Post-sixties Narratives in Contemporary American Cultural Criticism

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ABSTRACT
As a special type of criticism, post-sixties narratives represent a very important part of contemporary American cultural criticism. These narratives shape the American collective memory and the national mood – the structure of feeling of American society. Russell Jacoby’s post-sixties narrative, from-bohemia-to-academia, is a case in point. It posits Bohemia and Academia as two contrasting historical tropes, spatial tropes as well as political tropes, to represent contemporary American intellectual life. Such a “Bohemian narrative” offers the “against the grain” narrative tension in Jacoby’s post-sixties narrative. Examination of various post-sixties narratives may help us obtain a new perspective on contemporary American cultural criticism and, at the same time, deepen our understanding of contemporary American culture.

KEYWORDS
post-sixties narrative; cultural criticism; Bohemian narrative; structure of feeling

摘 要
作为一种特殊的批评话语，后六十年代叙事代表了当代美国文化批评的重要部分。这些叙事塑造了美国集体记忆与国家情绪，即美国社会的情感结构。拉塞尔·雅各比的后六十年代叙事“从波西米亚到学院”就是这样一个例子，它将波西米亚与学院作为两个具有对比性的历史、空间和知识分子转喻，用于描述当代美国知识分子生活。这样的“波西米亚叙事”为雅各比的后六十年代叙事提供了某种“反主流”的叙事张力。检验各种后六十年代叙事为我们提供了研究当代美国文化批评的新视野，加深了对当代美国文化的理解。

The relationship between narrative and criticism remains controversial in the academic field. Narratology has mostly resided in the field of literary studies. Although later research extended narrative genres to other fields such as history, politics, anthropology, etc., few Chinese scholars have made clear assertions about the relationship between narrative and criticism. However, narratives can be readily found in contemporary cultural criticism. The former provides the latter with not only tropes and plots, but also particular narrative logic. In many cases, narratives themselves function as criticism.

The author of this article attempts to clarify such a relationship between narrative and criticism by examining the relationship between post-sixties narratives and contemporary American cultural criticism. By attempting a case study of a book written by American cultural critic Russell Jacoby, this article seeks to show how Jacoby structures his post-
sixties narrative to represent postwar American intellectual life. Such a post-sixties narrative serves to organize understanding of both the past and present of American public life; it produces a structure of feeling, especially among the intellectual Left.

1. Post-sixties narratives, cultural studies, cultural criticism

Traditional narratology denies that narrative itself can function as criticism. However, more and more scholars have stressed the ideological factors involved in the process of narrative construction. This suggests that narrative is not only descriptive, but also interpretative. Through a thorough study of the relationship between narrative and ideology, Xingran Chen states:

...the development of Hermeneutics has already proved that in any field of Humanities, the so-called objectivity of any description is doubtful; any description has certain elements of interpretation, or, any description has to explain its own legitimacy; narrative and criticism are the different aspects of interpreting activity... (62)

Therefore, in a certain sense, any narrative can be an interpretation by the narrator, who tells stories based on his/her own understanding, imagination, and even manipulation. The narrator is not only a story-teller, but also an opinion sharer: he shows his attitudes toward something good or bad, lets the hero speak his ideas, makes comments on events and characters. Taken as a whole, the narrator can function as a critic at the same time. In this sense, narrative itself becomes criticism.

This duality is manifested in the narratives about the 1960s in America, which the author calls post-sixties narratives. By post-sixties narrative, the author wants to refer broadly to any oral or written, visual or audio, formal or informal, public or private, academic or non-academic, storytelling about the 1960s. As the author deals with American cultural criticism in this article, she wants to point out that “the 1960s” that she is talking about here do not merely span the period from the year 1960 to the year 1970. The American 1960s, in a much broader sense, refer to the long period from the mid and late 1950s (the peak of the McCarthy years, the Soviet Union’s launch of Sputnik and the Beat Generation) to the early 1970s (Watergate and the resignation of Nixon) – which is often referred to as “the long Sixties.” (Dekovon 3) What should be noted is that since stories can be told when the event is still happening, post-sixties narratives refer not only to narratives composed after the 1960s but also those crafted within that period. In this sense, the prefix “post” in “post-sixties narrative” does not only mean “after the 1960s,” but also “after/while the Sixties event happened.” Furthermore, like the prefix “post” in “postmodern,” “post” in “post-sixties narrative” can also refer to the new narratives that contest with, revise, or rewrite older narratives about the 1960s.

