, more and more critics have stated and argue about James's secretive personal life, including his sexual orientation and his homosexual tendency. In 2000, John R. Bradley published *Henry James Forever Pubertal*, and comprehensively expounded James's personal dilemma—his narcissistic complex and the male desires shown in his work and their ambiguity. David Lodge's *Author, Author* and Colm Toibin's *The Master*, both published in 2004, “gave particular emphasis to the pathetic tableau of a bewildered author standing before the curtain after the 1895 premiere of ‘Guy Domville’ and finding himself the target of catcalls and jeers from a disappointed house” (Anesko “Mistakes” x). In *Henry James's Feminist Afterlives, Annie Fields, Emily Dickinson, Marguerite Duras* (2018), Wichelns approaches the thorny, much-debated question of Henry James's negotiations with his own period's ideas about gender, sexuality, class, nation, and literary style tangentially—through the responses of three women authors who have never substantively been examined in light of their relationships to James or his work.

Throughout the research of James at home and abroad, the focus is mainly on James's literary works, theories and James's life and biography and correspondence. Though we can see sporadic scrutiny about his views on the influence of the marketplace, it is necessary to explore James's innate motive, which needs a panoramic view of Henry James. A systematic exploration of James's authorship is greatly expected for a better understanding of James's contribution. Given the complexity and uniqueness of Henry James, there is plenty of room for new perspectives of James study such as James's authorship and James's “literary community” comprised of author, reader and critic, which comes to be my starting point and foothold of my thesis.

1.3 The Feasibility and Significance of This Thesis

From the literature review, it is clear that the majority of James studies at home and abroad has been and is still focusing on the interpretation and analysis of James's literary works through various perspectives and ever-emerging critical theories with a new era coming, in which a bunch of them discuss the characteristics of style and character based on James's literary theories. Despite the fact that domestic James

research has advanced significantly and demonstrated a trend toward depth and diversification, there are several issues that still need to be resolved. First, there are a lot of articles, however they are dispersed. The study of James is unbalanced because it focuses on the analysis of works and the analysis of novel techniques, with a great deal of similar selections and repetitive studies. Second, there is a general lack of thought in the grand scheme of things, and there are few publications that discuss James in the context of a community and his contribution to literature. The previous studies are indispensable, of course, for us to have a better understanding of James and his work, nevertheless, there is a crucial aspect of James that has long been neglected, i.e. James's authorship.

What I call "authorship" is not only about James as a writer, but also about a comprehensive system of James as a writer, a reader and a critic, which includes James's literary theories, the author-reader relationship, and James's view on criticism. James has his own set of artistic ideals and theories of writing literary works, while paying attention to what readers can get from them and how critics can promote the above two processes, thus forming the system of "literary community." This community is built between the writer, the reader and the critic. It is James's pluralistic authorship that has shaped his comprehensive thinking about literary community. And it is because James has always kept this community in mind and put it into practice that has contributed enormously to his success today. By combining James's literary theories, James's understanding of criticism, James's social context, particularly the marketplace in the 19th century, and the incorporation of James's related texts, I hope to explore this community and foster deeper reflection on the roles of writer, reader, and critic in today's society.

Chapter Two

HENRY JAMES AS A WRITER

Martin Day writes that “James is the greatest master certainly in the American novel, and possibly in the English language, of the art of fiction” (185). Leavis also speaks highly of James: “what achievement in the art of fiction—fiction as a completely serious art addressed to the adult mind—can we point to in English as surpassing his?” (172). As a novelist, why James is so highly regarded?

Since its emergence as a new literary form in the first half of the eighteenth century, the English novel has been loved by readers and critics alike. For a long time, however, English novelists do not explore the art of the novel, and the novel as a literary form could not be compared with poetry and drama, which, in the eyes of the public and novelists, belong to the refined arts, while the novel belongs to the vulgar arts.

