

Analysis of Realism and Modernism of Hardy's Novels from the Perspective of Literary Ethics

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Abstract: Thomas Hardy is a famous English poet and novelist, and he is also one of the few writers who spanned two centuries in the history of English literature. In the process of the development of modernity, Hardy's tragic art shows the great pain brought by modern civilization, which has a strong modernist literary color. Hardy's tragic novels have the flavor of modern literature. The anti-social tendency, alienation and anxiety about human destiny reflected in modern literature are the keynote of Hardy's tragic novels. Hardy's works not only inherit and carry forward the traditional literary features of Victorian era, but also create modernist literature. Based on the perspective of literary ethics, this paper discusses the modernist factors in Hardy's realistic novels, so that more people can understand the thought-provoking, philosophical and practical contents in his works, in order to pay homage to the British writer who spanned two centuries.

1. Introduction

Thomas Hardy is not only an excellent successor of British critical realism literature, but also a pioneer of modern literature [1]. His novel creation has duality. On the one hand, he inherited the great tradition of critical realism and deeply exposed the disadvantages of the Victorian Dynasty. On the other hand, he pioneered British modernism and painfully analyzed the dilemma of people in modern capitalist society [2]. Hardy is one of the most important writers in the transition period from realism to modernism in the history of English literature. His creation era is an era of multiple symbiosis, so his works also have multiple styles [3]. In terms of novel creation, Hardy is often positioned as the representative writer of British realistic novels in the late 19th century. His works are different from his predecessor Dickens and his successor Lawrence. In fact, he is a bridge character connecting the two generations of novels [4]. The artistic level of his novels is called Shakespeare in English novels. It can be seen that he has made brilliant artistic achievements. Hardy's novels are usually inseparable from the small town in southwest England where he was born and raised. Compared with other writers, Hardy's novels have strong local characteristics [5].

Hardy's tragic novels have the flavor of modern literature. The anti social tendency, alienation and anxiety about human destiny reflected in modern literature are the tone of Hardy's tragic novels [6]. As a great writer spanning two centuries, his works have always been talked about by the world. According to the types, his novels can be divided into character and environment novels, romance and fantasy novels and structure novels, among which character and environment novels are the most prominent. Although Hardy has long been regarded as a realist writer, his works obviously have traces of modernism [7]. In recent years, many critics have focused on the modernity of Hardy's works. However, so far, few people have systematically analyzed the specific reflection of Existentialism in Hardy's works. The anti social tendency, alienation and anxiety about human destiny reflected in modern literature are the keynote of these tragic novels [8]. Based on the perspective of Literary Ethics, this paper discusses the modernist factors contained in Hardy's realistic novels around Hardy's tragic novels, so that more people can understand the thought-provoking, philosophical and practical contents in his works, so as to commemorate the British literary giant who has spanned two centuries.

2. Thomas Hardy and His Realistic Thought

Thomas Hardy was born in Dorchester, Dorset, England on June 2, 1840. This is a village far away from industrial civilization and maintaining patriarchal tradition. Hardy, who lived in such an environment since childhood, has unlimited love for nature and strong feelings for his hometown, so most of his novels are set in this area. Since his childhood, Hardy's father has taught him violin, and his mother often tells him some literary works, which makes him develop extraordinary musical comprehension and literary literacy. These factors are reflected in his works and become a major feature of his works [9]. During his study, Hardy accumulated a lot of knowledge and read a lot of literary works through his continuous efforts. Since Hardy lived in a simple country since childhood, his works often exude a strong local human flavor. Although they are not as humorous as Dickens's literary language, they are implicit, meaningful and memorable, flashing the brilliance of enlightening people's wisdom and understanding. As a realistic writer, Hardy has devoted his thoughts to many problems such as religion, ethics, life, society, love and marriage in his works, and assumed the responsibility of being a realistic writer. Such novels are usually classified as Hardy's character and environment novels, which reflect the relationship between man and society, man's pursuit of a better life, and the fierce conflict in the process, and have a great impact on the history of contemporary and future literature.



Fig.1 Thomas Hardy

Hardy is different from many other realistic writers in the 19th century. In his tragic novels, there is neither Dickens' and Eliot's optimistic spirit of self-improvement and self-regulation of the capitalist system, nor the naive fantasy of improving society by exposing the dark side of society. Hardy believes that social evil cannot be eliminated, the situation of human beings is getting worse and worse, and pessimism and world-weariness are increasingly becoming a common mental state of human beings. In many of his works, Hardy thinks that Christian civilization is the birthplace of tragedy and the burial place of all good things, and gives relentless criticism and fierce attack to stale religious ideas. He intends to create tragic conflicts and tragic endings, so as to arouse readers' thoughts on the tragic fate of the hero, and realize that decadent religions and ethics are contrary to human nature and cannibalism, so as to criticize old religions and moral concepts and purify people's hearts. Hardy's novels in the early stage of his creation inherited and carried forward the traditional English literature, but the thoughts embodied in his novels in the middle and late period surpassed the Victorian era in which he lived, and incorporated modern consciousness and modern feelings. Therefore, the world regarded it as a bridge connecting the preceding with the following in English literature.

