On the Henry James’s Imagination of the Chinese Culture: The Pagoda in *The Golden Bowl* as an Example

Zhihan Nan

Faculty of Liberal Arts, North West University, xi’an, China.
nanzhihan@stumail.nwu.edu.cn

**Abstract.** The United States of America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was a period in which the American nation constructed its own cultural subjectivity. As an important figure in American culture, Henry James created a series of works that focused on the tradition and development of American culture in this process and then played an important role. As a cultural scholar with a global vision, James not only looked at the cultural reality of the United States and Europe, but also did not forget to turn back to the Far East to take a look. His unique and deeply meaningful Oriental imagination is an important reference for us to interpret James's humanistic and cultural outlook. James's cultural attitude toward China in the late 19th century American literature is somewhat unique. He implied his own unique understanding of the oriental culture in his works, as he expressed suspicion, curiosity, and most of all, caution, which reflects James's rigorous cultural concepts and his cosmopolitan cultural thoughts. Because of James's own important position in American cultural history, his attitude is helpful for us to analyze the image of China in American literature and understand American culture at the end of the nineteenth century, as well as the history of cultural exchanges between China and the United States.

**Keywords:** Henry James, Chinese Imagination, Cosmopolitan Cultural Perspective.

1. Introduction

Henry James (1843-1916) is a renowned literary figure in the history of American literature and is considered the greatest American novelist of the 19th century after Hawthorne and Melville. As a writer and theorist, James actually exerted a major influence in the development of literary movements, including the "psychoanalytic" novel and the stream-of-consciousness writing of the 20th century. He inherited the tradition of English and French realist novels and initiated the European and American modern novel genres. Such a master of profound thought and rich writing has always been the focus of literary criticism. Since the early discovery and interpretation of James's works by William Dean Howells, James studies at home and abroad have continued for more than a hundred years, with many famous authors and rich writings. Among them, the study of James and his works from a cultural perspective is one of the key areas of research, and the relevant foreign research has focused mainly on the multi-dimensional commentaries on James placed on the cultural scene by critics before and after 1984, with representative figures such as Mark Seltzler(*Henry James and the Art of Power*, 1984) and John Carlos Rowe (*The Theoretical Dimension of Henry James*, 1984). Related studies in China have mainly focused on the two themes of examining James's cultural outlook in general and interpreting the cultural connotations in specific works, mostly exploring the European-American cultural conflicts and fusion view embodied in James's works. All in all, the study of James and his works from a cultural perspective has always been the focus of James studies. On the one hand, it is because of his unique cultural outlook and the large number of "international themes" in his works; on the other hand, against the background of globalization, the integration of cultures and conflicts have gradually become the focus of attention in the academic world. Although there have been fruitful results in the field of culture, there are few studies on the Oriental sub-theme in James's writings.

In fact, the works of Henry James contain many references to the Orient, especially China, which can be collectively referred to as the "Chinese Imagination," reflecting James's attitude toward China and Chinese culture. This attitude is not only influenced by the collective imagination of the Western world towards China in the same period, but is also inseparable from James's own cultural outlook.
and identity as a cultural cosmopolitan. The author intends to take the pagoda in Henry James' work *The Golden Bowl* as an example, taking into account some other works. It examines the Chinese imagery in James's writing, analyzes the artistic and cultural considerations behind the imagery, and at the same time explores the reasons behind James's attitude toward Chinese culture. It also comments on issues such as James's own cultural outlook and identity as a cultural cosmopolitan.

2. James' Chinese Imagination and the Pagoda

In James's works, we can explore a variety of cultural themes, and China often appears as a representative of Eastern culture. However, unlike his contemporaries Emerson, Hawthorne, and other writers who also pay attention to China, James' familiarity with China and Chinese culture is far less than theirs. He has never set foot in China, nor has he ever systematically studied China, and such a writer, "detached" from China and its culture, repeatedly mentions China in many of his works. In fact, James's writings are mostly about China's imagination, which implies his understanding of Chinese culture; embedding elements of foreign cultures in his works is also an important attempt of his artistic practice. More importantly, by writing Chinese images, James implicitly expresses his own attitude toward China and Chinese culture. As one of the three late novels at the peak of James's literary life, *The Golden Bowl* marks the return of the Oriental element in James's work after the theme of writing about theater and artists in the 1890s[2].