James believes that the literary genre of fiction has historically been treated with disrespect and underestimated. Instead of viewing fiction as merely a means of spreading morality and amusing readers, a novelist should approach the process of writing fiction as a sacred endeavor, confront literary production with seriousness, and approach fiction as an art form. “It must take itself seriously for the public to take it so” (James “The Fiction of the Novel” 377). On this issue, James is very serious and persistent. Confronted with the fact that the English writer Antony Trollope has told his readers in his novels that “the events he narrates have not really happened,” and that “he can give his narrative any turn the reader may like best,” James considers this behavior as “a betrayal of a sacred office” and “a terrible crime” (“The Fiction of the Novel” 378). James affirms and inherits George Eliot’s profound insight into human nature, but also criticizes Eliot’s novels for overly long narratives and overly tedious descriptions of local flavor that weaken the tragic nature of the work’s themes and the amount of reminiscence and reporting that hinders the development of the storyline (James “George Eliot” 205). In addition to the heavy detail, James also says Eliot’s novel lacks an artistic aesthetic, which is James’s criticism and complaint about the English novel as a whole.

In James's age of time, when the novel was facing overcrowding and vulgarity, James firmly believes that "this injure is only superficial" and that "eloquent voice... [should be] raised to call attention to the fact that it is at once as free and as serious a branch of literature as any other" ("The Fiction of the Novel" 383). James developed his own theory of the novel and set standards for the profession, thus truly establishing the novel as a unique narrative art. James's seriousness and dedication to the novel enabled him to move beyond the confines of Victorian English fiction and to stand at the forefront of modern fiction. Dai Xianmei expresses similar opinion as James. She believes that the perpetrators of any activity or act that is to have an impact on the public must themselves first meet this high standard in social reform activities, as is the case with the development of the art of fiction when it comes to readers' reading expectations (Dai "Literary Theory of Henry James" 94). Novelists should take their profession seriously, and in the face of life, novelists should be fully free to pick and choose the materials they need to create the perfect artistic image.

It should be especially noted that James never puts himself in the position of the novel's creator, whether in terms of artistic ideals or novelistic theory, but takes into consideration the whole artistic community. In particular, James takes it upon himself to develop the taste of the reader and sees the future of the novel as the ultimate goal. James believes that the writer should think ahead and higher than the reader. As James says, "there is no real health for any art...that does not move a step in advance of its farthest follower" (Dole xx). In this chapter, I will introduce James's ideal of fiction, which is rooted in the tradition of life and truth, compared with "art for art's sake." I will further discuss James's two important theories, including "psychological reality" that combines tradition and modernity, as well as the strict requirements of the fictional organism as aesthetic consciousness, which is the unity of content and form. In this way, we can gain a better understanding the creation of the novel as James sees it and his efforts to make the novel a fine art.

2.1 James's Artistic Ideal

Beginning with Plato, and with the controversy between poetry and philosophy, the question of the social function of literature has been the subject of endless debate among literary scholars. By the late nineteenth century, the confrontation between

literary concepts is reflected in two distinct trends of thought: aestheticism and naturalism. The aestheticists are hedonists who believe that life imitates art by instinct, rather than art imitating life. Naturalism, on the other hand, takes truthfulness as the starting point of literary creation and believes that the highest character of a novelist is not imagination but truthfulness, that is, the truthful representation of nature. If the idea of “art for art’s sake” not only severs the connection between art and social life, but also denies the function of literature, then naturalism takes authenticity as the only criterion for measuring literary works. The result is that art and life are confused. Although aestheticism intends to resist the commodification of art, and naturalism helps to eliminate the subjective style of Romanticism, they are two extreme genres of literature. The former turns literature into a falsehood, and the latter treats literature as a mere record of social life. Neither helps us figure out the truth of literature.

James’s creative philosophy is undoubtedly influenced by realism and naturalism, believing that “[a] novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life” and that “[t]he only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life” (“The Fiction of the Novel” 384, 378). Facing the hypocritical morality, commodified literature, and unreliable moral ideal of perfection in real life, Wilde defends his artistic conscience by “art for art’s sake.” While James rose to the challenge and blazed a new trail between art and morality, thus bringing new vigor and vitality into literary creation.