For example, Richard Hofstadter’s Anti-Intellectualism in American Culture was published in the year 1963 and had as its focus the American intellectual life in the 1950s. However, based on the notion of “the long Sixties,” Hofstadter’s book can be regarded clearly as a post-sixties narrative. The same is true with Daniel Bell’s Cultural Contradiction of Capitalism, which was published in 1972. Bob Dylan’s most successful songs in the 1960s, for example, “Blowing in the Wind,” can be thought of as post-sixties narratives in musical form. Similarly, post-sixties narratives can also be found
among the movies produced during the 1960s. For example, both Rebel without a Cause (1955) and The Graduate (1968) may be considered typical of movies with post-sixties narratives. They tell stories about 1950s juvenile delinquency and 1960s youth rebellion.

All such narratives, whatever the format, which were both about 1960s society and culture and were written during the 1960s, are post-sixties narratives themselves. They provide the subsequent narratives with tropes, plots and narrative logic. Therefore, post-sixties narratives are in a constant process of reconsideration, renegotiation and rewriting. There are consequently always going to be narrative tensions between different post-sixties narratives. Hence no narrative closure of post-sixties narratives is really possible. They are always open to reconstruction.

In general, post-sixties narratives can be found in the following genres of representation:

1. Literary writing: novels, plays, poetry, etc.
2. Public or private discourse, discussions, debates, etc.
3. Films, ads, plays, music, TV shows, etc.
4. Cultural criticism: literary criticism and studies, cultural studies, newspaper columns and editorials, book reviews, etc.

In this article the author wants to focus on the last genre: cultural criticism. For a long time in the Chinese academy there has been some misunderstanding of the terms cultural criticism and cultural studies. Both of them seem to be regarded as merely complementary, if not tangential, or even completely unrelated, to actual literary studies. The author would, however, call this a “literary-centered” opinion. It neglects the very fact that literature itself is just a part of culture as a whole. Therefore, literary studies, as well as literary criticism, in fact, belong to cultural studies and cultural criticism.

Furthermore, the relationship between cultural criticism and cultural studies has not been made clear yet. In the author’s opinion, cultural criticism does include cultural studies. Cultural criticism is sometimes regarded as simply another name of cultural studies, as both seem to be treated as the intellectual activities mainly from the Left. However, the author must insist that cultural criticism already existed for a long time prior to the 1960s, when cultural studies as a discrete academic field was inaugurated. To put it in another way, cultural studies began, more or less, as academic cultural criticism during the 1960s. But cultural criticism outside of the academic field still continues to exist in other forms, as seen in the above-defined categories of post-sixties narratives. In this sense, cultural studies belong to cultural criticism.

Another point that the author wants to make is about the claim of cultural studies, sometimes relating to cultural criticism as well, as being the exclusive province of the academic Left. The author must insist that cultural studies should not exclude perspectives from the Right. By the way, who claims the Right does not study culture? And what about the Middle? With that said, the author intends to clarify that cultural studies may arise from any political camps, or even non-political groups. That political perspective is important to cultural studies does not necessarily mean that the critic him or herself must belong to any political faction, or that he or she is bound to be political in their studies. Cultural studies should not be seen as exclusively a career
opportunity for the intellectual Left. It must be inclusive, involving all kinds of readings and interpretations. Nor should non-academic cultural studies or criticism be excluded.

Consider Dylan’s song writing as an example. His songs were undoubtedly a special type of cultural criticism, but not in the academic sense, as is literary and art criticism. They can be political but not necessarily academic. To a certain degree, the exclusiveness of cultural studies has narrowed its scope of perspectives, limited its capacity for imagination, and obscured its contact with real life. Note also the phenomenon of depoliticization of cultural studies in some of its post-modern versions. Cultural studies, as well as cultural criticism, should rebuild its framework, enlarge its domain, and create new narrative paradigms.

It is important to have a clear idea about the above relationships in order to better understand how post-sixties narratives operate in the field of cultural criticism, as both Left and Right, academic and non-academic employ such narratives. With all that said, the author would like to understand cultural criticism as not merely an academic discipline, but any narrative that involves people’s opinions of, attitudes toward, and comments on society and culture.

Another fact the author intends to call attention to is that it was precisely during the 1960s that cultural studies as an academic field, if not a formal discipline yet, was started. This was through the work of CCCS, Frankfurt school, and the French Structuralists, etc. Their works were largely derived from the society and culture of the 1960s. This coincidence – the beginning of cultural studies (as well as contemporary cultural criticism) in the 1960s, and the fact that the discussions and debates of the field have been closely related to the 1960s subject matter – suggests the innate relationship between post-sixties narratives and cultural studies and cultural criticism. To a certain degree, what cultural studies has been all about largely depends on telling stories about the 1960s, in other words, post-sixties narratives. In this sense, post-sixties narratives themselves are a special type of cultural criticism.

