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珍妮弗·伊根小说中的空间叙事

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博 士 学 位 论 文

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The Spatial Narrative in Jennifer Egan's Fiction

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## Abstract

Jennifer Egan (1962- ) is one of the most important contemporary writers in the United States. Renowned for her audacious, intriguing and visionary novels and short stories, this daring and gifted writer reveals strong spatial consciousness in her fictional works. The rapid development of modern science and technology has changed people's cognition of space to a great degree. Space is no longer regarded only as the static and rigid setting for social and historical activities, hence the increasing prominence of the issues of space and spatiality in human life. Under the influence of the widespread spatial thinking, Egan creates a fantastic literary space of her own. On the one hand, she plays wildly with narrative techniques, displaying a tendency towards spatialization in narrative through the kaleidoscopic formal architecture of her fiction. On the other hand, she gives a vivid and touching description of the various political contradictions and trendy cultural phenomena in contemporary American society through the political and metaphorical story space reconstructed in her fiction.

The domestic and overseas literary criticism on Egan, heretofore, has mainly focused on the identification of the literary school that she belongs to, the analysis of the literary genres of her works, and the discussion of the recurrent motifs such as time, trauma, music and technology in her fiction. With the "spatial turn" emerging in the diversified fields since the latter half of the 20th century, contemporary study of spatial narrative has got a great development, and the issues of space and spatiality in Egan's fiction begin to attract more and more critical attention. Being dependent on theories of spatial narrative as its major theoretic basis, and applying other transdisciplinary spatial critical theories, this dissertation explores the distinctive charm of Egan's literary space from two aspects: the textual space and the story space. Egan study, at home and abroad, is still in its initial stage and deserves more critical attention. Up till the present moment, there is still not a systematic and comprehensive

research on Egan's fiction. Therefore, a specialized study of Egan's spatial poetics has a certain degree of pioneering significance and innovative value.

This dissertation consists of three parts: the introduction, the main body and the conclusion. The introduction part gives a general survey of Egan's literary career and achievements, briefly reviews Egan study at home and abroad, and presents the basic theories and structure of this dissertation. The main body, exploring Egan's fictional writing from the perspective of spatial narrative, consists of four chapters: Chapter One, Spatial Theories and Egan's Spatial Consciousness; Chapter Two, Spatial Form and "Self-identity"; Chapter Three, Political Implications of Space; Chapter Four, Metaphorical Space in Image Culture.

Chapter One makes a sketch of the transdisciplinary spatial theories and Egan's spatial consciousness, illustrating the significance of the spatial critical approach to Egan's fictional works. On account of the "spatial turn" initiated and promoted by theorists like Henry Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, and Edward W. Soja, spatial thinking and spatial theories have been affecting a broad range of disciplines in recent years, hence the booming of research on spatial narrative. For one thing, some critics concentrate on analyzing the spatial form of the narrative text. For another thing, there have emerged more voices emphasizing the function of space in narrative. Contemporary theories of spatial narrative open up a new research scope, embracing both the discourse of narrative and the story of narrative. Therefore the study of spatial narrative may be conducted from two aspects: the textual space and the story space. Furthermore, this chapter sheds light on Egan's spatial consciousness, which has its origin in her spatial identity and spatial experience, and is mirrored by the capacious literary map she has drawn in her literary creation. In the process of her literary creation, Egan's spatial consciousness has been intensified and weaved into the spatial narrative of her writings. While experimenting on her art indefatigably with devices of spatial form in the strategic textual space of her fiction, she creates a political and metaphorical story space, reflecting her keen observation and serious contemplation of some prevailing political and cultural issues in contemporary American society. The following three chapters of this dissertation elaborate

corollaries to this main proposition.