2.1.1 Art for art’s sake?

Since Plato expels poetry from Utopian and accuses poets of failing to provide people with truth, western poets have written a series of articles defending the truthfulness of poetry over a long period of time by trying to explain the positive social function of poetry or art. For a long time, critics generally believe in Horace’s theory of “education for pleasure” and regard literary edification as the poet’s primary purpose, while Shelley raises the poet to a higher level than all others, arguing that “poetry is the unacknowledged legislator.” On the other hand, there are critics who argue exactly the opposite, emphasizing that poetry has nothing to do with truth and morality.

The germ of “art for art’s sake” can be seen in Edgar Allan Poe, who, unlike his transcendentalist contemporaries at the time, was firmly opposed to the teaching of truth or moral lessons in poetry and attacked “the heresy of didactic poetry.” He writes:

There is no nobler and more sublime work under the sun than such a poem—I mean the poem itself, which is a poem and nothing else—a poem written entirely for the sake of poetry. (Poe 901)

Edgar Allan Poe’s “poetry for poetry’s sake” is the precursor of aestheticism. It can be traced back to the aesthetics of Kant and even to the thought of Plato in the eighteenth century.

In the mid- to late-nineteenth century, the aesthetic movement is inherited by Wilde, culminating in “art for art’s sake.” The Aesthetic movement, which upholds the autonomy of art and asserts that literary creation has its own value and is unconstrained by politics, social necessities, or educational goals, goes by the phrase “art for art’s sake.” Artists and writers declare that art should not serve any purpose, including the expression of any idea, and reject all theories that view art as a didactic or reforming tool (Zhao 189). In contrast to the social cult of merit and power of the time, the ideal of this movement is the cult of beauty. If Pater is more or less veiled in his hedonistic view of art, Wilde is adamant in his core viewpoint of aestheticism, firmly cutting the connection between art and actual life and placing art and morals in a position of irrelevance. In the preface of his masterpiece of aestheticism, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, he writes:

There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. There are books that are well written or badly written. That is all. (Wilde xxiiv)

In other words, poetry cannot provide truth, and the poet is the manufacturer of falsehoods and lies. In “The Decay of Lying,” Wilde argues that the tedium and mediocrity of modern art is due to the decline of the lie as an art, and that the revitalization of modern art requires a change in the cult of truth and the cultivation of the lost art of lying. Wilde elaborates four principles of his “new aesthetics.” The first doctrine denies the object of what art expresses and believes that art is independent and only expresses itself. Second, Wilde disapproves of the aim of art pursuing life and

nature, which he thinks is the root cause of all bad art. In his opinion, “the only beautiful things are the things do not concern us” and “realism is a complete failure” (Wilde “The Decay of Lying” 18). The third one is about the relationship between life and art. He believes the one that is imitated is not life but art, which is obviously very different from our traditional theory of imitation. Finally, Wilde says that “the telling of beautiful but untrue stories is the true purpose of art” (“The Decay of Lying” 19). It is clear that Wilde is an unwavering supporter and defender of the idea of “art for art’s sake.”

The essence of aestheticism is the rebellion against the theory of realism, which emphasizes the form of art and the transcendence of art over reality, life and ethics. Wilde becomes the leader of the aestheticist movement in the second half of the 19th century, advocating “art for art’s sake,” which is closely related to the social reality of the Victorian period at that time. We already know that the Victorian period in England in the mid-to-late nineteenth century was a period of rapid wealth growth, economic prosperity, and a huge gap between the rich and the poor, when the bourgeois political status is established and the dominant ideology of society changes from one of sensuality, imagination, and freedom to one that espoused modern bourgeois moral values such as scientism, rationalism, and utilitarianism. The bourgeoisie lives an extravagant, corrupt and degenerate life by its nature of greed, gaining profits and satisfying desires, while on the surface it propagates a noble, decent and serious moral creed. Art is reduced to a tool of moral indoctrination, defending false moral tenets and the ugly face of the bourgeoisie. In other words, during the Victorian period of moral degradation, when art was stifled by imagination and creativity, as well as its own aesthetic qualities, Wilde chooses to abandon the connection between art and morality and reality, and opts for “pure art.” In his aesthetic work *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, although we cannot say that this work is completely free of moral tendencies, it is indisputable that Wilde expresses the ultimate failure of the real life and the ultimate eternity of art.

