Abstract
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote many mystery and detective stories from 1890s to 1910s, years saw the advancement of powerful modern science and technology, especially inventions of transportation means or machines that accelerate mobility power in late-Victorian and Edwardian society. In some of these mystery or detective stories especially featuring the well-known sleuth Sherlock Holmes, Doyle tended to integrate an early subject’s experience of shrunken space and reduced time into an unknown fear by delineating his characters who perceive horror and nervousness while facing or riding on a railway transportation, including mainly the steam railway in mysterious tales like “The Lost Special” (1898) and “The Man with the Watches” (1908) as well as in detective stories like “The Adventure of the Engineer’s Thumb” (1892), “The Adventure of Bruce-Partington Plan” (1908), “Valley of Fear” (1914) and several others.

How can this spatiotemporal mobility be connected to mysterious affairs which lead Doyle's quasi-detective characters and police power to spring into investigative action? Railway transportation, mobility, and horror are woven together into a driving force that facilitates our geographical and forensic exploration of Doyle's stories.

KeyWords: Conan Doyle, detective, transportation, mobility, horror,
Introduction

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote many mystery and the detective stories from 1890s to 1910s, years saw the advancement of powerful modern science and technology, especially inventions of transportation means or machines that accelerate mobility power in late-Victorian and Edwardian society. In some of these mysterious tales or detective stories especially featuring the well-known sleuth Sherlock Holmes, Doyle exhibited an ambivalent sense of horror and perceptions of space and time on transportation means, mainly steam train, in an age of mechanization and industrialization. He also highlighted in his story setting with horror or nervousness and acclimatized his readers to the railway time and space. In these tales or stories, fear and nervousness usually results from an uncertain sense of spatiotemporal disorientation caused by “a glooming portrait of new technology to a nightmare vision of urban modernity” (Daly 14). More precisely, Doyle tended to integrate an early subject’s experience of shrunken space and reduced time into an unknown fear by delineating his characters who perceive horror and nervousness while facing or riding on a moving vehicle, including mainly the steam railway in mysterious tales like “The Lost Special” (1898) and “The Man with the Watches” (1908) as well as detective stories like “The Adventure of the Engineer’s Thumb” (1892), “The Adventure of Bruce-Partington Plan” (1908), “Valley of Fear” (1914) and several others.

Doyle’s works, especially mystery and detective stories, are often examined in a genre or narrative structure study, in which the narrative formula of Doyle’s writing and the characterization of a big sleuth’s rational detection in late-Victorian and Edwardian society are emphasized. Most scholars in the 20th century use feminist or post-colonial approach to probe into the female position and gender politics as well as character’s imperial consciousness and their biased presentations of racial other in Doyle’s mystery and detective stories.1 The detective hero is highlighted in Doyle’s short stories and usually regarded as an adventurous and masculine Englishman who almost risks his life into fighting against criminals or evil masterminds in order to find the ultimate truth for breaking cases.2 Recent studies show that Doyle’s tales of mystery

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1 There are many criticisms about the issues of Victorian society, female consciousness, and feminism presented in Conan Doyle’s detective stories or novels, including Ellen F. Higgins “The Female Rivals of Sherlock Holmes” (1996), Rosemary Hennessy and Michael Atkinson’s The Secret Marriage of Sherlock Holmes and Other Eccentric Reading (1996), Rajeswari Mohan’s The Speckled Band: The Construction of Woman in a Popular Text of Empire (1993).

2 Generally speaking, many scholars’ studies usually probe into the issue of patriarchal or imperial consciousness in the nineteenth century Victorian society in British society, including Catherine Wynn’s The Colonial Conan Doyle (2002), Diana Barsham’s Arthur Conan Doyle and the Meaning of Masculinity (2000), Joseph A. Kestner’s Sherlock Holmes’ Men: Masculinity, Conan Doyle, and Cultural Anxiety (1997), James W. Maerte’s “Masculine Power and the Ideal Reasoner: Sherlock
and the supernatural, which are seldom discussed for the past decades, are examined in a psychoanalyst or cultural approach. Moreover, Conan Doyle’s conceptions of sport, medicine, science, law and order, army, and spirit in writing his works are also viewed and explored by contemporary critics. Nevertheless, no scholars focus their study issues on the space and time of railway mobility and its relation to horror when they make researches into Doyle’s works.