*The Golden Bowl* tells the story of the love between Amerigo, a poor Italian prince, and Maggie, a young American woman, while the first Volume of this novel, “The Prince”, seems to be a typical Victorian continental novel, telling the story of an extramarital affair between a woman and the hero's fornication. Volume II, “The Princess”, however, completely breaks through traditional barriers and rebuilds a marriage on the brink of collapse, using Maggie’s long, complex, and convoluted thoughts as a guide. The two couples at the center of the story, Amerigo and Maggie, and Adam and Charlotte, are entangled in an extremely complex model. It is precisely because of the complexity of the work's content and ideology that scholars have studied it from different angles. From the perspective of the image of China alone, in addition to the Oriental Pagoda at the beginning of Volume II, Chapter four of Volume I also includes "Chinese Mats" and "Opium-Smoking Chinese."(标上页码) The pagoda is a key part of the princess's journey to self-knowledge, which is the theme of the entire second volume. The original text reads:

This situation had been occupying for months and months the very centre of the garden of her life, but it had reared itself there like some strange tall tower of ivory, or perhaps rather some wonderful beautiful but outlandish pagoda, a structure plated with hard bright porcelain, coloured and figured and adorned at the overhanging eaves with silver bells that tinkled ever so charmingly when stirred by chance airs. ...... but never quite making out as yet where she might have entered had she wished. ...... The thing might have been, by the distance at which it kept her, a Mahometan mosque, with which no base heretic could take a liberty. [2] (p.293-294)

James' description of the pagoda is extremely detailed, on the one hand to blur the line between consciousness and reality, as Ruth Bernard Yeazell, a professor in Yale University, mentions in her introduction to *The Golden Bowl*, “The pagoda is so well described that we almost forget that it doesn't really exist in the novel” (555). On the other hand, the pagoda itself has a real-life prototype. James writes that "some wonderful beautiful but outlandish pagoda" and that it might be "a Muslim mosque" all point to a specific pagoda, the "Nanjing Tao Pagoda" in the Dazhongnian Temple in Nanjing, China. The construction of the first temple of the Ashoka Pagoda, the Ming Dynasty Yongle Pagoda. The pagoda stands at a height of 178.2 meters, comprising nine floors and eight sides, with a circumference of over 100 meters. Its entire body is constructed from burnt glass, making it the world's first tower of this kind in China. The pagoda's primary structure is composed of brick, with glazed pieces affixed by mortise and tenon joints on both the interior and exterior surfaces. The tower's body is clad in white porcelain veneer, which James describes in his work as an ivory tower. [3] (p. 293), the pagoda is constructed with a gable under a hanging copper wind chime. This structure
is comprised of 152 layers, and even in the breeze, the crisp ringing sound can be heard for miles. This corresponds to James's reference to "silver bells that tinkled ever so charmingly when stirred by chance airs" [3] (p. 293). The tower room is square, with eaves, arches, flat sits, and railings decorated with multicolored glazed bricks with Buddha themes such as lions, white elephants, and flying goats. The size of the bricks and tiles used varies because of the passing of the layers. This is what James refers to as "coloured and figured and adorned at the overhanging eaves" [3] (p. 293). A comparative study of the imagery of the pagoda in The Golden Bowl reveals that the source is the glazed pagoda of the Temple of the Great Remembrance of God. The mysterious "ivory tower" draws on the cultural elements of the far eastern empire. The magnificent and fantastic pagoda and the ancient mysterious empire seem to have some kind of unspeakable connection, and this kind of architectural and figurative borrowing has deeper cultural connotations.

James's knowledge of the Genghis Khan came mainly from his friend Pierre Loti's Impressions (1898). Pierre Loti, the famous French travel writer and a close friend of James, recorded an oriental pagoda in his Impressions published in 1898, "A huge building remains, the shadows seem to move in the hearth, inside there are gilded walls, gilded roofs, vast churches and splendid chapels. It was one of the king's pagodas." [4] (p. 169) James wrote an “Introduction” to the book and described Lottie's Orient as "deceptive. (4)] (p. 17) Adeline R. Tintner, in her article "Henry James, the Orientalist" catalogs the influences of Oriental elements in James's creative journey, and makes clear that the Oriental elements in The Golden Bowl are very different from James's earlier works, and that Lottie's Oriental pagodas influenced James's work both in terms of their original imagery and their inner meanings. In addition, Lottie's 1887 travelogue, Propositions d'Exil (1887), also describes a pagoda in the middle of a jungle-like garden, there, the mosque and the pagoda coexist, and he is unable to enter the interior of the pagoda,[5] just as Maggie is unable to enter the interior of the pagoda in The Golden Bowl. The Dutch professional draftsman Johan Nieuhof visited China with a Dutch mission in 1656 to meet the Emperor Shunzhi of the Qing Dynasty.