Chapter Two analyzes the spatial form of the narrative in Egan's fiction and illuminates how it contributes to the construction of Egan's important theme of "self-identity," which mainly includes the exploration of "self-invention," "double selves" and "self-redemption" in Egan's fiction. Through a successive analysis of Egan's four novels, this chapter strives to demonstrate that Egan's literary creation has so far revealed a tendency towards spatialization in narrative. Egan aptly applies the distinctive spatial device, "reflexive reference," in her first novel, *The Invisible Circus*, which is basically narrated in a traditional pattern. The spatial effect helps to generate a mood of nostalgia and melancholy for the novel. And a frequent space shift makes a spatialized plot, unfolding before our eyes the process of the heroine's "self-invention." Then this chapter focuses on the novels *Look at Me* and *The Keep*, showing the transformation from diachrony to spatialization in Egan's narrative. While the mechanics of juxtaposition in *Look at Me* give rise to the effect of spatial simultaneity, the labyrinthine narratives in *The Keep* further advance the process of spatialization. The author's wielding of spatial forms like "Chinese box" and metafiction compels the reader to construct a psychological space for aesthetics purpose. Moreover, the spatialized structure shared by both novels, specifically, the structure of juxtaposition, is consciously set up to symbolize and emphasize Egan's motif of "double selves." This chapter then zooms in the dazzling experimentations and innovations in Egan's masterpiece *A Visit from the Goon Squad* to demonstrate how she dismantles shackles of temporality of the novel as a temporal art. Through her genre hopping from ordinary short stories to a music album, a travelogue with academic terms, a celebrity profile in magazine, and then a PowerPoint presentation, Egan visualizes the novel by turning it into an artwork like a collage, exhibiting the effect of spatial secondary illusion. Moreover, with the novel's polyphonic essence of multi-voicedness, space of an interlocking network is built to incarnate the human interconnectedness and spatial coexistence. And the spatialized time of the novel not only breaks the bondage of the temporal art, but also implies the author's pondering over the motif of "self-redemption."



Chapter Three turns to explore the political implications of the story space in Egan's fiction. As a social and historical product, space is political and ideological, embedded with all kinds of power relations. The story space of fiction, as the space reconstructed by the writer via different literary methods, contributes to the narrative with its representation of social, historical and cultural significance. This chapter probes into how Egan encodes and restructures space to reveal the various contradictions in American society, such as gender hierarchies in space, inequalities and injustices in urban space, and clashes in the heterogeneous space. Egan reveals great sympathy with women through her delineations of the family space and the space of the female body. The spatial arrangement and connotations of the family space indicate the discipline of women's thoughts and behavior, the enclosure of their lives, and the restraint of their creativity by the power of patriarchy. It is noteworthy that patriarchal discourse is also practiced by means of surveillance, manipulation and oppression of the female body. Gender hierarchies exhibited in the story space of Egan's fiction invite our reflections on questions about how to truly obtain women's equal rights and liberation in modern society. The urban space in Egan's fiction is imbued with inequalities and injustices. According to the urban critical theory, the excessive accumulation of capital induces the ebb and flow of "creative destruction" upon urban space, which is destined to result in the deprivation of the right to the city and spatial justice. With detailed descriptions of the spatial discrepancies of different strata, and spatial reconfiguration at different scales in American society, Egan's fiction exposes the contradictions between the rich and poor, the center and periphery, and the economic growth and ecological balance. This conveys Egan's appealing for an equal and just living space for human beings. Besides, a multicultural heterogeneous space, saturated with the contradictions between different ethnic groups and cultures which at least partly lead to the problem of terrorism, is presented in Egan's fiction. The issues of terrorism are focalized through the lens of heterotopias, including "heterotopias of deviation," "heterotopias of crisis," and "heterotopias opening onto heterochronies." Egan's imaginary depiction of the heterotopias not only discloses the spiritual pressure and anxiety of contemporary American people but also

raises the question of how to rebuild the social order and confidence of the United States in a new domestic and international structure.

Chapter Four discusses the function of the metaphorical story space as the spatial representation of American image culture in Egan's fiction. Egan believes that American culture is essentially image culture, obsessed with surfaces and appearances, for contemporary American life is made up of a blizzard of images and information which blurs the line between reality and illusion. The issues of "self-identity" and terrorism involved in the former two chapters are closely connected with image culture, the most important theme in Egan's fiction. This chapter explores Egan's representation and interrogation of image culture from three spatial perspectives: "perceived space," "conceived space" and "Thirdspace." The "perceived space" in Egan's fiction displays an affecting picture of people's longing for transcendence under the influence of image culture. The ethereal transcendental dreams harbored in the heart of modern Americans are embodied through the metaphorical symbols of "Emerald City" and "Mirrored Room." Egan's insight into image culture is also revealed through the "conceived space" reconstructed by the characters in her fiction with their language and imagination. The "conceived space" in Egan's fiction, whether Moose's "insane world" or Howard's "fantastic kingdom," exposes the illusions fabricated by image culture. Through shaping the "conceived space," Egan puts forward her suggestion that we should grope for something substantial so as to resist the infiltration and inundation of image culture in everyday life. This chapter then dissects how Egan portrays contemporary American society as the real-and-imagined "Thirdspace," which is the spatial metaphor for image culture. As delineated in Egan's fiction, the source of image culture can be traced back to the emergence of modern mass media, and image culture is intensified with the development of telecommunication technologies in the present age of digitalization. We see, therefore, the production of the hyperreal space of simulacra and the virtual space of telecommunication, which compose the contemporary "Thirdspace" that fuses the fact and imagination, the concrete and abstract, the objective and subjective, the material and mental, and so on. This metaphorical "Thirdspace" mirrors Egan's

philosophical meditation on “what is real and what is not” and how to maintain the inner truth of human identity under the impact of the rapidly growing and overwhelmingly illusory image culture.