The antisocial tendency of Hardy's tragic novels is mainly reflected in his devastating criticism of the traditional values on which society depends. His criticism of religious doctrine, legal provisions and marriage morality is very similar to that of modern writers. Like a prophet in the desert, he saw the trauma brought by modern civilization and predicted that people's spiritual world would be a wasteland. In terms of marriage morality, Hardy is deeply disgusted with marriage morality as a social contract. He believes that "marriage concluded by God" is not sacred at all. What it gives people is not the harmonious relationship between people, but the shackles that bind

people. In Hardy's view, if marriage becomes a shackle for one party to restrict the other, people should abandon it. In law, Hardy questioned the justice of law. By describing Tess's fate, he criticized the ruthless and rigid legal provisions. Playboy who plays with women has not been punished by law, but has become the spiritual mentor of mankind. However, when the victim rose up against fate and the environment that caused her lifelong pain, the law gave her a cruel hanging.

3. Modernist Factors in Hardy's Realistic Novels

Thomas Hardy experienced the important period of Britain's transition from feudal society to modern times, was influenced by traditional culture and was exposed to the developing industrial civilization, and saw with his own eyes the era when Britain was gradually moving towards an industrial society under the capitalist system. Therefore, his novels reveal the true picture of the disintegration of English countryside in this period, and reflect the process of destruction of the archaic customs of patriarchal clan system. With the emergence of modern industry and the emergence of the middle class, people become indifferent and alienated, and human beings feel unprecedented loneliness. Coupled with the influence of the two world wars, freedom, fraternity and democracy have all become shattered. Hardy's life spans two centuries, and his literary creation also has distinct watershed characteristics, which reflects the transition from realism to modernism. Modernism in Hardy's novels is mainly reflected in the psychological activities of the characters in the novels and the outstanding problems in modern people, while using symbolism.

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Britain is experiencing social upheaval. During the reign of Victoria, the government was corrupt and the economy was sluggish. People at the bottom of society who lived in such an environment were miserable, and the whole society was filled with a morbid sad atmosphere. Living in such a social environment, Hardy created a series of realistic tragic novels which reflected the life of the people at the bottom of society. The protagonists in the novels often did not integrate into the society, and could not communicate their thoughts and feelings normally, eventually becoming victims under secular pressure. Compared with Lawrence, the representative writer of modernism, Hardy's novels have many similarities with Lawrence. From this point, Hardy is slowly moving towards modernism.

Modernism pays attention to self-expression in shaping characters, and refuses to use people directly to tell stories. Modernism uses symbolism, imagery, stream of consciousness and black humor when expressing characters. Tess of the D 'Urbervilles is one of the Wessex series, which describes the tragic fate of a rural girl. Tess, the heroine of the story, is a pure, beautiful and hardworking rural girl, who has a good yearning for her future life, but her tragic fate awaits her. Living in a poor rural area, she had to work in a distant relative's home because of her livelihood, but she was tricked and raped by Ale. She couldn't bear all this and went back to her home, only to find that she was pregnant and became a "degenerate" woman in the eyes of the world. People in the village not only did not sympathize with her, but regarded her as an immoral sinner, which was strongly criticized by the society.

Modern writers often associate the fate of the hero with that of the whole mankind, and they attribute the phenomena existing in capitalist society to the universal phenomena in the whole world. They all showed a profound and indescribable anxiety for survival, a sense of loneliness and emptiness that the foundation of survival was uprooted, and a kind of sorrow and fear that survival lost its purpose and significance. In Hardy's view, the spiritual world of mankind will be a wasteland, which coincides with Eliot's wasteland. Of course, Hardy's exploration of human destiny is not limited to the description of scenery. His psychological description of the hero shows the trauma brought by modern civilization.

4. Conclusions

Hardy has many similarities with modern writers. At the end of the 19th century, the capitalist society declined day by day. The indifferent interpersonal relationship and hypocritical moral concept made many people pessimistic and disappointed. Pessimism gradually replaced blind

optimism and became the fashion at the end of the century. With the development of capitalism, the relationship between people is getting less and less harmonious. Harmonious interpersonal relationship was replaced by cold hostile relationship. People's desire and actions to approach and understand each other are often regarded as hostile behaviors. As Hardy is a writer spanning two centuries, his novels not only inherit the literary tradition of Queen Victoria, but also incorporate the modernist characteristics that Hardy personally innovated. Thomas Hardy's realistic novels inherit the tradition of English literature, and at the same time, skillfully incorporate some modernist factors, and use modernist expression techniques such as metaphor and symbol to create the hero with modernist characteristics, and express his views and opinions in religion, society, life and morality, so they have a strong modernist color.

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