Underneath the hypocrisy of reality there is an aversion to reality, an aversion to life, or an escape from reality and life. Wilde regards the material of life as an impurity that art must remove. Aestheticism itself is a rebellion against realism, essentially an attack on a morally degraded society, but it chooses to take life and morality out of

literature, which means that Wilde's artistic ideal is to pursue artistic beauty. At a time when the artist and the social environment cannot be reconciled, "art for art's sake" is actually a self-defense of artistic identity, as well as a refuge from a hypocritical society and despicable human nature. On the other hand, in the practice of art itself, pure art is usually only an illusion, causing art to become water without source and wood without foundation (Zhao 193). It also brought irreconcilable contradictions, that is, the preservation of artistic independence turned into a lack of freedom in the choice of subject matter, a biased and apolitical tendency, etc (Zhao 194). As a contemporary of Wilde who faces the same social environment, James adopts a totally different view. When aestheticism advocates the opposition between art and life, James sees art as the fruit of life. He believes that the only reason a novel exists is because it tries to represent life. Nietzsche also refutes the idea of art for art's sake:

The struggle against purpose in art is always the struggle against the moralizing tendency in art, against its subordination to morality.... Once you exclude the purposes of sermonizing and improving people from art, it does not follow even remotely that art is totally purposeless, aimless, senseless, in short, art for art's sake—a worm swallowing its own tail. (204)

2.1.2 Art for life's sake

Against the background of the debate on the social function of art, we can see that the essence of the debate is actually the entanglement of aesthetics and morality, imagination and truth. Wilde's aestheticism expresses that the value of art lies in capturing the beauty of the moment, while it is futile to explore its ideological and moral significance. Moreover, art should be independent of real life and a sacred place where imagination runs wild. Realism, however, advocate that art express reality and convey morality.

As a contemporary of Wilde in the Victorian era, James is dissatisfied with how realist novelists approach novel writing, mainly for their caring too much about readers' preference. James's notes and reviews on English and French writers provide revealing evidence. Take Walter Scott, Dickens and George Sand for example, James writes that they "care...supremely, for their fable, for its twists and turns and surprises, for the work

they have in hand of amusing the reader” (“Ivan Turgenieff” 216-217). Realists are generally “dogmatic optimist” due to the need to please their readers (“Ivan Turgenieff” 251). And this optimism makes them inevitably conservative, or rather, reflects the essence of their own conservatism. In this regard, James expresses his dissatisfaction with George Eliot. Although she is superior to Dickens and Thackeray as a “thinker” because she possesses “the keenest observation and the most skilful thinking” (“George Eliot” 26), her novels have a tendency to give in to old traditions, the traditional happy ending. James accuses British fiction of this problem in general: “As for the aberrations of a shallow optimism, the ground (of English fiction especially) is strewn with their brittle particles as with broken glass” (“The Art of Fiction” 408). James believes that novelists are destined to forget their distinctive mission as novelists and become conservative optimists if they care too much about the demands of the times and society and adhere to the rules of old traditions.

Imagination and truth, aesthetics and morality, are two extremes, with one conveying enjoyment and the other preaching. The scales of beauty and truth seem to be difficult to balance and can easily tilt to one side. How does James view and solve this century-old dilemma? James’s answer for this question is art for life’s sake: “the only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to present life” (“The Art of Fiction” 378). He cautions young novelists not to “think too much about optimism and pessimism” but to “try to catch the true colour of life itself” (“The Art of Fiction” 408). Nietzsche, after refuting the idea of art for art’s sake, asks a direct question about the meaning of art, that is, the purpose of art:

Is the artist’s most basic instinct bound up with art, or is it bound up much more intimately with life, which is the meaning of art? Isn’t it bound up with the desirability of life? (204)

The word “life” is not an unfamiliar word in the world of literature, and we all know that art comes from life, which shows the importance of life in art. It is only life itself that is equated with reality. In James’s view, art expresses the reality of life, but reality is not the expression of life itself in minute detail, but the atmosphere of reality, emphasizing that art can at best convey the air of reality. This illusion of reality is the combination of life and imagination, morality and aesthetic appreciation.