3. The Art and Culture Behind James’s Chinese Imagination of Pagoda

One might inquire as to the rationale behind James's choice of the Chinese imagery of the "pagoda" in this instance. Additionally, it would be beneficial to ascertain the role that the pagoda imagery itself plays in the work. Upon returning to the text, it becomes evident that the author believes that James's writing of the pagoda is informed by both artistic and cultural considerations.

The magnificent and fantastic pagoda is an image that is rich in metaphorical meanings. This metaphorical significance can be observed in several aspects of the narrative. Firstly, the pagoda represents Maggie's challenging situation and psychological struggles. Secondly, it symbolizes the fog that has descended over her husband's relationship with Charlotte. Thirdly, the pagoda reflects Maggie's own complex and prolonged consciousness after she has come to terms with her situation. This kind of multiple use of metaphorical imagery is a common feature of James's later novels, including the "dove wings" in The Wings of the Dove, the gold-plated crystal bowl in The Golden Bowl, and the recurring phrase "the garden". Seymour Chatman posits that the purpose of James's extensive use of metaphor is to depict a state of mind that has been perceived but not yet conceptualized, which he refers to as "pre-cognitive" consciousness [8]. In the opening pages of the second volume of The Golden Bowl, the metaphor of the pagoda is employed to convey Maggie's nebulous, uncertain state of mind, in which she is vaguely aware of a crisis in her marriage and her ethical order, yet lacks a clear understanding or judgment of it. This state is preceded by a process of mental intuition that precedes thought and language, which Chatman refers to as "pre-cognitive" consciousness. As to the question why this metaphor is used at the beginning of Volume 2, Sharon Cameron posits that it is to demonstrate the protagonist's awareness of her marital status (). Maggie is a "naïve" young woman whose lack of experience in marriage and emotions makes her confused when confronted with the intimate relationship between her husband, Amerigo, and her stepmother, Charlotte. She is aware of this relationship, but her understanding of it is vague and her feelings about
it are similarly unclear. Consequently, she is unable to form a clear and certain judgment. Thus, she is alienated and detached from it, yet new and desirous of exploring it. This is James' purpose in setting up the pagoda: to reveal this complex inner consciousness of Maggie's and to describe the process of its transmutation.

James here reveals the complex and indistinguishable, contradictory and interconnected psychological reality within the individual prior to the emergence of the character's consciousness and desire. It is difficult to find a suitable way to express this complex psychological reality, but James accurately portrays it in a complicated and fantastic pagoda, which is a stroke of genius in James's artistic creation to put all the complex and unspeakable psychological states in a highly metaphorical language. Having grasped James's intention to employ the imagery of the pagoda, let us now return to the description of the pagoda in the work and examine James's artistic practice of translating the imagery into a description of the character's "pre-cognitive" state of mind. This is achieved through the pagoda itself. By analyzing the architectural form and aesthetic characteristics of the pagoda, it can be seen that James selected this image as the central focus of this section for one reason, the pagoda's own exotic colors and mysterious qualities point to the self-consciousness of Maggie and the theme of his work.

The exotic colours and mysterious qualities of the pagoda are reflected in both the cultural connotations behind the pagoda and the aesthetic colours of the pagoda itself. Firstly, James describes the pagoda as an exotic pagoda [3] (p.293) and states that the pagoda is no different from a mosque [3] (p.294), which suggests that the language used contains exotic cultural information and depicts an oriental pagoda with exotic colors. The Orient is perceived as a foreign and mysterious place by Maggie, who is situated in England and has been influenced by European and American cultures. This perception of strangeness and alienation can be attributed to the geographical distance between the East and West and the significant differences in cultural values. Whether it is Eastern culture or the crisis of marital ethics, Maggie finds these concepts unfamiliar and confusing, which is reflected in his perception of the pagoda as a symbol of the Orient. Concurrently, it is evident that the language utilized by James to describe the pagoda is markedly aesthetic, encompassing elements such as white ivory towers, intricate patterns, and silver bells adorning the cornices. Furthermore, he directly lauds it as magnificent and beautifully ornamented. The pagoda's beauty captivates Maggie to the extent that she is compelled to approach it in a step-by-step manner. She imagines herself as a pagan intruding upon a religious treasure and approaching the pagoda at the risk of losing her life. This illustrates that the mental images Maggie perceives have a fatal attraction for her. If the exotic colors behind the pagoda elicit a sense of strangeness and estrangement, prompting a feeling of fear, then the aesthetic colors of the pagoda itself arouse curiosity. The curious and fearful pagoda assists James in portraying Maggie’s inner consciousness transformation, and the pagoda's cultural connotations play a pivotal role in this process. This intertextual reference between artistic expression and cultural attitude will be discussed in greater detail later.