2. Decade labeling, post-sixties narratives, and the national mood

For some reason, people tend to divide history by decades. As a matter of fact, such division of history by decades has generally become the habitual way in which people measure time, as well as events that occur during that decade. For example, for Americans, the 1930s was a decade of “the Depression,” in which the stock market crash, breadlines, and finally the New Deal shaped the American collective memory. Furthermore, such a division of time is usually accompanied by people’s evaluation or characterization of a certain decade. An example is that people usually give labels to different generations, as in the “Lost Generation” in the 1920s, the “Beat Generation” in the 1950s, and the “Me Generation” in the 1980s. Such words as “lost,” “beat,” and “me” without exception indicate some kind of theme, motif or evaluation that people assign to these decades.

This way of looking at history by “decade labeling,” according to Fred Davis, changes the meaning of time itself:
time is not a ding an sich but rather something we are constantly arranging, defining, structuring, modulating, suspending or accelerating depending on the problems and purposes confronting us and our fellows. (16)

As a result, time is not merely a measurement of the length of history, but also a measurement of its contents: values, hopes, disappointments, and commitments. Its meaning always involves how people look at it, that is, their attitudes toward it. Time, in this sense, like space in its new cultural-geographical context, is something undergoing constant redefinition and reconstruction.

However, such “decade labeling” does not necessarily fit neatly within the span of ten years. According to Davis, there inevitably exists a “chronological imprecision” in decade labeling, so much so that some events that happened in one decade might be included in the next. For example, the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 is regarded as part of the “Cold War Fifties,” while Watergate and Nixon’s resignation in 1974 as capping the “Turbulent Sixties.” Furthermore, the labeling of one decade is always connected to that of the preceding and the succeeding one. Therefore, the meanings of such decades are closely knit together to form a somewhat coherent narrative logic. This suggests, according to Davis, the persistence of decade labels. Although the “meaning” of a decade undergoes possible reconstruction, you cannot easily change the meaning of one unless you change that of the adjacent others:

That is, the historic plots and stories that symbolically fix a decade in our minds encompass not just a single decade but several at once. Moreover, these are linked thematically in certain patterns of inversion, complementary or negation which make it difficult to change the thematic representation of one without markedly altering the definitions of others as well. (19)

Such a narrative plot can be clearly seen in the decade labeling of the 1920s. It stands in contrast to the narrative about the preceding 1910s, an era of “trench warfare, mass carnage, social revolutions and ‘the end of European empire as the world had come to know it,’” and in equal contrast to the subsequent 1930s, which was portrayed as an era of economic depression – “the breadlines, the dustbowl, Okies and Arkies migrating to California, the gaunt Appalachian visages captured by the photographer Walker Evans and, in somewhat incongruous palliative relief, the glamor of the movies and the homey diversions of the Sunday evening radio comedy show.” The narrative of the post-World War I 1920s features a “symbolical hegemony of the jazz age imagery.” Although historians have pointed out that in the 1920s there were in fact “low farm prices, sweatshops, immigrant ghettos, holy rollers and libidinal repression,” such counter-imagery does not alter people’s imagination of the 1920s as an age of “hip flask, flared trousers, flapper dresses, cloche hats, speakeasies, open touring cars spilling over the ‘flaming youth.’” Structuring these sweeping narrative labels in such an order suggests a moral vision of the passage of historical time. As Davis suggests,

The symbolic architectonic of the three decades, therefore, takes more or less the ‘natural form’ of dissolution-renaissance-retreat. Implicated therein is the moral narrative of phoenix rising from the ashes into a period of material riches and inevitable excess followed by collective retribution for sin – a modern reenactment of the biblical smashing of the Golden Calf or of Sodom and Gomorrah. (20)
Davis’ research is revelatory because it allows us to see the close relationship between decade labeling, historical narratives, and national mood. Raymond Williams suggests that culture also means a certain “structure of feeling.” Such decade labeling and decade narratives can naturally produce such a “structure of feeling,” or national mood, in American culture. It is exactly at this point that the author wants to put the special historical decade – the 1960s – into focus. The author intends to use the term “post-sixties narratives” to refer to different stories (memoirs, labels, comments, studies, etc.), both academic and non-academic, that are told about the 1960s – from the mid and late 1950s to the early 1970s.