James seems to have found in Turgenev the anchor of his artistic ideal, and he identifies with and admires his rich, intense and grand imagination, and exclaims that his work “has mingled so much ideal beauty with so much unsparing reality” (“Ivan Turgenieff” 250). This is the art that James has been longing for, a fusion of aesthetics and morality. Realists with their beautiful dreams in heart often deny reality with disheartening irony in the face of the ignorance of the real world and the suffering of human beings, and then proceed to a happy ending with gusto. According to James, the novelist who has achieved the highest level of goodness should be a person who has purged himself of the habit of satire and sarcasm and embrace whatever life has to offer:

[W]e can neither forget it nor deny it nor dispense with it. We can welcome experience as it comes, and give it what it demands, in exchange for something which it is idle to pause to call much or little so long as it contributes to swell the volume of consciousness. In this there is mingled pain and delight...and seek to understand. (James “Ivan Turgenieff” 251)

James argues that an important question for a poet or novelist is “how does he feel about life?...[but it can be ultimately concluded as] what, in the last analysis, is his philosophy?” (“Ivan Turgenieff” 243). In other words, novelists need to feel life and express life, but the process of feeling and expressing life reflects the novelist’s philosophy of life, his understanding of the world, and the consciousness of the novelist’s mind, which is what James calls “the wisdom of the mind.” To have a wise eye for human nature and a deep understanding for human intelligence. James appreciates Turgenev’s “intellectual impulse toward universal appreciation” and his impartiality in putting into his works the insights of his observations of life (“Ivan Turgenieff” 216). Writers are responsible to apply the wisdom of their minds to extract the essence of life and pass it on to the reader through the creation of serious art, through which life can be touched and felt by the audience. Chances are this kind of communication is not likely to take place in a fun and entertaining way. “Very readable novels have been written without imagination” (James “Gorge Eliot” 38). It demands seriousness and imagination. Therefore, James’s understanding and requirement for art is to express life that transcends the shackles of social traditions and external constraints, that regardless of optimism or pessimism. All they should do is to face and deal with life with a free mind and express it with condensed wisdom.

2.2 James's Theory of Literary Creation

James regards the representation of life as an artistic ideal and proposes a series of techniques and literary concepts for creating novels in order to better represent life. It follows that it is Henry James who established the concept of considering novel as unique narrative art, and novel theory a serious system. The issue of narrative technique in fiction is largely in limbo before James. His theories are born out of the socio-historical context in which he lives and emerges and develops in his novel writing practice. As a modernist writer, he is brave enough to rise above the confines of tradition to explore and improve the art of fiction, to achieve the inheritance and transcendence of tradition. The greatness of James lies exactly in the inextricable connection between his “tradition” and “modernness.” Tradition is reflected in James’s emphasis on the rigorousness of morality in his work and his emphasis on life from beginning to the very end. While modernness is reflected in James’s concern with consciousness, his depiction of the uncertainty of reality, and his liberation of traditional narrative from plot decisions. James believes in the organic whole and systematic nature of novel theory, transforming amusing and educating novels to serious artistic creation. James is a legitimate pioneer of modern novel.

2.2.1 The unity of tradition and modernity

To some extent, James’s emphasis on imagination and life makes his works deeply rooted in romanticism and realism, but showing a clear modernity in the meantime. Art reflect truth and reality. But truth and reality in literature does not mean an accurate record of the details of life, which are devoid of emotion, imagination and artistry and are not able to deliver and reflect human nature. The crazy fantasies and twisted stories of romanticism and detailed description of realism are no object of attention in James’s novels. Instead, James resorts to the inner minds of his characters. James does not describe the external behavioral activities of people, but starts from the psychological activities. James comes to realize that background details are not in the slightest helpful for people’s insights into human social nature, while the spiritual life of the characters could reveal their vivid souls, better present the contradictions between themselves and the outside world. It can reflect the real situation of social life so as to explore how an insightful and observant person with a high sense of responsibility makes his own

observations and thoughts on the external reality. It is important to note that James's novels are also called "psychological realist" novels precisely because of his focus on the psychological reality of the characters. The purpose of James's novels is also different from that of traditional realist novelists:

Unlike his predecessors he does not ask, how does one get ahead in his life? He demands, what is the actual experience of living? (Day 185)

Because of James's focus on the lived experience rather than the material plane, many of James's protagonists are women who do not have "economic pressures omnipresent with realistic novelists" and "less likely to be wholly wrapped up in money-making than men" (Day 185), which is a major experimental feature of James's novels. In order to achieve psychological reality, James proposes and uses a series of novel writing techniques, including "center of consciousness" and "dramatic representation," which are fully demonstrations of James's modernness.

