

The Value Charm of Pessimistic Feminism in Henry James' Psychological Realism Novels

Jie Chen*

College of Foreign Languages, Bohai University, Jinzhou, China
547831259@qq.com
*Corresponding Author

Abstract: Henry James has created a group of typical female group portraits, lifelike, as if real people "live" in the world of novels. The purpose of studying the value charm of James' pessimistic feminism is to understand James's feminine outlook and moral standard, and to explore the survival value and happiness dimension of women. The value charm is reflected in the aspects of culture, literature, society, age, art and so on: cultural value makes European and American cultures from conflict to integration; literary value adds multiple colors to the literary world; social value provides the way for women to realize their ideals in life; time value has laid the foundation for the development of modernist literature; and artistic value of art has created the narrative style centered on consciousness.

Keywords: Henry James; psychological realism; pessimistic feminism; value charm

1. Introduction

Henry James' works are well received by readers, and the heroine has become the focus of research by many scholars. Close to women's ideas, appreciate women's needs, sympathize with women's fate, and understand women's choices. Created a group of typical female group portraits, lifelike, as if real people "live" in the world of novels. They love life and pursue freedom. James has given them a lot of wealth not to fight for survival. Women are free to choose life in the way they like. The factors that caused their tragic growth also have certain similarities, such as cultural conflicts in Europe and America, lack of single or both parents' care, and harm and betrayal from male friends. Life itself is cruel, and when a good wish becomes a painful reality, the courageous nature and intelligence of women help them out of the siege.

2. Cultural Value: Make European and American Culture from Conflict to Integration

"Cultural conflict" refers to the state of competition or confrontation between two or more cultures that come into contact with each other. It is determined by the "innate" or nature of culture and is an inevitable phenomenon in the development of culture. In the era when James lived, Europe began to decline from the heyday of economy, industry and culture, but it was still in a leading position in the world and could not shake the authority of the world's overlord. America first experienced a civil war, which caused great damage to the domestic economy and culture, and distanced itself from Europe. However, the civil war broke the yoke of slavery in America, liberated the productive forces, and promoted the accelerated development of economy, industry, and culture. In comparison, the vitality is stronger and the prospects are better. At that time, America emphasized innovation, struggle, and personal freedom, which was in sharp contrast with Europe's conservative and self-proclaimed [1]. Europe has a single population structure, a strong sense of cultural identity, and does not easily accept foreign cultures. At that time, rumors of foreigners plundering wealth were everywhere. Europeans were increasingly xenophobic, and they were always alert to the invasion of foreign cultures. "Cultural integration" as a term was proposed by Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz. Prior to this, James had already put forward this point of view in his works. James advocated the integration of European and American cultures, and was the first modern American writer to apply European culture to American individualism[2].

In "The Portrait of a Lady"[3], for Isabel, freedom is the highest value of life, and life means to experience life freely. She insists on being independent and acting on her own will. Isabel is free to

experience her life dream. When she was broken by Osmond and Mrs. May, she maintained her freedom of thought. Although Osmond tried to control everything about her, she could not control her thoughts. This kind of spiritual freedom save her from despair, she did not give up the pursuit of freedom. European culture is a traditional conservative culture. Feudal asceticism and other decadent feudal traditional concepts have formed behaviors that focus on form, etiquette, and customs. Isabel has loved reading since she was a child. Although she inherited the American spirit of advocating freedom of individuality, she loves traditional European culture as much as James, which to a certain extent indicates the pursuit of European and American cultural integration. Many aspects of the works reflect the integration of European and American cultures. For example, Isabel's cousin Ralph is the embodiment of the ideal of European and American cultural integration. He has the honesty, frankness, generosity, elegance, maturity and moral consciousness of Americans, but not Americans. Vulgar and unreasonable, with European knowledge and culture, but without European sophistication, all aspects reflect the perfect integration of European and American culture.