Perhaps no other decade than the 1960s could produce so many complicated and contrasting narratives in 20th century American culture. Compared with the narrative of the 1950s (social quiescence) and that of the 1970s (inner absorption), the narrative of the 1960s (outward rebellion) has always invited incessant discussion and debate. Mentioning the 1960s inevitably engenders a variety of sharp sentiments among Americans. When asked what they thought about the 1960s, baby boomers may regretfully remind us of an age of idealism although a failed one, whereas the younger generation may glibly talk about hippies and sexual emancipation. By ideological demarcation, there is also the difference between the conservative narratives of moral decay and liberal accounts of paradise lost. Besides, various academic post-sixties narratives (“the Sixties Studies”), also add to the repertoire of stories about the 1960s more complicated narrative plots and logic. For example, where Todd Gitlin praised the sixties as “Years of Hope, Days of Rage,” Allen Bloom lamented “The Closing of the American Mind.” Even within the same political left “trench” among the New York intellectuals, the post-sixties narratives will vary according to different, sometimes even contradictory, intellectual stances as to whether to embrace or criticize American mass culture of the 1960s.

Eleanor Townsley has been examining the impact of the 1960s on American public life for a long time:

I have found that in my own work on academic professionalization, as well as in ordinary political discourse, I repeatedly encounter talk of the 1960s. At conference presentations on my research, for example, discussion turns quickly away from what I see as my scholarly concerns (theory, data, method) toward nostalgic accounts of what happened at Ann Arbor, Berkeley and Columbia. Moreover, in ordinary political talk with friends and colleagues, mention of the 1960s produces an effect very different from when other historical periods are discussed. People generally roll their eyes back, sigh, and begin accounts of coming of age. Alternatively, their eyes glaze, and they complain about everyone else’s fixation on the 1960s (usually the younger academic crowd). Or they inform me that the 1960s are long past, so I should ‘get over it’ (this last, most often from undergraduate students). Many different kinds of responses are triggered by mention of the 1960s, all of them suggesting the enduring meaningfulness of that time for the present. (103-104)

The post-sixties narratives that Townsley mentions here have evidently shaped a structure of feeling among American intellectuals: they “roll their eyes, sigh” and their eyes “glaze,” and they “complain,” which suggests nostalgia, lament, as well as anxiety. The great impact of the 1960s on American public life is clear to see in such emotional and physical reactions. The American national mood is thus closely related...
to the post-sixties narratives that have been circulating within and outside of the academy.

What deserves further attention is the purpose of post-sixties narratives. Obviously, such narratives are full of political implications. “The Sixties,” to Townsley, “is an important political trope of the last quarter of the 20th century; that is, it is a figurative use of words, which organizes our understanding of contemporary US politics and society.” (99) This shows both the narrative dynamic – stories about the 1960s provide clues for understanding the present, and the narrative logic – 1960s were in such a way and what we can learn from that time. According to Townsley, such a narrative logic can even be used as a tool for historical indexing: you can judge a person’s political stance based on his evaluation of the 1960s. For example, a person who expresses sympathy for the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s would almost certainly be on the side of Bill Clinton in terms of his domestic policies in the 1990s. In short, post-sixties narratives function to illustrate “how we came to be where we are right now” (Townsley 109).

It is also important to investigate “the Sixties” tropes. In addition to the tropes that Townsley offers – JFK’s “Ask not what your country can do for you,” Martin Luther King Jr’s “I have a dream,” Bob Dylan’s “The Times they are a-changing” – there are some others. Norman Mailer’s “The White Negro,” C. Wright Mills’ “The Whiter Collar,” Friedman’s “The Lonely Crowd,” Galbraith’s “The Affluent Society,” Norman Podhoretz’ “The Know-Nothing Bohemians,” are some other significant cultural focal points. Such powerful tropes from the 1960s have been appearing in different post-sixties narratives. Therefore, it is necessary to explore how these tropes are employed in those narratives. Next, a case study will be used to show how such tropes are used in one of the most powerful post-sixties narratives about intellectual life in contemporary American cultural criticism.

3. From-Bohemia-to-academia: a post-sixties narrative in the age of academy

Russell Jacoby’s book The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academy (2000) is used as an example to show how the author Jacoby weaves the post-sixties narrative into his representation of American intellectual life since the mid-20th century. In such a narrative, Bohemia and academia serve as not only historical and spatial tropes to suggest the shift of intellectual life, but also political tropes that carry the author’s observations (as a sociologist), reflections (as one of the academics), as well as criticism (as a cultural critic) of such a shift. Such a post-sixties narrative, therefore, can be understood as a particular paradigm of cultural criticism, which combines historical, spatial, and political narrative strategy and produces a structure of feeling in post-sixties American public life.