Firstly, James proposes the "center of consciousness" as the narrative perspective of his works. The center of consciousness narrative means that the narrator of the story is no longer the omniscient third-person narrator or the first-person protagonist "I", but to have one of the characters in the work act as narrator. Central consciousness is chosen as the point of view, through which the narrator can observe the surrounding environment, characters, events and inner feelings, as well as psychological changes and revelations of each character around them. A story relies on the narrator's limited information and ideas to keep moving forward. This technique is applied in James's novels from early stage. There are large sections of Isabel's psychological feelings in *The Portrait of a Lady*. The entire story of *Daisy Miller* is based upon Winterbourne's feelings and reflections on the people around her. The growth of the young protagonist Maisie in *What Maisie Knew* proceed with her consciousness from disbelief in dealing with the dirty world of adults to his familiarity with the rules of the game. The novel's narrative is filtered through the protagonist's inner thoughts and consciousness to highlight the importance of the novel's characters. James's novel moves from traditional storytelling to modern character novels, which also implies a great deal of psychological description in the work. While this objective presentation avoids authorial intervention, it also tends to confuse the reader and create an ambiguous impression of the novel. That is part of the reason way the average reader often turns

away from James:

The arena of conflict has shifted from outside events to the inner life. Readers of James constantly complained that almost nothing 'happened' in his fiction. (Day 186)

James has always been adamant that authors should be intellectually minded in their creations and that readers can gain an understanding of the world from an intellectual text. For readers who prefer light-hearted and easy entertainment, James is definitely not an ideal writer.

The second manifestation of James's modernness is the progression of dramatic representation of character consciousness. James actively learns from the art of drama to dramatize the thoughts and consciousness of the central characters. James advocates showing rather than telling. Compared with telling, James prefers his works being presented in a theater to show the scene. The advantage of doing so is that the audience can visually, directly, and realistically see the actors on stage to act out the story again. Traditional storytellers tend to employ the trick of "going beneath the surface of the action to obtain a reliable view of a character's mind and heart" (Booth 3). In dramatic representation, Lubbock argues, the novelist no longer tells the reader what is going on there, but uses the manners and behaviour of the mind as the instrument by which the story is expressed. In a stage play, a character must independently assume the role he plays. If he is to play a desperate character with sinful thoughts, he cannot expect the author to appear beside the stage and tell the audience the truth. He must bring it out by himself through his own words and actions, looks and expressions (112).

The practice of dramatic techniques in James's works is inseparable from his presentation of the inner world of the characters, which complement each other. With the characters' consciousness being the center of the novel, the third person "centre of consciousness" explicitly assumes the role of narrator and serves the purpose of showing. The reader sees the characters directly through the eyes, and the characters and the plot of the story come alive on the page, while the author stays out of the way. The reader, like watching a theatrical performance, feels and judges the characters directly through their inner world. The characters' emotions, the writer's consciousness and the reader's experience are interwoven.

The traditional and modern nature of James's artistic theory is reflected in that he demands novels be based on life on the one hand, but emphasizes the unreliability of life on the other hand (Dai, "Literary Theory of Henry James" 19). James moves from a focus on character rather than plot to assigning a limited perspective to the central character and presenting it as a dramatic performance, which both facilitates the illusion of life and turns readers into active participants. They unconsciously participate in the creation of this form and illusion. At the same time, we can find that the consciousness of the protagonists of James's novels usually reaches an epiphany after experiencing the frustrations and sufferings of life. Isabel in *The Portrait of a Lady* chooses to return to the family full of lies after being deceived. Catherine in *Washington Square* chooses not to accept a new person and die alone after being disappointed by both family affection and love from her significant other. Tina in *The Aspen Papers* burns the manuscript after realizing the reality. There is no earth-shaking ups and downs, no earth-shattering love, no blind optimism of finally meeting the right man and living a happy life, but only a sense of responsibility to her family and herself in front of the reality she must face up to. Although the emotions are in a mess, reason still functions well enough to reach the epiphany at the critical moment under confused thoughts. Following the growth of the characters' consciousness in the novel, the reader seems to develop a keen awareness along with the characters in the process of facing the frustrations and pains of life (Dai "Transgression" 28). James makes much effort to connect writer and reader through the inner characterization of his characters, making it easier for readers to approach the most vulnerable and real side of human nature. As a result, readers tend to have an immersive reading experience and become self-reflective, thus gaining a better perspective on the world. This is exactly what James pursues and explores in order to "learn to will and seek to understand" ("Ivan Turgenieff" 251).