The conclusion presents an overall review of Egan’s spatial narrative, points out the significance of this study, prospects for new research space and reaffirms the literary achievements of Egan. With a relatively systematic study, this dissertation illuminates the aesthetic contribution of the spatial narrative to Egan’s fictional creation, and highlights the importance of space and spatiality in human life. On the whole, Egan’s spatial narrative commits to different elements of her fictional creation, such as the plot, structure, atmosphere, characterization, meaning representation, thematic construction, and so on. Her strategic textual space, bewildering and unpredictable, chimes with our turbulent time and shifting world, reflecting her persistent pursuit of the artistic vitality of the novel in the overwhelming context of new media. As a tripledialectic of historicity, sociality and spatiality, the story space of Egan’s fiction reveals her profound concerns about the various social contradictions and cultural changes in the United States. Standing in the wind and listening to the hum of time, this enthusiastic and serious woman writer, with poetic temperament of aesthetic redemption, is walking slowly towards the transcendental literary space in her heart.

**Key words:** Jennifer Egan; spatial narrative; spatial form; political implications;  
image culture

## 摘要

珍妮弗·伊根（Jennifer Egan, 1962—）是美国当代最重要的作家之一。她的小说风格不羁，令人神往，富有洞见，展现了这位有勇气、有天赋的作家强烈的空间意识。现代科技的迅猛发展极大地改变了人们对空间的认知。空间不再被看作仅是社会历史活动展开的静态、僵化的背景，空间与空间性问题在人类生活中变得日益显著。在广泛的空间思维的影响下，伊根创造了自己奇妙的文学空间。一方面，她肆意运用叙事技巧，在小说万花筒似的构形中展现叙事的空间化倾向。另一方面，她通过小说所重构的富有政治意蕴和隐喻色彩的故事空间，生动而感人地描绘出当代美国社会的种种政治矛盾和新潮的文化现象。

迄今为止，国内外对伊根的文学评论主要集中于鉴定其所归属的文学流派，分析其作品的文学类型，以及讨论其小说中反复出现的如时间、创伤、音乐、科技等主题。伴随自 20 世纪下半叶以来在各个领域所兴起的“空间转向”，当代空间叙事研究取得了很大进展，伊根小说中的空间及空间性问题亦开始引起越来越多的学术界的关注。本论文以空间叙事理论为主要理论基础，并结合各种跨学科的空间批评理论，从文本空间和故事空间两个方面分析伊根文学空间的独特魅力。伊根研究，无论在国内还是国外，尚处于起步阶段，值得更多关注。目前，尚无针对伊根小说的系统性、综合性的整体研究。因此，对伊根空间诗学的专门研究具有一定程度的开拓意义和创新价值。

本论文由三个部分组成：引言，正文和结语。引言部分概括性地介绍伊根的文学生涯和文学成就、国内外的研究现状及本论文的基本理论和框架。正文部分从空间叙事的角度探讨伊根的小说创作，包括以下四章：第一章，空间理论和伊根的空间意识；第二章，空间形式和“自我认同”；第三章，空间政治意蕴；第四章，意象文化中的隐喻性空间。

第一章概述跨学科的空间理论和伊根的空间意识，阐明空间批评方法对伊根小说研究的意义。由诸如亨利·列斐伏尔（Henry Lefebvre）、米歇尔·福柯（Michel Foucault）和爱德华·W·索亚（Edward W. Soja）等理论家所发起并推动的“空间转向”使得近年来空间思维和空间理论在许多学科领域产生广泛影响，空间叙