At this point, we can be certain that James has staged a brilliantly complex stage play for Maggie at the beginning of the second volume of The Golden Bowl, drawing on the elaborate and mysterious Oriental pagoda. In Self, Freedom and Ethical Life: A Study of Henry James, Mao Liang offers an analysis of the ethical connotations and moral ideals of The Golden Bowl. The author posits that these two cannot be found in external factors but can only be explored in the development and transmutation of the inner consciousness of the character of Maggie, which is the center of the book and the second volume. Furthermore, the author argues that all metaphorical imagery serves the object of Maggie's inner consciousness. Upon grasping this concept, one can comprehend James' artistic considerations in the use of pagoda imagery. If the enigmatic pagoda serves as a conduit for James to comprehend Maggie's intricate and protracted consciousness, which is a factor in his artistic output, then James's perception of the pagoda reflects his stance on cultural cognition. As previously stated, the prototype of the pagoda in question is the porcelain pagoda of the Great Annunciation Temple in China, which was widely circulated and held in high regard in Europe. One can find numerous historical sources and literary works that attest to this. Following the reading of Nieuhof's travels,
Louis XIV was so fascinated by the Chinese pagoda described in the book that he authorized the construction of the Porcelain Palace of Trianon in Versailles in 1670. [11] In 1839, Hans Christian Andersen wrote in *The Garden of Heaven*, "I (the east wind) have just come from China—I danced around the Porcelain Pagoda for a while, and made all the bells jingle and tinkle!" [12] The Porcelain Pagoda here is the pagoda in the Temple of the Great Annunciation. By defining the pagoda in *The Golden Bowl* as mysterious, intriguing, inaccessible, and even fearful, James is in fact implicitly expressing his own impression of the ancient empire in the East, and at the same time implicitly expressing his own attitudes toward China and Chinese culture—doubtfulness, curiosity, and fear. James's cultural attitude is readily discernible. It can be traced back to the Western world's collective imagination of China in James's time. It is also closely related to the writer's own cultural stance and the purpose of writing.

The portrayal of China in Western mainstream ideology and literature differs between the eighteenth century and nineteenth century. As the nineteenth century progressed, the attitudes of Europe and the United States towards China underwent a significant reversal. Religion, trade, and colonial invasion resulted in the gradual decline of China's ancient civilization, which was once renowned for its beauty and nobility. This deterioration was a consequence of the country's backwardness and ignorance, which were exposed to the world. Consequently, criticism of China became a powerful tool in the hands of the renowned American thinker Emerson, who championed Confucianism. However, despite his appreciation of Chinese thought and culture, Emerson's distaste for the Chinese empire remained. In his writings, the young Emerson repeatedly attacked China's perceived closeness, rigidity, and obscurantism. He was relentless in his criticism of the once-respected empire, stating that it "enjoys the reputation of being purely mummified, and has carefully preserved for three or four thousand years the ugliest features in the world." [14] This bias was even more pronounced in European thought, where the contrast between Europe and Asia became a prominent topic of discussion among intellectuals after the 19th century. Major European thinkers who could be considered the ideological leaders of their time saw China as a prime example of how an ancient civilization could adapt to the challenges of modernity. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel asserted that China was a primitive civilization, incapable of distinguishing between moral and legal categories [16]. John Stuart Mill cited China as a "cautionary example" of stagnation and lack of individuality in *On Liberty* [17]. Tor de Quincey viewed China as an irredeemably corrupt empire [18]. Nietzsche equated "Chineseness" with mediocrity and stagnation [19]. Such arguments were pervasive throughout European and American thought and directly influenced the portrayal of China in literature. In the nineteenth century, the prevailing attitude of European and American intellectual and literary circles toward China underwent a shift from admiration and affirmation to attack and denigration. Simultaneously, China was regarded as a kind of instrumental "Other" in order to represent the West itself, influenced by Western-centered thinking. In such a context, Henry James was inevitably influenced by the attitudes of contemporaneous thinkers and writers toward China, exhibiting skepticism and detachment. Nevertheless, James's own skepticism and alienation are evident, yet he refrains from a wholesale negation and criticism of China. A comparison of James's other works on China with those of other writers of the same period reveals a notable absence of the malicious attacks and denials that were common at the time. This suggests that James approached China and Chinese culture with a certain degree of caution.