James believes that life is the root of artistic creation. Rooted in the real world without being constrained by it, he emphasises imagination, observation and the importance of the writer's subjective initiative, which keeps him grounded in the Romantic tradition. James's protagonists are masters of their own emotions, always seeking freedom and experience with an independent will and a noble consciousness at great cost. James seeks to correct the deep spiritual crisis with a rigorous artistic form, and in the end he became a pioneer of modernism.

2.2.2 The unity of content and form

The relationship between content and form is topic that James has constantly focused on since the early days of his creation career. The artist form has not been considered as crucial in the history of novel creation, while James attached much importance to it. For one thing, the exploration and development of artistic form is an integral part for novel to be treated as serious art; for another, artistic form must be given priority for novel to present life and to achieve the goal of art for art's sake. According to Li Weiping, the relationship between form and content is essentially the relationship between art and life (78). Art, as a vehicle for expressing life, is the raw material for artistic creation, and the processing of this raw material requires the support of form, and it is this processing of life that reveals meaning and vitality in front of art.

It is universally acknowledged that a theme is contained in a story, and a novel tells a story. What James cannot agree is some so-called standards people set for a story. James believes that no one, even a genius, can invent a rule as a basis for distinguishing whether an event is a story or not. In response, James defended his novel *The Portrait of a Lady*: why is a hero's adventure a story, but a beautiful young lady's rejection of a duke for psychological reasons not? For James, the novel deals with all the bits and pieces of life, and encompasses all experience of life, including the miserable things, the unpleasant things, and the ugly things in life. Any attempt to dictate and frame its content undermines its freedom, so much so that this restriction might "bring it down from its large, free character of an immense and exquisite correspondence with life" (James "The Art of Fiction" 402). James believes that the selection of life for art should be typical and inclusive, rather than the selection of "picking a bouquet for Mrs. Grundy" ("The Art of Fiction" 398). For James, the description of the mind and the full expression of the state of mind is a vivid and desirable thing.

The selection of content void of freedom often renders the novel caught in the conformist structure, trapped in narrowness of theme, or the mechanical imitation of reality without any imagination, which is not in the slightest the embodiment of life. In James's view, traditional novelists are in trouble because they fail to deal with the relationship between art and life. People often forget the close connection between experience and art, and instead subconsciously equate fiction as the products of

artificial and ingenious thing:

Many people speak of it as a factitious, artificial form, a product of ingenuity, the business of which is to alter and arrange the things that surround us, to translate them into conventional, traditional moulds. This, however, is a view of the matter which carries us hut a very short way, condemns the art to an eternal repetition of a few familiar clichés, cuts short its development, and leads us straight up to a dead wall. (James “The Art of Fiction” 397-398)

Their characters, events, and endings are negatively unbelievable and their effort to make the story fictional is obvious. Those works are mostly the result of the author’s imagination out of thin air and intention of going all the way to please the reader. They are mere substitute for life, displaying usual conventions. In contrast to the rearrangement of life that traditional writers hold sacred, James believes that reality lies in the unstructured life, capturing only life as it is, its strange, irregular rhythm. In the face of the chaos and complexity of life, the experience and wisdom in the minds of novelists are very important. They should distinguish the truth of art from the truth of life, and avoid randomly injecting people and things in life into novels.