事研究开始兴盛。一方面，一些评论家注重对叙事文本空间形式的分析。另一方面，更多的声音开始强调空间的叙事功能。当代空间叙事理论开拓了一个新的研究视野，将叙事的话语和故事两个层面同时纳入其中，因而空间叙事研究可以从文本空间和故事空间两个方面展开。此外，本章还对伊根的空间意识做出阐释。伊根的空间意识源自她的空间身份和空间体验，映照于她所描绘的广阔的文学地图之上。在其文学创作过程中，伊根的空间意识得以深化，她将这种空间意识编织进了作品的空间叙事之中。伊根在其具有策略性的文本空间中运用空间形式的技巧孜孜不倦地进行艺术实验的同时，创造了一个富有政治性、隐喻性的故事空间，折射出她对当代盛行于美国的一些政治、文化问题的敏锐观察和严肃思考。本论文接下来的三章围绕这个主要命题进行详细阐述和推论。

第二章分析伊根小说叙事的空間形式，并阐明空间形式对伊根的重要主题“自我认同”的建构意义。在伊根的小说中，这一主题细分为“自我创造”、“双重自我”和“自我救赎”。本章通过依次分析伊根的四部小说，力图论证迄今为止伊根的文学创作在叙事上呈现出空间化的倾向。在其以传统叙事模式为主的第一部小说《隐形马戏团》(*The Invisible Circus*)中，伊根适当地运用了独到的空间技巧“反应参照”，空间效果为小说制造了一种怀旧、忧郁的氛围。并且，频繁的空间转换产生了空间化的情节，展现出女主人公“自我创造”的过程。随后本章聚焦于小说《望着我》(*Look at Me*)和《塔楼》(*The Keep*)，揭示伊根的叙事从历时性向空间化的转变。如果说《望着我》中的并置手法产生了空间同时性效果，《塔楼》中的迷宫式叙事则使空间化进程更进一步。作者对“中国盒子”和元小说等空间形式的运用，迫使读者去建构艺术审美的心理空间。而两部小说共有的空间化结构，即并置结构的设置，象征并强调了伊根的“双重自我”主题。本章还聚焦于伊根代表作《恶棍来访》(*A Visit from the Goon Squad*)中令人炫目的实验和创新，探究她如何拆解小说作为时间艺术的时间性枷锁。从普通短篇小说到音乐唱片、包含学术术语的游记、杂志中的名人简介，再到演示文稿的文类跳跃，将小说化为一幅拼贴画的艺术品，实现了空间第二位幻觉的效果。另外，作者通过多声部的叙事手法赋予小说复调本质，从而创建了一个连锁的网状空间，体现了人类的互相关联性和空间共存性。小说空间化的时间不仅挣脱了时间艺术的束缚，还蕴涵着作者对“自我救赎”主题的思考。

第三章转而探讨伊根小说故事空间的政治意蕴。作为社会和历史的产物，空间是政治的、意识形态的，其中蕴含各种权力关系。而小说的故事空间，是作者通过不同的文学手段所重构的空间，在叙事上具有社会、历史和文化意义的表征功能。本章研究伊根如何对空间进行编码和重组，以彰显美国社会的种种矛盾，如空间中的性别等级、城市空间的不平等与不公正以及异质空间中的冲突等。伊根在其小说中通过对家庭空间和女性身体空间的描绘流露出对女性的极大同情。伊根笔下家庭空间的布局安排和空间意蕴表现出男权机制对女性思想行为的规训、对其生命活力的围限以及对其创造力的遏制。值得注意的是，男权话语还通过对女性身体空间的监视、操纵和压迫等手段加以实施。伊根小说的故事空间所呈现出的性别等级关系，促使我们思考在现代社会中女性如何获得真正的平等和解放。伊根笔下的城市空间渗透着诸多不平等与不公正。城市空间批判理论认为资本的过度积累导致对城市空间进行潮起潮落的“创造性破坏”，这势必造成对城市权利和空间正义的剥夺。伊根小说通过详细描绘美国社会不同阶层的空间差异、不同规模的空间重组，揭示了富人与穷人、中心与边缘、经济发展和生态平衡之间的矛盾，传达了作者对平等、公正的人类生存空间的诉求。此外，伊根小说中还呈现了一个多元文化的异质空间，充斥着不同族群和文化之间的矛盾，它是恐怖主义问题的部分成因。对恐怖主义问题的聚焦透过异托邦的镜头进行，包括“偏离异托邦”、“危机异托邦”和“通往异托邦的异托邦”。伊根对异托邦的想象性描绘不但揭示了当代美国人的精神压力和焦虑情绪，而且提出了在新的国内外格局下如何重建美国社会秩序和信心的问题。