Although many books haven been written about the academy, fewer academics have troubled to writing about Bohemia. The reason seems to be quite simple: as the academy waxes, Bohemia would appear to wane. This is why Jacoby talks about “the Decline of Bohemia” in his book. But when did Bohemia start? How did it begin to decline? Generally, Bohemia is thought to have originated in the mid-19th century Latin Quarter of Paris and to have subsequently spread to other capitals like Berlin,
Prague, London, and even New York. Bohemia usually refers to an environment centered on coffee houses or little cabarets where young, poor writers and artists meet and talk about literature and ideas. Bohemia arrived in New York in the late 19th century and merged in the 1950s with the Beat Generation to form the 1960s hippie movement. Due to its marginal social status and non-mainstream and rebellious style, it has always been difficult for Bohemia to find its way into the establishment. When Bohemia is talked about, it is always about poverty, illness, eccentricity, and failed ambitions. Nevertheless, as an intellectual subculture born in big cities, Bohemia has been closely related to urban popular culture. In America, especially during the 1950s and 1960s, the Beats and the Hippies were clearly the preeminent spokespeople of Bohemianism. It had a close relationship with the avant-garde movement in the arts and paralleled the rise of modernism, in which the American Bohemian intellectual tradition had resided. Literary modernism in America in fact started with the so-called “Bohemian narrative” which describes the destitute life of poor writers and artists who wandered about in the Greenwich Village, with the usual “against the grain” narrative tension (Soto 98). The first generation of the New York intellectuals identified themselves with the Village Bohemians. However, younger generation intellectuals who came of age in the 1960s did not have much of an idea about what Bohemia was. To sum up, Bohemia is a place where independent intellectuals meet and talk; it may include a concrete geographical entity like a coffee shop or a restaurant, but it may also mean more broadly a spiritual space where men of letters make their home.

In his book, Jacoby obviously adopts a “Bohemian narrative,” in which he tries to use Bohemia and academia as two contrasting tropes to create the “against the grain” narrative tension.

### 3.1. Bohemia and academia as historical tropes

The historical narrative strategy of Jacoby lies in his decade labeling in which he breaks down the usual “the long Sixties” narrative time (from the mid and late 1950s to the early 1970s.) Instead, he divides “the long Sixties” into two segments, selecting (oddly enough) the calendar year of 1960 to divide the 1950s and the 1960s. According to such a division of time, Bohemia is related to the 1950s; academia, the 1960s. Based on this, the narrative plot is clearly drawn: Bohemia ended in the late 1950s and academia started in the early 1960s. The “decade” approach to understanding historical periods would appear to appeal to Jacoby.

As Davis has pointed out, however, narrative time does not have to correspond exactly to actual historical time. The same seems true with Jacoby’s post-sixties narrative: the shift from Bohemia to academia did not happen exactly during the year 1960. For example, a look at Jacoby’s list of the older generation intellectuals who represent the Bohemians in the 1950s will sift out at least such names as C. Wright Mills, Irving Howe, Lionel Trilling, as they became college professors before 1960. Meanwhile, although in a different style from that of the Beats, hippies were the 1960s’ Bohemians in terms of their nonconformist spirit and alternative lifestyle; they also had close connections with older generation Bohemian intellectuals who were their spiritual leaders in the Anti-War and Student Movement during the 1960s. (Xiang 153–161) Therefore, Bohemia did not start to decline until at least the late 1960s, when
the Student Movement began to peter out, the hippy phenomenon began to lose cultural primacy, and young intellectuals increasingly marched into the academy. Similar to the generally accepted narrative of “the turbulent Sixties” contrasted with the “the silent Fifties,” Jacoby seeks a narrative of “the academic 1960s” contrasted with “the Bohemian 1950s,” regardless of the fact that this actual historical process of the from-Bohemia-to-academia cannot be neatly fitted into his facile decade labeling. This suggests the evident strategy that Jacoby uses to arrange his scheme of post-sixties narrative by manipulating the narrative sequence.

Another example of the historical narrative strategy can be found in the book. Jacoby first lists the “many vital works from the late 1950s and early 1960s.” These include John Kenneth Galbraith’s *The Affluent Society*, Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*, Paul Goodman’s *Grow Up Absurd*, Jane Jacob’s *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, C. Wright Mills’ *The Power Elite*, William H. Whyte’s *The Organization Man*, and Michael Harrington’s *The Other America*. Jacoby then points out that, simply listing these books and authors suggests two striking truths about the current scene: the same books or individuals command the cultural heights today, and very few books or people have been added. Today, a quarter of a century later, we continue to listen to the same intellectuals, Norman Mailer or Daniel Bell or John Kenneth Galbraith or Gore Vidal, who first gained attention in the 1950s. (9)

Again, although admitting that some of the most important books were published in the 1960s, Jacoby adds that authors like Norman Mailer, or Daniel Bell, John Kenneth Galbraith, and Gore Vidal “first gained attention in the 1950s.” It is obvious that Jacoby stresses the importance of the decade of the 1950s in American intellectual history in order to stress the 1960s’ “decline of Bohemia” and “rise of academy.” Such emphasis on a clear demarcation of narrative time enhances narrative tension positing a dramatic change of intellectual life from the 1950s to the 1960s. But this is not necessarily in accord with reality.