Doyle actually presented the story plot of railway or train transportation at least in one-third of his mystery and detective stories. These plots demonstrate criminals’ using new perceptions of shrunken space and reduced time on train as red herrings or false alibi as misleading clues to evade the police’s investigation and legal sanction. Doyle’s great sleuth Sherlock Holmes knows well and even memorizes train timetables by heart. He can tell Watson easily the latest time of train to catch in main stations of metropolitan London back and forth to visit victims’ or suspects’ houses mansions in rural area just for finding the truth and pinning down the criminals.

Railway transportation is integral to several Conan Doyle’s mystery and detective stories. In “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches” (1892) Holmes asks Watson to consult Bradshaw, Bradshaw’s Railway Guide (501), the monthly timetable of all British train services. These timetables provide Holmes with the possibilities for investigations. If the railway timetables can regularize people conception of time, the train tickets become the invention that normalizes people’s conception of space. In some cases, the departure station and destination station shown on tickets or dead passengers on train without holding ticket always attract Holmes attention to think much further about the spatial distances in which criminals may have sufficient time to commit their crime, or the location where criminals can hide themselves, shunning from the police or detective’s tracing and chasing. Viewed in this perspective, Victorian ideas of modernity and progress were shaped by the new perception of space and time of railway travel. This new perception also leads to a different conception of time and distance that breaks people’s routine logic and habitual thinking.

**Late-Victorian and Edwardian Railways**

This paper aims to explore and examine mainly how social changes caused by the development of railway in late-Victorian and Edwardian England could produce

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3 About these studies, please see Michael Dirda’s On Conan Doyle (2012) and Douglas Kerr’s Conan Doyle: Writing, Profession, and Practice (2013).
initial impacts of changing spatiotemporal perceptions as well as how changing thoughts of criminal and the police/detective could be affected by these impacts. Also, this project probes into the reasons why the positive power of late-Victorian and Edwardian railway that gave impetus to economic development can later create negative social impacts and even turn into a negative symbol of fear and of evil.

Several scholars, based on cultural approach, studies the impact of railway on Victorian and Edwardian society. Philip Spark argues that the expansion and prosperous development of railway changes people’s imagination of space and time. He mentions the “machine time” in an age of mechanization and industrialization, emphasizing the fact that the daily life of a great number of railway travelers or commuters are deeply affected or restricted to train (the steam railway) timetable which is integral to their living habits of moving space and employment of time. The operation of railways and train passengers need a regularized “standard time,” so the train timetable and watch become a necessity for railway commuters and travelers. The “machine time” functions just like the working time and “work-discipline that enable the factory system to spread accurate timekeeping and absorb people to be restricted to “their life by the clock” (Zemka 3). It can be regarded as the “clock discipline of train” (Zemka 6). As a consequence, the abstraction of time becomes an industrial reordering of time-consciousness and is materialized into a form of watch and symbolizes people’s wealth, elevation of social status, and urban resident identity.

Alex Goody argues that the “railways laid the foundations for a fundamental reconfiguration of cultural and geographical space. Train travel transformed the social, cultural and physical landscape of Britain and America, leading to standardized time, the rapid availability of fresh produce in cities, the speeded-up delivery of mail and the possibility of cheaper leisure excursions, among many other effects (Goody 4).

Wolfgang Schivelbusch assumes that the mechanic power replaces animal strength initiated in an industrialized process in Victorian age. Railway can stand for this main mechanic power. The steam locomotive drives forward the moving carriages and enables the passengers on the carriage to alter their perceptions due to the changing landscape outside the carriage windows of a moving train. This shifting and flowing landscape also form a shocking effect that strikes against a conceiving subject’s mapping of his own spatial location in a situation of an early compression of time and

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To these people who take the new transportation means, the steam train, the moving space and landscape outside the window on locomotive-drawn carriage change faster and more drastic than those on old horse-drawn carriage. The train windows actually create a new moving landscape by turning the land into a perception of a “panoramic landscape” (Gilbert 31) that breaks away from a subject’s habitual and familiar space and time normalized by a transportation means drawn by an animal strength. More precisely, it is a sort of physiological response to mechanized speed (Zemka 24), owing to the fact that a conceiving subject may suffer pathologically an unfamiliar and even horrible sense of disorientation resulting from a transitory spatiotemporal perception between two different transportation means in different period.