4. Skepticism and Caution: James's Multiple Cultural Views

It is uncertain and cautious to suggest that James's attitude toward Chinese culture can be roughly outlined by two aspects. The reasons for this attitude are diverse and constrained by the collective imagination of the era in which he lived. Furthermore, they are inseparable from the ideological cognition and character traits of the main body of creativity. Before examining the underlying causes of James's cultural attitude, it is essential to recognize that James's cultural attitude is derived from his imaginative portrayal of China, which is starkly distinct from the reality of China and can be classified as a form of creative imagination. The content of James's image of China in *The Golden*
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dl is fictionalized, as evidenced by the fact that it does not align with the actual historical and cultural context of China.

It is important to note that James’s purpose in writing about China was not to gain a deeper understanding of the country or to engage in objective exploration. Instead, his aim was to serve his own artistic creation.

Firstly, James writes about China in order to confirm his "Self". In particular, in The Golden Bowl through writing about China and Chinese culture, James confirms Maggie’s cultural environment and her state of consciousness. The "mystery" of China corresponds to the fluidity and openness of American culture in Maggie, and serves James’s artistic practice of describing Maggie’s psychological state. James compares Chinese culture to the "Other" and then confirms the "Self." Spinoza posited a theorem:

"No individual thing, that is, any thing that is qualified and conditioned to exist, can exist or act under certain conditions unless there is a cause Other than itself that makes it conditioned to exist and act" [22] (p. 67).

This statement elucidates the interrelated relationship between "same" and "different." No individual thing can be determined by itself; rather, it is determined by the other, which is different from itself. This is a fundamental tenet of Spinoza's philosophy, which he calls "All determination is at the same time difference" [22] (p. 370). This perspective is further elucidated in Saussure's structuralist linguistics, where Saussure posits that a linguistic system is constituted by elements that are defined by their differences. Consequently, the initial step in differentiating one entity from another is to identify the distinctive feature that sets it apart from the Others. By applying Spinoza's philosophical concepts and Saussure's linguistic concepts to culture, the East and the West are a pair of subjects that naturally have a "Self and Other" relationship. In James's cultural context, the Self is the Western civilization, and the Other is the Eastern civilization. In The Golden Bowl, the "Other" is represented by the pagoda in the East, which serves to confirm the "Self" of Maggie and Maggie's state of consciousness. This use of writing to confirm the Self is even more evident in the short work The Europeans published in 1878.

The Europeans portrays a wealthy American gentleman who has traveled to China, Robert Acton, a wealthy, bold, and tasteful man who epitomizes the nineteenth-century American business success story. In the novel, Acton's experiences in China are blended into his image along with his collection of Chinese artifacts, and the Chinese element becomes the most effective symbol of this American gentleman's wealth and status. James writes about Acton's Chinese collection in his work:

And then he possessed the most delightful chinoiseries—trophies of his sojourn in the Celestial Empire: pagodas of ebony and cabinets of ivory; sculptured monsters, grinning and leering on chimney-pieces, in front of beautifully figured hand-screens; porcelain dinner-sets, gleaming behind the glass doors of mahogany buffets; large screens, in corners, covered with tasseled silk and embroidered with mandarins and dragons. [22]

If the pagoda in The Golden Bowl represents the cultural Other, then China, with its vast wealth, represents the economic Other in The Europeans. Whether it is the mysterious and affluent China compared to the Puritanical America, or the new American aristocracy with Chinese elements and the traditional European aristocracy, the difference between them is obvious, and it is this difference that confirms the Actonian American culture. James wrote about China in order to confirm his "Self," which is related to his bloodline and his own time and culture. It is also related to the deep-seated reason for his hesitant and cautious attitude towards Chinese culture. In Orientalism, Edward Said commented on the behavior of traditional Western writers in depicting the Orient. Said argued that the Orient is a construct of Western culture and knowledge. Said further argued that the purpose of Western writers in constructing the Orient is to confirm themselves. [24] (p. 28) Through this subtle expression, Said reveals the original opportunity for Western writers to write about the Orient under the influence of Western-centered ideas. James is distinct from purely Western-centered writers, but he is inevitably affected by Western-centered ideas, and the China in his writing must be represented, constructed, and used as a "tool" to confirm the subject of the work. To clarify Said's words, it is
impossible for a European or an American studying the Orient to ignore or deny the reality of their own environment. Their encounter with the Orient occurs first as a European or an American, and then as a concrete individual. James's original motive for writing Chinese imagery was to confirm his own self-determination, which led him to refrain from paying excessive attention to and establishing a close connection with China. His hesitation and prudence can be attributed to his unfamiliarity and detachment from Chinese culture, which is the appropriate attitude towards an "Other" culture. However, it is more important to emphasize that although James cannot escape the collective imagination of China in his own time and culture, he is a humanist who thinks independently and a master with a cosmopolitan vision. By writing about China, James is also expressing his respect and curiosity for a foreign culture. This reflects the qualities of a cultural cosmopolitan in him, and is a remnant of his lifelong view of the integration of European and American cultures.