The 1960s, in such a post-sixties narrative, is marked as a fundamental transitional decade of public culture in American history. Then, 1950s Bohemia and 1960s academia function as effective historical tropes. When Bohemia is mentioned, it reminds people of the 1950s; when academia is mentioned, the 1960s and subsequent decades. Bohemia is the past; academia, the present. Not entirely accurate, but useful as a benchmark for understanding.

### 3.2. Bohemia and academia as spatial tropes

Any discussion about Bohemia will always involve such geographical names as the Latin Quarter in Paris, the SOHO area in London, and Greenwich Village in New York. In America, in addition to the Village, North Beach in San Francisco was another important Bohemian cultural center in the 1950s and 1960s. In fact, Bohemia, as the product of the modern metropolis, soon emerged in the little cafes and cheap pubs in big cities where poor writers and artists gathered and talked. In a word, Bohemia has always been not only an idea, but also a place. However, according to Jacoby, the 1960s witnessed the demise of Bohemia because of suburban expansion and the rise of university towns, which disrupted once vibrant city life.
During the 1960s, the expansion of the suburbs also drove more people away from the city, draining energy and vitality from urban centers. Cities became less congenial to Bohemian life. Meanwhile, universities attracted independent writers and intellectuals:

Of the thousands of statistics describing the transformation of the United States in the twentieth century, two may partly explain a missing generation: the increasing substitution of corporate employment for independent businessmen, workers, and craftsmen; and the post-World War II “explosion” of higher education. These currents carried intellectuals from independence to dependence, from free-lance writing to salaried teaching in colleges. Between 1920 and 1970 the United States population doubled, but the number of college teachers multiplied ten-fold, rising from 50,000 in 1920 to 500,000 in 1970 (Jacoby 13-14).

Here, according to Jacoby, Bohemia is a place of “independence and free-lance writing,” while the academy is a place of “dependence and salaried teaching.” This suggests such a pair of spatial tropes: Bohemia and academia. Generally, Bohemia involves such spaces as little cafés, pubs, and cheap restaurants. Academia involves such places as campuses, conference halls, and classrooms. Moreover, Bohemia relates to big cities; academia, university towns. That such a spatial shift happened in the late 1950s and early 1960s suggests the fundamental change in American intellectual life: “with few reservations, by the end of the 1950s, American intellectuals decamped from the cities to the campuses, from the cafes to the cafeterias.” (Jacoby 14) Furthermore, such a change of intellectual space also suggests a change of intellectual spirit:

The rhythm of the lives of intellectuals permeates their writings. This is not surprising. If telephoning supplants letters and cafes yield to conferences, thinking itself – its density and parameters – may echo the shifts. The decline of Bohemia may entail not simply the decline of urban intellectuals and their audience, but of urban intelligence as well. To vary an old proposition, café society gives rise to the aphorism and essay; the college campus yields the monograph and lecture – and the grant application (31).

In such a from-Bohemia-to-academia narrative, Jacoby chooses the technique of spatial narrative. That is, he uses Bohemia and academia to suggest the spatial shift of intellectual life. In this spatial narrative, where academy starts, Bohemia ends. Thus, Bohemia and academia function as two contrasting spatial tropes. To some degree, these two also become enemy battlefields: if Bohemia is where intellectual independence and creative thinking reside, then academia is where the true intellectual spirit dies. This contrastive spatial narrative, therefore, works along with the historical narrative (1950s Bohemia and 1960s academia) to intensify the narrative tension. This gives a stronger impression of the 1960s as a decade when American intellectual life began to decline: “For the generation born in the 1940s and after, Bohemia ceased to be either an idea or a place” (Jacoby 40).

### 3.3. Bohemia and academia as political tropes

If Bohemia and academia as both historical tropes and spatial tropes seem to be used more in a descriptive way, then Jacoby’s employment of Bohemia and academia as political tropes suggests that he is far more critical than descriptive in his post-sixties
narrative. Jacoby’s historical and spatial narratives lay the foundation for his political narrative – his representation and criticism of postwar American intellectual life.

When Jacoby uses the term “public intellectuals,” he is in fact talking about the Bohemian intellectuals back in the 1950s and 1960s, who lived as city residents and wrote for the city residents. But when Bohemia gave way to academia, “writing and criticism had become careers, not callings” (Jacoby 61). Jacoby slams university professors – some Marxists scholars, feminists, and post-modernists – for their writing, full of abstract theories and trite jargon characterized by “vagueness and imprecision.” Jacoby criticizes such academic writing and praises the writing of the public intellectuals. Such figures as Jane Jacobs, William H. Whyte, Lewis Mumford, Percival Goodman, Paul Goodman, and Murray Bookchin back in the 1950s and 1960s, “breathe of public discussions, open, engaged and lucid.” (Jacoby 57) Bohemian intellectuals all wrote with a public language, a vernacular that spoke concisely and clearly to the public. Their writing manifested concern about what was happening in real life.