3. Literary Value: Adding Multiple Colors to the Literary World

Henry James's position in the history of novel is as unique as Shakespeare's position in the history of poetry. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature three times during his lifetime. He did not receive a systematic school education, but quickly mastered French, began to read French literature, and completely accepted the influence of European thoughts. In my youth, I became more interested in literature and creation. The love life is rich, the creative enthusiasm is strong, and many masterpieces have been handed down. James' main works are novels, and there are also many literary reviews, travel notes, biographies and scripts. James pioneered psychoanalytic novels, depicting the inner world of ordinary people as if they were a maze. James occupies a pivotal position in the new critics. From the perspective of Europeans, he is hailed as a "literary master" across national boundaries and a pioneer of modern western novels. The novella is a kind of "extremely beautiful" art form that James prefers. The rich and colorful content is used in a small but refined form, which raises the accomplishments of novella creation to unprecedented heights. James praised the noble morality and put personality above material interests.

James' novels value the external world to the inner world, the objective environment to the subjective spirit, and especially the expression of the characters' inner consciousness. This artistic technique has a profound impact on the creation of the novel. In the art of novel, James proposed that reality only exists in the observer's impression, transferring realism from the outer world to the artist's inner world. James' theory of the center of consciousness, and the use of related narrative perspectives in novels, promoted the development of stream of consciousness literature. As a literary creation technique, stream of consciousness has played an important role in enhancing literary expression. James is regarded as the founder of contemporary narratology, using a limited narrative perspective and becoming the main content of narratology theory. James paid special attention to the narrative perspective, created a consciousness-centered narrative method, overcoming the limitations of the author's narrative and the first-person narrative[4]. James' novel creation and theoretical value have had a profound impact on later generations, and his argument that "novel is an art" is the core of novel theory.

4. Social Value: Provide the Way for Women to Realize Their Ideals in Life

James once said: "The characters in my pen are not some mortals, but the kind of people that mortals can become"[6]. The heroines are dedicated to the pursuit of life ideals, which are based on knowledge, wisdom and noble moral sentiments, rather than social status and wealth. The heroines constantly improve themselves and approach their ideals in life. Due to the huge gap between reality and ideals, heroines often encounter various crises on the road to realize their ideals in life. However, after going through all kinds of hardships, I still stick to my ideals in life and are willing to give everything for it. Those sophisticated, wicked, and morally-minded people, driven by various interests, the naive and simple heroine treats hypocrisy as true. Although they have paid a heavy price, they have matured in conflict and pain. .

The heroine of "Washington Square", Catherine, is a rich lady who fell in love after being teased by the personable property hunter Townsend. Her father was scheming and firmly opposed to their marriage. In the torment of love and fatherhood, Catherine suffered from her father's ruthlessness, and finally suffered a shameless betrayal by her fiance, and she had to live a lonely life in an apartment in

the corner of Washington Square. Catherine's tragedy is not only a personal tragedy, but also a social tragedy. For women to realize their ideals in life, they must change the oppression brought about by the male-dominated society. Daisy, the heroine of "Daisy Miller", is a vibrant new woman with the typical characteristics of a new woman. Although Daisy eventually died young, many people attended her funeral, symbolizing the victory of new ethics and new fashions, and heralding a bright future for new women. The heroine Isabel in "The Portrait of a Lady" has material wealth and set foot on Europe under the influence of culture. She quickly got used to the life of the European continent. She has her own way of behavior regarding the different ways of life in Europe and America[5]. The American spirit of freedom adds color to her life on the European continent. When frustrated and trampled, he always maintained his lofty ideals and clung to the last spiritual fortress. Freedom was sublimated and manifested in a higher form, inner freedom of consciousness.

5. Time Value: Laid the Foundation for the Development of Modernist Literature

Modernism is the stage of capitalism entering the modern industrial society. A wave of literary thoughts that have emerged in Europe and America is essentially a resistance to the capitalist social order and values since the enlightenment, and an attempt to provide new spiritual coordinates for the bewildered western culture. The ideological characteristics of modernist literature are as follows: first, the strong spirit of criticism and negation, using the entire modern civilization and rationalism as the object of criticism, revealing the oppression of people by the traditional value system. Second, the theme of alienation. With the development of modern capitalism, the relationship between man and nature has become more and more alienated, and the relationship with interdependence has been destroyed and is in a state of alienation. Third, the sense of absurdity. Modernists believe that the world is irrational and absurdity is the essential state of social life. Only by understanding the absoluteness of absurdity can we have the courage to overcome absurdity. Fourth, loneliness and fear. Modern people have lost their spiritual home and have a serious spiritual crisis, and loneliness and fear are inevitable. Modernist literature advocates starting from people's psychological feelings and expressing the repression and distortion of life on people. The characters in modern novels are distorted, the stories are funny and absurd, and the theme is vague and hopeless.