Railway travel was something refreshing and exhilarating that marks the turning point of the transitional phase of the early modern period into that of modern age. These moving, flowing, and even traumatic feelings disturb a conceiving subject’s old and familiar space and time and even bring up a sense of horror and fear. Besides the unfamiliar and disorienting feelings, Victorian people may embrace a negative attitude and the sense of horror toward the railway train due to the fact that lots of train accidents (collisions and derails) as well as consequential death and serious injury of passengers had been taken place since the operation of railway or underground trains. These terrible death and injuries caused by railways make more and more people at that time to regard railway train as “modern urban evil” or “monstrous machine.” Why does the positive symbol of railway train that boosts advanced transportation and economic development should turn into an urban evil? This is also a good question deserving more discussion and exploration.

Actually, few scholars view Doyle’s tales of mystery and detective from an angle of spatiotemporal perception about railway in an age of mechanization and industrialization. The railway theme in Doyle’s tales or stories highlights the modernity issues including industrialization, urbanization, and acceleration of the pace of everyday life.

**Railway Space and Time**

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7 Zemka regards this conceiving subject’s psychological response as the spatiotemporal disorientation caused by a physical reaction of the “machine time,” a negative “railway trauma.” See Sue Zemka's *Time and the Moment in Victorian Literature and Society* (Cambridge UP, 2012).

In Doyle’s detective stories like “The Adventure of Engineer’s Thumb” (1892) and “The Greek Interpreter” (1893), getting off a train in some locations unknown to the character and waiting alone to be met and taken to country house also became the author’s ways of setting a plot in motion. The train drops one off at a lonely station (often shrouded with a disorienting mist) in the dark of night, which often creates a disorienting and mysterious ambience in these stories.

In “The Adventure of Engineer’s Thumb,” the engineer caught the last (midnight) train to a remote rural village and found "no chance of a train back" (430). When he got off the train at the remote station and waited alone for someone to pick him up late at night, he suddenly perceived that he “was the only passenger who got out there, and there was no one upon platform” (432). Doyle intended to use this lonely traveler in a midnight railway station to highlight a mysterious atmosphere within the middle of nowhere. Later, when the engineer tried to desperately escape away from gangsters’ chasing and killing, he found that he was lost in bush woods and “had no idea whether he was in north, south, east, or west” (434). He could not make clear where he was until he reached “the very station at which [he] had arrived upon the previous night” (440). Viewed in this light, the railway station in Doyle’s stories becomes a symbol of compass and bright lighthouse that saved a person from a danger of being entrapped in a spatial disorientation state and even of being chased to be killed by evil guys.

Similarly, in “The Greek Interpreter,” Mr. Melas was asked to leave a coach and left alone in dark clump of furze-bushes late at night. He stood gazing round and wondering and could not tell where on earth he might be until he saw the red signal-lamp of a railway in total darkness. He found someone camp to him whom proved to be a railway porter telling him that he will be in time to catch the last midnight train to London Victoria station (693). Doyle’s characters in both stories suffered a fear of spatial disorientation in darkness. It was the brightness of railway station lamp and signal that gave them the directions. More relevantly, they overcame their sense of unfamiliar and even horror toward a disorienting space by regaining the familiar space through finding the location of a railway station. Also, arriving at the station, he could finally find a way home by catching the last train to go back to London. The characters did not only overcome getting lost in an unknown space by reaching a railway station but overcame not knowing exact time by catching up in time the last train to return to his familiar perception of space and time for going home.
After railway transportation is integrated into Victorian people’s everyday life, the time-consciousness proves to be essential to their mind. In order not to miss train for going to works or running errands in time, timetable and watch are personal necessities for catching the railway time. Yet, this time on railway creates special conditions and opportunities for criminal to commit illegal deeds especially murder. In “The Lost Special” (1898) and “The Man with Watches” (1908), criminals employed the time of railway operation to misguides police’s investigation, and the police also traced the time sequences of committing crime according to the time and spatial locations which the railway porters reported to one another with telegrams when trains passed specific places or stations.