In 1875, at the age of 32, James traveled to Paris and other European countries, and subsequently relocated to London the following year. As a consequence of his life and creative experiences across two continents, James gradually demonstrated the thinking and vision of a cultural cosmopolitan. He had published a series of constructive views on the creation of American cultural subjectivity, European and American cultural exchanges, and other related topics. Mark Rennella, an American scholar, evaluates James as a representative cultural cosmopolitan in Boston's cultural elite group, citing a letter James wrote to a close friend in 1867 (at the age of 24) in which he expresses his hope for the inclusion of other civilizations' outstanding cultures into American culture.

I feel that my only chance for success as a critic is to let all the breezes of the west blow through me at their will. We are Americans born—il faut prendre son parti [one has to take one's side]. I look upon it as a great blessing; and I think that to be an American is an excellent preparation for culture. We have exquisite qualities as a race, and it seems to me that we are ahead of the European races in the fact that more than either of them we can deal freely with forms of civilization not our own, can pick and choose and assimilate and in short (aesthetically etc.) claim our property wherever we find it.[25] (p.24)

From this, it is evident that James is a cultural cosmopolitan with a broad vision and a tolerant mind. He once declared, "I am proud of my cosmopolitan vision" (p. 121).

In addition, James's extensive oeuvre encompasses a multitude of novels that explore European and American cultural themes. These works reflect his perspective on the European and American cultural fusion, which is characterized by an openness and tolerance, as well as a pursuit of new paths of cultural development. This approach enables him to engage with foreign cultures in a more objective and calm manner. In The Portrait of a Lady, James integrates his personal life experience into the fate of his characters, narrating his own uncertainty, perseverance, and transcendence in the pursuit of European and American cultural integration. Isabel Archer is highly similar to James's own life experience and the evolution of his cultural conception. Living on two continents gave James a cosmopolitan outlook, but it also made him an "outsider" to both cultures. James's biographer Leon Edel calls his life experience a "double exile," i.e., "he felt like an outsider at home, and he was afraid of being an outsider in Europe"[1](p.123). James was able to use the cosmopolitan vision to examine the cultural reality of Europe and the United States at the same time to look at other countries and national cultures, to adopt a more objective, more open, more tolerant attitude to face other cultures, this methodology adopted in the face of cultural differences is summarized by other scholars as follows, "abandoning the parochial national consciousness, to a more open vision to observe the common cultural treasure of humanity"[27].The European and American view of cultural fusion has profoundly influenced James's creative work, and is the concrete embodiment and best example of James's cultural cosmopolitanism trait.

When James looked at China as an ancient Eastern empire, he discarded the prejudice and condescension of many contemporaries in the West, and wrote about China with a calmer and more cautious attitude. Doubtful, but not contemptuous; cautious, but also restrained. This is the uniqueness of James's perseverance against the tide of the times, as well as the nobility of a cultural cosmopolitan.
5. Conclusion

James's "pagoda" is an important clue to tell the story of the protagonist's transformation of consciousness, and it is also an artistic symbol borrowed from the Chinese cultural field. The intertextual reference between art and culture makes the pagoda not only have artistic value, but also point to James's own cultural concepts. James was both detached and cautious about Chinese culture; he was hesitant and cautious, curious but restrained, a cultural attitude that was unique in European and American literature from the latter part of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. The reasons for James's cultural attitude are closely related to his acceptance and understanding of the Orient and Chinese art, as well as his open and tolerant identity as a cosmopolitan culturalist. It is true that James did not get rid of his Western-centeredness in the process of writing about China, but he tried his best to think independently beyond the limitations of his own time and culture, and provided us with a unique mode of cultural thinking. James's uniqueness is of great help to us in studying James's view of literature and culture, in analyzing the image of China in American literature, and in understanding the history of cultural exchange between China and the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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