James' early realism works have incorporated elements of modernism, his mid-stage works have a tendency to transition from realism to modernism, and his later works have obvious characteristics of modernism. In James' works, realism is embodied in the real social environment, creating typical characters, and modernity is embodied in the stream of consciousness, imagery and symbolism. James' attention to his works has shifted from exterior to interior, from tradition to modern, emphasizing the psychological process and spiritual world of the characters. The period when James was engaged in writing was the period when the novel experienced various stages of romanticism, realism and naturalism, leading to the modern psychological novel. James' exploration of the psychology of the characters in the novel and the pursuit of the artistic form of his works are the most prominent features of modernist novels[7]. The combination of realism and modernism embodies the forward-looking nature of creation and has a profound impact on modernist literature. James is an important founder of Anglo-American modernist literature, and his literary achievements and theoretical contributions are milestones in the history of western literature[8].

6. Artistic Value: Created the Narrative Style Centered on Consciousness

The narrative perspective, also called narrative focus, is a specific angle for observing and telling the content of a story. Viewing the same incident from different angles, it may take on different looks. Before James, traditional novels basically adopted two narrative methods: first, "the omniscient point of view", generally referred to as the main person by the third person, and the narrator has no fixed perspective, like an omniscient "God". In everything, the narrator knows more than the characters in the work. Second, "autobiographical", using the first person to describe it according to the observation of "I". James broke the traditional two methods, adopted "the limited point of view" and created a narrative method with characters as the "center of consciousness", neither from the omniscient author nor from the first person. From the perspective of "I", the narrative clues come from a certain character in the work, and the narrative description starts from the observation and understanding of this character [9]. The narrative details must be filtered through the thoughts of the "consciousness center" characters. This filtering behavior itself, in turn, can better reflect this "consciousness center"[10].

In "The Ambassadors", a large number of character dialogues and inner monologues, as well as the

author's unique way of speaking, are used to show the inner world of the protagonist. Use a skilled limited perspective to explore the changes in the characters' thoughts and emotions. In "The Golden Bowl", two centers of consciousness are involved, Prince Amerigo and Maggie Verver. The first half takes Prince Amerigo as the center of consciousness, and Charlotte Stant and Maggie Verver are in a position to be observed; the second half takes Maggie Verver as the center of consciousness. It shows how she went from being kept in the dark to gradually understanding the true relationship between Charlotte Stant and Maggie Verver[11]. The two consciousness centers exhibit different ideologies and values, and provide the possibility to reexamine the two concepts. From the single center of consciousness in "The Ambassadors" to the two centers of consciousness in "The Golden Bowl", it shows that James has shifted from describing the psychological meaning of events to individuals to portraying the communication and conflict of consciousness when facing intricate interpersonal relationships. Modernism believes that the object of the novel is the spiritual world of the characters. Only by expressing the psychological consciousness of the characters can the truth of life be obtained. Writers should pay attention to the pursuit of psychological truth and penetrate into the hearts of characters. They must abandon the traditional omniscience perspective and introduce a multi-faceted narrative perspective.

7. Conclusions

To study and sort out the value charm of James' pessimistic feminism lies in promoting factors that are beneficial to women's own rights and not violating the overall harmony of the family and society, abandoning trite and empty ethical preaching and narrow patriarchal thoughts on women, and then better out a way to the future based on women's independent personality, mutual assistance, and healthy balance. At the same time, it absorbs the value charm of pessimistic feminism in James' psychological realism novels to guide literary creation and improve the level of creation and appreciation of female literature.

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