For example, in her book The Death and Life of Great American Cities (1961), Jane Jacobs, as an amateur, spoke more truthfully and eloquently than many professional city-planners. She was far away from academic institutions, and did not conform to their authority. She wrote according to her own experiences in the city, not from theories and books:

She argued persuasively that professionals – the planners, consultants, and engineers – devitalized city in the name of reform; that their geometrical blocks, superhighways, and zoning-by-use effectively, sometimes deliberately, gutted neighborhoods; that the city regressed into homogenous units that undermined continuous human activity (Jacoby 58).

Any well-educated reader can easily understand what Jacobs is talking about. Such a style, however, belongs to the old Bohemian intellectual style, not that of the academic writing by university professors. Jacobs’ book is itself a good example of public writing that cares about the ordinary life in the city and the benefit of the people. It has political concerns. By comparison, most academics seem to be more concerned about their careers and research funds. Even the scholars of politics are depoliticized. Jacoby commented on this change:

Discussions about intellectuals do not cease, but the terms change. Where once there was talk of intellectuals as critics and Bohemians, now there is talk of intellectuals as a sociological class. The shift in idiom illuminates the shift in life (107).

That is true: the shift in language style illuminates the shift in political stance. In his book, Jacoby gives astonishing examples of unengaged, vague academic writings, among which Fredric Jameson’s “postmodern textual analysis” of the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles stands out. Jacoby quotes Jameson’s praise of Bonaventure Hotel as a typical and outstanding representative of post-modern architecture as “inserted into the city fabric.” Its entrances exemplify this very different relation to the city and

sumptuous old hotels staged the passageway from city street to the older interior. The buildings of International Style were acts of “disruption”…To this new space corresponds “a new collective practice, a new mode in which individuals move and congregate…” (170)
However, as Jacoby points out, the design of the narrow entrance in the back of the hotel, as a matter of fact, is for the purpose of preventing poor people and Latinos from walking into the hotel. It seems that Professor Jameson neglects such a fact and is too much focused on his “postmodernist” textual analysis. Jacoby therefore concludes sharply and sarcastically:

That a leading Marxist critic can wax eloquent about the “insertion” of the Bonaventure into the city without stumbling on the fact that it expressly excludes, as well as devitalizes, the city suggests that the Marxist Theoretical “explosion” has the force of a seminar coffee break (172).

Compared to Jane Jacobs’ writing about city life, Jameson’s surely confounds and confuses the reader. Again, it is not so much a matter of a language style as it is a matter of whether there is political concern. If a Marxist critic is depoliticized, it seems to be even harder to expect other scholars to be political. Jacoby’s criticism of contemporary professorship is clearly based on his from-Bohemia-to-academia narrative. In such a narrative, he uses Bohemia and academia as political tropes to organize his criticism of academic professionalism: Bohemia represents political radicalism; academia represents conservatism. Furthermore, his criticism of academia goes beyond the 1960s and extends to the 1980s, when Jacoby wrote his book. In this sense, his post-sixties narrative about the academy informs how American intellectualism came to be where they are at now: how they came all the way from Bohemia to academia – from the 1950s public intellectuals to the professional academics, from independent city spaces to university campuses, from Utopia to Myopia.10

Jacoby’s post-sixties narrative engendered wide discussion among intellectual circles, inciting both approval and disapproval. On the one hand, since the publication of his book, the term “public intellectual,” which was first used by Jacoby, has gained wide circulation and aroused heated debates as to how to define the term “intellectual.” On the other, his from-Bohemia-to-academia narrative maintains the 1960s as historical indexing with which American intellectuals understand their past and present. Although such a narrative may likely be labeled as “nostalgic,” Lawrence Grossberg, most recently in 2014, pointed out: “The 60s counterculture’s vectors have powerfully shaped the politics of the past 50 years; the U.S. continues to live in its shadow in both positive and negative ways” (237). Therefore, Jacoby’s post-sixties narrative is still relevant and contributes to shaping a certain structure of feeling among Americans, as Chen states:

That a story is worth telling, listening and communicating, is because the conflict that the story demonstrates is close to the life experiences under a particular social and historical circumstance. It contains so many desires and discontents toward life. Meanwhile, the solution to the conflict in the story embodies people’s imagination of an ideal life. We take narratives as social discourse practices, which means those stories that can be told so widely without exception have their concerns with reality (161).