At the beginning of “The Lost Special,” the importance of time in an age of mechanization and industrialization is highlighted. The late-Victorian people in this story always bore the motto “[t]ime was everything” (226) on their mind. The ticket fare of train indicates the fact that the railway space (train-riding distance) and time (train-riding time) can be measured into money value “at the usual special rate of five shillings a mile” (226). In “The Man with Watches,” the train was a favorite one among “Manchester business men who are returning from town, for it did the journey in four hours and twenty minutes, with only three stoppages upon the way” (303). The railway space and time encapsulated Victorian people into a modernizing process in which they are subjected to a new disciplinary space and time formulated by modern technologies especially the railway train.

The police in “The Lost Special” endeavored to find out where the missing special train was by looking up the train-passing time in railway porter’s communication record to pin down the possible locations based on their correlation passing time of trains.

“Special passed here five o’clock.—Collins Green.”
“Special passed here six past five.—Earlstown.”
“Special passed here 5:10.—Newton.”
“Special passed here 5:20—Kenyon Junction.”
“No special train has passed here—Barton Moses”
“The special has gone wrong between Kenyon Junction and Barton Moss.” (230)

Based on this spatiotemporal relative correlation, the police concluded that the missing train must be located at somewhere between Keyon Junction station and Barton Moss station. Nevertheless, after searching high and low, the police found no
clues and had no idea about where the mysteriously missing train is. Hopeless, the police focused their investigation on the train ticket to solve the railway mystery.

The train ticket may indicate a passenger’s moving space from his departure station to his destination station and his evidence of riding a train. In “The Lost Special,” the train conductor’s “examination of the tickets had made it certain that no one either joined or left [the train]” (229). The detective in the service of the railway company started his investigation with missing tickets to trace and narrow down criminals’ escaping path and crime-committing sites for pinning down the truth of a murder mystery on train. This detective further deducted that the criminal jumped from one train into another one because “two trains would at that time be travelling in the same direction at a similar rate of speed and upon parallel lines” (239). In this sense, the criminal committed murder by using a unique occasion (two train being in parallel place and slowing down at the same time) of railway space and time which are unfamiliar to and befuddle the railway detective’s conceiving mind. To the railway detective, he must get clear of “unfamiliar” space and time to solve this mystery. It is a vacillating process between the familiar and the unfamiliar and an ultimate restoring of the familiar just like the detective who turns “unfamiliar” and disorienting clues into familiar and clear evidences for breaking cases. He concluded that after a criminal murdered the victim he saw his opportunity to escape from the moving train due to the fact that “the train was for some reason going very slowly at the moment.”

Judging from this mentioned plot, the issue of railway space and time is highlighted in this story. Moreover, just like the characters in “The Adventure of Engineer’s Thumb” and “The Greek Interpreter” who suffered spatiotemporal disorientation, the criminals similarly “fell off from foot board and [rolled down] a steep embankment…and [he] remembered nothing more” (260) and caught in a comma. If the comma and remembering nothing can indicate a conceiving subject’s disorienting state, the criminal’s waking up and being safe from the danger of falling off from a slow-moving train may elaborate a man’s “triumph over industrial time because the hero always get there on time to avert [an] industrial accident” (Daly 6) caused by a railway train. In Doyle’s stories, many characters strived to conquer railway time and space by finding the location of railway station to catch the train in time or by jumping successfully into a right space to get away. They all suffered spatiotemporal disorientation or temporary memory loss, but they could regain their familiar memory and returned home safely by getting away from the possible danger caused by their bewildering perception of space and time in a society under the influence of mechanization and industrialization. The interaction between the conceiving subject
(Victorian people) and the disorienting perception (space and time they strive to conquer or to get familiar with) manifests a modernity issue, which is often featured with how people conceive or overcome a new industrialized (especially railway) space and time in a new condition.

The story plots of “Silver Blaze” (1892) and “The Adventure of Norwood Builder” (1892) feature the regulated and normalized space and time of the railway. In “Silver Blaze,” Sherlock Holmes tried to solve a mystery of robbery case and perceive the railway space and time on train by “looking out of window and glancing at his watch,” finding that the “rate at present is fifty-three and a half of miles an hour” (522). The “quarter-mile posts” (522) Holmes mentioned in this story displays the fact that the same distance (quarter-mile) among railway posts has already become a normalized measurement of spatial distance and even passing time, which may inspire a detective to shape his successful ratiocination.

