

Abstract

Henry James on Ethical Questions within the Process of Globalization

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This dissertation examines the text of an American writer, Henry James (1843-1916), focusing on new ethical attitudes and the human condition during the expansion of globalization and the development of a new world order in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Henry James lived as an expatriate in England at a time when the United States was growing into a hegemonic power after unprecedented industrial and economic development during the postbellum era, while Europe, in particular Great Britain, was facing the decline of national power. His texts reflect a transition from the nineteenth-century Euro-centric world, which was based on colonialist maneuvering and a nation-state system, to the rise of American imperialism and the emergence of a global world order. While James put himself in an unstable position as an expatriate, he also secured comparative freedom from the restrictions and demands of the state. From this standpoint, his writing touches upon a series of international themes, which treat the meeting of America and Europe. In these texts, we recognize a shift in the power balance between the Old and New Worlds and in people's behavior under such new and unsettling conditions.

The aim of this dissertation is to explore the new ethical attitudes that surfaced during the globalization represented in James's texts. Here, I regard globalization as a tendency that generates spatial and ideological unification through the amplified interrelation of geographically distant regions, which, as a result, accompanies drastic changes in people's behaviors and consciousness. In his texts, James depicts the ways in which people make ethical decisions under such new and unpredictable conditions. James's responses to these global changes are represented through his depiction of social and cultural issues, such as gender roles, societal mores, marriage, inheritance, and, most importantly, the ethical behaviors of his characters. In this study, I examine the ethical

attitudes portrayed in James's texts, in chronological order, referring to the geopolitical conditions of each period.

Chapter 1 examines the representation of women and the anti-normative relationship between women and men in one of James's early novels, *Roderick Hudson* (1875), in particular in relation to the discourse of national politics. I focus on women's desires, and, in particular their "uncanny" aspects, which enable a new kind of female-male relation that carries the potential to subvert the gender codes of nineteenth-century America.

Chapter 2 treats *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), one of James's representative novels from the middle period, and analyzes a male character's action toward the heroine in an economic context. By regarding his action as an investment, I examine the possibility of the liberation of women and men from the social codes which regulated the conduct of both sexes.

Chapter 3 investigates the representation of terrorism and democracy in *The Princess Casamassima* (1886). The anxiety about democracy in late-nineteenth-century Europe that James depicts in this text reveals the danger of this new political system and its problematic side concerning the exclusion of "others."

Chapter 4 explores the changes in material conditions and the emergence of new ethical possibility depicted in *The Spoils of Poynton* (1895). While this text explicates the demise of Victorian cultural ideals and the rise of consumerist capitalism at the end of the nineteenth century, in the heroin's conduct James presents the possibility of building new ethical values, which would not be subsumed by the monetary system.

Chapter 5 examines *The Ambassadors* (1903), written during James's Major Phase, focusing on the ethical dimension of the protagonist's attitudes in the globalizing world of the beginning of the twentieth century. The contrasting of two American characters from old and new generations in this text reveals the new kinds of ethical choices, or justice, that can be found in the globalizing world of the new century.

Chapter 6 considers James's war essays, written in 1914 and 1915 during the early period of World War I. While nationalistic discourses were widely circulated throughout Europe during wartime, James instead explores the possibility of transnational culture in these essays. I investigate the significance of his vindication of culture and art, which is proffered so forcefully, in spite of the political climate, in the last days of his life.