The deepening of his literary practice makes James aware of the importance of artistic form in expressing his themes, and the failure of his attempts to create drama in the middle of his career prompts James to constantly innovate his artistic form techniques. James raises the importance of the artistic form of the novel to an unprecedented level, pursuing the organic unity of form and content. In “The Art of the Fiction,” James clearly states:

Story and novel, content and form, are equal to needle and thread, and I have never yet heard of a gang of seamstresses who would even suggest using only thread instead of needle, or only needle instead of thread. (400)

James’s equation of the importance of content and form implies a complete blending of art and life, without distinction. Lubbock articulates a similar view on this issue. He believes that the best form is that which brings out the subject of the work to its fullest—there is no other definition of what is meant by the form of a novel. A well-written work is one in which theme and form are in harmony and indistinguishable—a work in which the theme is given full play by virtue of the form, and the form brings out the whole theme (Lubbock 29). James believes that the novel is

essentially a product of consciousness, which itself is indivisible, and therefore the novel itself is an organic whole, an embodiment of life itself. He rejects the separation of form from content and the simplistic division of genres. James says that “the only classification of the novel that I can understand is into that which has life and that which has it not,” and any effort trying to set standards for separating novels as “the romance, the novel of incident and that of character” is meaningless (“The Art of the Fiction” 393). Otherwise, the novel falls into a pattern of conformity.

James’s quest for the unity of form and content is intertwined with the innovation of his novel-writing techniques. The novelist needs to choose the best form for a novel to reflect life and express its illusions. James put the goal into the expression of the spiritual world of the characters, the human experience and perceptions in life. The way to achieve this goal is to dilute the storyline to reflect life through center of consciousness, dramatization, impersonal narrative and other techniques to get a glimpse of the characters’ observations, impressions and perceptions. The novel’s authenticity is enhanced by reflecting life through the characters’ observations, impressions, and perceptions.

In the final analysis, be it James’s emphasis on the consistency of form and content or his innovation of artistic methods beyond tradition, they are all an attempt to make art better represent life, and James’s artistic ideals were always carried out in it. In the long process of exploration, James always focuses on how to use the wisdom and experience of the artist’s mind to express the illusion of life, a process that not only demand of the writer that he should not pursue the ups and downs of the plot, write for the entertainment of the reader, nor should he be obsessed with expressing the superficial reality of life to the neglect of the artistic reality. From our vantage point, these can be considered as James’s efforts to “retain control over artistic standards” so that “art would not be reduced to a commodity” (Adamson 32). At the same time, James also put forward his requirements as a reader. While the writer affects the reader, i.e., the audience of the creator, the reader also reacts to the author. James believes that only when writers and readers work together, the literary market can develop for the better.

Chapter Three

HENRY JAMES AS A READER

As a novelist, James is well aware that fiction as an art was being downgraded, and he continues to innovate his fictional techniques, creating “the illusion of life” for the sake of art. However, James does not stop at focusing on the development of the novel itself and how novelists value the creation of novels as art, but extends his writing to an important aspect related to novels, namely, the audience of novels: the readers. The creation of a novel is a kind of art, so the reading of the created novel is the appreciation of art. This appreciation is not a unilateral choice of the reader’s reading needs and tastes, but rather the future of the novel as a whole. This is why the exploration of James as a reader is so important for consisting a part of the literary community. James has written a series of “stories of writers” which we can explore James’s expectations from writers as a reader and the relationship between the writer and the reader.

The focus of this chapter is to examine James’s ideal readership as a reader through the lens of the nineteenth-century English and American literary market. The nineteenth century is a time of proliferation of novels and readers, and the dramatic increase in quantity brings with it a mixed bag of quality, both in terms of novels and readers. If the majority of readers are lowbrow, then the general preference of readers is likely to lead novels into a dead end and become victims of commercialization. The “irreflective and uncritical” reader will then accelerate “the demoralization [and] the vulgarisation of literature in general” (Dole xiv). In this context, James describes the ideal writer as a reader in his mind, referring to the real readers of the nineteenth century, and argues that James as a reader expects proper guidance from the writers. Readers should be thoughtful and prudent, but they should not be ambiguous and follow the trend.

3.1 The Literary Marketplace in the 19th Century

The Anglo-American literary market of the second half of the nineteenth century

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