In “The Adventure of Norwood Builder,” Holmes concluded that a will was “written in a train” (789) and the good writing had been done when the train stopping at stations, bad writing done when the express train was moving, and the very bad writing done when the train was tremulously passing over divergent points (of main line and branch line). The detective took advantage of the subtle correlation between passing space and moving time of a train and drawing up of the will, succeeding in solving a mystery in a building.

In “The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plan” (1908), again, the criminal manipulated the passing space and moving time of the Metropolitan (underground) train, including train passing at the parallel of the railway, the curve, and junction points of railway to commit murder and abandon victim’s body. At the beginning of the story, a body was found at "a point close to the station, where the line emerges from the tunnel in which [the train] runs" (401).

Holmes later deducted the fact that the body beside the rail was just a red herring which misguided the police and the detective to consider that the rail close to the station was the first crime scene. Actually, the criminal made use of the window sill of a mansion very close to a location where parallel of railway lines made two underground trains slower down and nearly stop for a railway security operation. The murderer killed the victim in this mansion and put the body on the roof of a train through the window sill that was a little higher than the train when it was slowly passing or even stopping for a minute. The murderer just took the advantage of the
temporarily stopping train for abandoning the body on the roof of the train. Then, the body just fell down beside the rail when the train passed a curve, which misguided the detective to deduct a wrong ratiocination.

The railway space and time had been integrated into people’s daily life. More accurately, people’s living space could be accessed to the railway zone; or habitant in a house could seize the moment for putting something on the train when the train passed or temporary “stopped” underneath their window sill. Henceforth, they could even rest a body on the roof of the train. Like other aforementioned stories, missing tickets for tracing the criminal and victim’s identity, character’s losing sense of direction in darkness or in dense fog, and roaring train at midnight that bring forth a nearly horrible ambience in “The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plan” also delineate the impact of railway space and time on people’s nervousness and uneasiness about the rise of the new machine technology, the railway.

The new railway machine had also marched its paces into the rural area and become an essential connection between the city and the country. It, nevertheless, helps accelerate the speed of urbanization of the countryside. In “The Adventure of Copper Beech” (1892), the rural area seems to be contaminated by the prosperous expansion of railway network and absorbed into part of the urbanization. The detective Sherlock Holmes told Watson on a moving train that the former “smiling and beautiful countryside” (502) demonstrate a “horror of countryside” (Wynnes 42), saying:

You look at these scattered houses, and you are impressed by their beauty. I look at them, and the only thought which come to me is a feeling of the isolation and impunity with which crime may be committed there. (502).

To Holmes, the evil criminal hid in the tranquil and peaceful countryside. They are urban intruders from “the lowest and vilest alleys in London who are always “fill [him] with a certain horror” (502). It is an urbanizing process enhanced by the railway development that promotes a technological convenience and progression for a small suburban town but, in the meantime, deteriorates the tranquility and peace and even bring urban criminal into the countryside.
Transportation and Horror

The railway development in the nineteenth century led to a more industrialized and more urbanized society. This rise of modern transportation compresses people’s moving time and shrunken space between two different locations. This spatiotemporal compression may confuse a conceiving subject’s perception and even arouse an uncanny feeling toward a new “sublime landscape” (Robinson 106). The idea of “sublime” is often found in the nineteenth century Romantic poets and it refers to an “awe-inspiring spectacle” (Agathocleous 94) perceived by a man (poet) when he faces stunning and spectacular scenery or landscape. Put it another way, this awe-inspiring spectacle may alienate a conceiving subject from his sense of familiarity and certainty into a state he feels unfamiliar and even an ambiguous sense of terror.

This sense of terror can be related to the rise of industrial machine. In “The Adventure of Engineer’s Thumb,” the engineer in this story nearly died when an evil mastermind attempted to do away with him by taking and locking him to a panel room installed with a fatal industrial machine, the hydraulic press, when the switch was on and the black ceiling with mighty mechanic power was coming down upon him and nearly killing him (437). The clashing and destructive hydraulic press here indeed becomes a mechanic terror that gives the engineer a nightmarish and painful memory in his lifetime.