Post-sixties narratives, the stories about the 1960s, will continue to be worth telling, listening and communicating. The same is true with the “Bohemian narrative.” As the process of “academization” continues and deprives intellectuals of their independence, stories of Bohemia will go on and on.
4. Conclusion

Post-sixties narratives in contemporary American cultural criticism represent a special type of cultural criticism. The tropes are used in such narratives to tell stories about the 1960s and thus organize an understanding of contemporary American society and culture. Post-sixties narratives, to a certain degree, help shape the collective historical memory and national structure of feeling. Again, although the case study in this article is from the intellectual Left, the author would like to stress that post-sixties narratives may come from radicals, conservatives, and liberals. Because for any one of them, the 1960s, whether conceived of as an era of “moral decay” or “paradise lost,” may serve as their most direct narrative dynamic. Whenever you are talking about the 1960s, you are also talking about the present. In such a sense, post-sixties narratives also become a site where different stories about the 1960s contest with each other. Therefore, the various post-sixties narratives need to be closely examined to gain a thorough understanding of contemporary American cultural criticism.

Jacoby’s “Bohemian narrative” in his representation of postwar American intellectual life is a typical example of post-sixties narratives in contemporary cultural criticism. The from-Bohemia-to-academia narrative plot helps intensify the narrative tension with the two contrasting tropes: Bohemia and academia. Such a “Bohemian narrative” expresses Jacoby’s, as well as other American intellectuals’, experiences and feelings about the current intellectual reality and the hope for a better future.

Notes

1. Yiheng Zhao, 广义叙述学 [A General Narratology] (Chengdu: Sichuan University Press, 2013). In the preface of this book, Zhao gives a list of narrative genres. However, these genres do not include literary or cultural criticism. Meanwhile, it is interesting to note that the author categorizes “history” as “factual narrative.” This, of course, is not in accord with my opinion. As will be discussed in this paper, history as narrative always involves interpretations, not necessarily fact.

2. In his book The Long Revolution (1961), Raymond Williams suggests that all cultures possess a particular sense of life, a “particular and characteristic colour” and “this structure of feeling is the culture of a period.” Other scholars such as Tony Bennett and Anthony Barnett offer their interpretation of this term also. See Graeme Turner, British Cultural Studies: An Introduction. (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 46-47. In addition, Lawrence Grossberg in his most recent book We All Want to Change the World also uses “structure of feeling” to suggest national mood.

3. Hayden White, 后现代历史叙事学 [A Postmodern Historical Narratology] Trans. Chen Yongguo, Zhang Wanjue. (Beijing: China Social Sciences, 2003). Fredric Jameson. The Political Unconscious. [政治无意识] Trans. Fengzhen Wang, and Yongguo Chen. (Beijing: China Social Sciences, 1999). Both of these two books stress the importance of ideological analysis of texts, although the former centers on historical texts; the latter, literary classics.

4. Angelo Quattrocchi, and Tom Nairn, 法国1968：终结的开始 [The Beginning of the End: France, May 1968] Trans. Zhao Gang. (Beijing: San Lian Book Store, 2001). When the French student movement occurred, Quattrocchi, who was in Paris then, wrote down what he was seeing among the Paris’ barricades and sent it, part by part, to Nairn, who was in London during that period.

5. Allan Bloom’s book The Closing of the American Mind (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987). Bloom’s book is a typical example of the post-sixties narratives from the Right. Norman Podhoretz’ “The Know-Nothing Bohemians” (1959) is another case in point. Due to the length of this article, no detailed analysis of the post-sixties narratives is made.
6. Jerrold Seigel. *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999). In this book, the author especially portrays Baudelaire as a dandy and Bohemian in detail. In addition, he also includes other Bohemians such as Privat d’Anglemont, the Goncourt brothers, Verlaine, and Breton, to name a few.

7. Alert Parry, *A History of Bohemianism in America* (New York: Dover 1960) Parry offers a history of American Bohemianism that begins in the 1870s and ends in the late 1950s.

8. Mary Gluck, *Popular Bohemia: Modernism and Urban Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: Harvard UP, 2005) This book mainly deals with the influence of Bohemianism on modern art. Gluck sees Bohemianism as the origin of primitivism and exoticism in the modernist movement.

9. Lin Xiang, “From the Public Sphere to the Public Man: The Bohemian Tradition of American Intellectuals,” Qiu Suo 10 (2010): 137-139. In this article, Xiang relates Bohemia to Habermas’s “public sphere.”

10. Russel Jacoby, *The End of Utopia: Politics and Culture in an Age of Apathy* (New York: Basic Books, 2000) In this book, Jacoby writes one chapter entitled “From Utopia to Myopia.” To a certain sense, this is a sister-book to *The Last Intellectuals*.

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