第四章阐述伊根小说中隐喻性的故事空间对美国意象文化的空间表征功能。伊根认为美国文化在本质上是一种沉迷于表象的意象文化，当代美国生活为暴风雪般的意象和信息所充斥，模糊了真实与虚幻的界线。前两章所涉及的“自我认同”和恐怖主义问题，都与伊根小说最重要的主题意象文化紧密相关。本章从“感知空间”、“构想空间”和“第三空间”三个空间视角探讨伊根对意象文化的再现与审视。伊根小说中的“感知空间”以动人的画卷描绘在意象文化的影响下人们对超然体验的渴望和追求。当代美国人心中缥缈的超验梦想透过“翡翠城”和“带镜子的房间”两个隐喻性符号得以具象化。伊根对意象文化的洞察还反映在其小说人物用语言和想象所创建的“构想空间”中。伊根小说的“构想空间”，不论

是慕斯的“癫狂世界”还是霍华德的“异想王国”都直指意象文化所制造的幻象。通过对“构想空间”的塑造，伊根发出了探求生活实质的呼声，以抵制意象文化对日常生活的渗透和淹没。接着本章剖析伊根如何将当代美国社会描绘成一个真实与想象的“第三空间”，作为意象文化的空间隐喻。如伊根小说中所勾画的那样，意象文化的来源可追溯至现代大众媒体的诞生，并随着当今数字化时代中电讯技术的发展愈演愈烈，从而产生当代社会中超真实的拟像空间和虚拟的电讯空间，它们构成了融合事实与想象、具体与抽象、客观与主观、物质与精神等因素于一体的当代“第三空间”。隐喻性的“第三空间”投射出伊根对“什么是真，什么是假”以及在飞速发展而充满幻象的意象文化的冲击下如何把握人类心灵本真的哲学思考。

结语部分总结伊根的空间叙事，点明本论文的研究价值，展望未来的研究空间，并重申伊根的文学成就。通过较为系统的分析，本论文阐明了空间叙事对伊根小说创作的美学贡献，从而彰显了空间与空间性在人类生活中的重要意义。总体来说，空间叙事作用于伊根小说创作的多种不同要素，如情节推动、文本结构、氛围烘托、人物刻画、意义表征和主题建构等。伊根策略性的文本空间，云谲波诡，鸣唱我们这个喧嚣的时代、变幻的世界，反映出她在当代新媒体的重重围困下对小说艺术生命力的执着追求。作为历史性、社会性和空间性的辩证统一体，伊根小说的故事空间透射出她对当代美国种种社会矛盾和文化变迁的深切关注。这位站在风里听时间低吟的女作家，正以热忱而严肃的创作姿态，带着美学救赎的诗性气质，彳亍前行，去往那心底超然的文学空间。

**关键词：**珍妮弗·伊根；空间叙事；空间形式；政治意蕴；意象文化

## Contents

A Note on Abbreviations.....	XV
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
I . Egan’s Literary Career and Achievements .....	3
II . Egan Study at Home and Abroad.....	7
III. The Basic Theories and Framework of the Dissertation .....	13
<b>Chapter One Spatial Theories and Egan’s Spatial Consciousness.....</b>	<b>16</b>
I . “Spatial Turn” in Humanities and Social Sciences .....	16
i . Lefebvre’s “Production of Space” .....	17
ii . Foucault’s “Micro-physics of Power” and “Heterotopias” .....	19
iii. Soja’s “Thirdspace” .....	22
II . The Evolution of Theories of Spatial Narrative.....	25
i . Spatial Form in Narrative.....	25
ii . The Function of Space in Narrative .....	29
iii. Redefining “Space” in the New Horizon of Research on Spatial Narrative...	32
III. Egan’s Spatial Consciousness.....	35
i . Egan’s Spatial Identity and Spatial Experience .....	35
ii . Egan’s Literary Map in the Context of Globalization.....	38
iii. Egan’s Spatial Narrative: the Textual Space and the Story Space .....	40
<b>Chapter Two Spatial Form and “Self-identity” .....</b>	<b>44</b>
I . <i>The Invisible Circus</i> : Challenging the Linear Narrative .....	45
i . The Traditional Narrative Pattern .....	45
ii . “Reflexive Reference” .....	47
iii. The Spatialized Plot and “Self-invention” .....	51
II . <i>Look at Me</i> and <i>The Keep</i> : Moving towards Spatialization in Narrative.....	54
i . Juxtaposition in <i>Look at Me</i> .....	54
ii . Labyrinthine Narratives in <i>The Keep</i> .....	58
iii. The Spatialized Structure and “Double Selves” .....	62
III. <i>A Visit from the Goon Squad</i> : Breaking Shackles of Temporality .....	67



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