This mechanic terror is also illuminated in “The Horror of the Heights” (1913), though not related to railway, can explicitly exemplify a conceiving subject’s fear of and anxiety about a rising of new perceptions of space and time on a modern technology. The pilot witnessed seemingly awe-inspiring sublime scenery presented or perceived on a new monoplane machine. However, the machine manifests a doom of mechanical terror seemingly replacing the prosperity of technological progression.

The pilot Joyce-Armstrong, flying high in the sky and feeling lost and nervousness when facing the disorienting scenery evinced his “anxiety to get clear” (16) of the exact place and time by his watch indicating no time and his unreliable compass showing no direction (20). He strived to, instead of staying and getting familiar with the strange and unfamiliar circumstance, “restore” his memory of original familiar space and time.
Again, Joyce-Armstrong’s perceptions on monoplane are oscillating between the familiar spatiotemporal condition and unfamiliar one, which adumbrates his cognitive mapping or normalizing process of geographical and temporal modernization.

Michael Dirda argues that the visionary wonder in this story “strikes [the pilot] as sublime, owe-inspiring creature of visionary grandeur” (Dirda 57). Joyce-Armstrong saw the “cloud [which] was as dark and thick as a London fog” (20)” and “organic matter appeared to be suspended in the atmosphere, inchoate and diffuse like jelly-fish” (25).” Yet, these visionary wonders turn into a hellish sky permeated by “ghost-like creatures and air-snake monsters” (29). At that moment, the pilot “almost lost [his] senses, [feeling] shock and breathlessness” (22). Like other characters in aforesaid works, the pilot also experienced being lost in a disorienting state and perceiving a “nameless terror” (36). Also, the shocking effect caused by a modern machine flying into an unknown world of the sky may turn the beautiful sublime scenery into a horrible and haunted place. The sense of horror therefore arises from a conceiving subject especially when he attempts to get his familiar space and time in a disorienting state on a modern machine.

In “Final Problem” (1893), Holmes and Watson took train and traced Moriarty to Canterbury station. On the platform, Holmes experienced a shocking effect of facing the train with powerful and heat engine.

Far away, from among the Kentish woods there rose a thin spray of smoke. A minute later a carriage and engine could be seen flying along the open curve which leads to the station...when it passed with a rattle and a roar, beating a blast of hot air into our faces. (748)

The rattle and roaring train is depicted as “the monstrous machine” (Gilbert 25) that gives the railway train a bad name by bearing a negative significance. In “Valley of Fear” (1914), the railway and an industrial small town in America are referred to a gloomy and uncomfortable experience in an industrialized coal-mine rural town in an outlandish valley. The projections of smoke and sulphur, dust and heat as well as railway workers bearing the odors and dirt of hard manual labor, along with “the evening train which connects the long line of coal-mining and iron-working settlements was slowly groaning its way up steep” (238) implicate the negative impact of mechanization and industrialization on this rural town, which is contaminated by “scattered mines and factories blackening the snow” (279). As the name of Valley of Fear suggests, a sense of dooming horror is overwhelming “in the hearts of the people
from the dusk to the dawn.” (283). This invasion of modern machine, including industrial equipment and railway, into the original tranquil and peaceful countryside associates industrial technology with nervousness and uneasiness. It emphasizes again the late-Victorian and Edwardian people’s horror of the monstrously marching machine with faster railway mobility.

**Conclusion**

The phenomenon of space and time on railway as well as a negative depiction of moving train exemplify a burgeoning phase a new industrial modernity boosted by the development of mobile technology especially the railway train. They cause visionary grandeur and a sense of uncertainty, sublime feeling, but turn into horror with the ambience of mist and darkness, a sort of spatiotemporal disorientation that challenges a conceiving subject’s habitual (familiar) thinking mind. The horror caused by a “mechanic (railway) terror” indirectly lures a conceiving subject into a vacillating state and anxiety about mapping of space and perception of time or a sense of overcoming the unfamiliar space and time. It highlights a forming process of industrial modernity and disciplinary society in which people attempts to rationalize the regulation of space and time by overcoming the sense of horror and getting familiar with the new perception of space and time enacted by railway in an age of mechanization and industrialization.
References


