

The Images in the Rocking-Horse Winner

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ABSTRACT. *The Rocking-Horse Winner is one of D. H. Lawrence's more famous short stories. In the form of modern fables, it described the tragic story of the little boy Paul who wanted to gain love by satisfying his mother's greed for money, but failed and eventually lost his life. By analyzing the images in the article, we can expose the author's hatred of the humanity distortion caused by industrial civilization to the people at that time.*

KEYWORDS: *The Rocking-Horse Winner; D. H. Lawrence; Images; Humanity distortion*

1. Introduction

D. H. Lawrence (David Herbert Lawrence) (1885-1930) is one of the greatest English novelists, poet, playwright, essayist, literary critic and painter of the 20th century, the greatest from a working-class family. He wrote many famous works. His works represent an extended reflection upon the dehumanizing effects of modernity and industrialization. The Rocking-Horse Winner is considered to be an example of modernist prose. It is his hatred towards growing consumerism, crass materialism and affection-less parenting style of English people.

In "The Rocking-Horse Winner," there is a beautiful woman, who lived in a pleasant house, with a garden, and has a son and two daughters, but she doesn't like them, and treated them coldly. His husband always handsome and expensive in his taste but only has a small income. And the house whispered the same words "There must be more money! There must be more money!" for many times. One day, when Paul talks to his mother, he perceives that there is never enough money in his family, he sets out to find a way to get money through luck. He discovers that if he rides his rocking-horse fast enough, he will get to somewhere named "luck" and know the name of the winning horse in the next race. He begins to make money and secretly give this money to his mother, but after he gives five thousand dollars to his mother, the desire for more money only grows more intense instead of going away. Also, the voices in the house suddenly go mad. So he cannot stop making money. He finally rides his rocking horse so furiously in order to discover the winner of the Derby that he falls into illness and dies.

2. Literature Review

Regardless of foreign or domestic, the research on Lawrence is still focused on novels, especially its four main novels, *Son and Lovers*, *Rainbow*, *Woman in Love* and *Mrs. Chatterley's Lover*. As for the other novels, especially short stories, are less researched.

2.1 The Foreign Research on Lawrence's Short Stories

In 1958, Monroe Gul created *The Continuity of Lawrence's Short Stories*. The author believes that these short stories are basically written in the last decade of his life. Whether in content, theme or form, there is a certain connection between these short stories, and it has a flexible objectivism style. Hilary Simpson of the United Kingdom discusses a theme of Lawrence's short stories in *Lawrence: Feminism and War*. War has changed women's self-awareness and feminism has flourished in society.

2.2 The Domestic Research on Lawrence's Short Stories

Domestic research on Lawrence started late. From the late 1980s, his works began to be translated on a large scale, mainly novels. The short and medium-length novels were selected into various collections, and published *Lawrence Short Story Collection* and *Lawrence Short Story Selection*. Professor Luo Ting's "Lawrence Biography" is China's first Lawrence biography written by domestic researchers and featuring Chinese characteristics. Wu Houzhen's *Looking for the Rainbow: Lawrence study* covers all of Lawrence's novels and representative short stories, making it the most comprehensive monograph in the country to date. However, with the deepening of scholars' research on Lawrence, short stories as an important form of Lawrence's creation have attracted more and more attention. In the past ten years, in the influential magazines such as *Foreign Literature* and *Foreign Literature Studies*, papers on Lawrence's short stories have also begun to appear. But so far, there have been 59 papers published in the magazine on Lawrence's short stories. The latest one is Hu Ying's *Natural Humanity in D. H. Lawrence's Short Story* published in the journal of Anshun College. This paper discusses the natural humanity in the article from three aspects, which reflects Lawrence's dislike of industrialization and calls for humanity to respect life and protect nature.

3. The Voices in the House

"There must be more money." This sentence has been repeated more than ten times in the article. Their appearance is not accidental. Every sentence has its true meaning and role. The following two aspects will be analyzed in detail.

3.1 Reveal the Background of the Society

In *The Rocking-Horse Winner*, the sound in the house appears for five times. The first appearance of the sound image appeared in the first sentence of the fifth paragraph of the text: “And so the house came to be haunted by the unspoken phrase: There must be more money! There must be more money!” No matter the people in the house, but also the dolls all can hear it whispering: “There must be more money! There must be more money!” And the second appearance in the sixth paragraph: “It came whispering from the springs of the still-swaying rocking horse,... “There must be more money!’ so.” These sentences reflect the silent cry from everyone’s deep heart in the family, expressing their infinite desire for money. But this cry is not only from this family, but also from the people in that era. They are want money.

The story of *The Rocking-Horse Winner*’s setting is post industrial revolution England, and the story takes place during a period the Americans call “the roaring 20s”, a time characterized by greed and a grasping materialism. At that time, the war did not bring permanent peace to the British people, but only the redistribution of global forces. The British economy has been hit hard during the war, and the income of the people was reduced. Even so, many people have not reduced their pursuit of luxury life, and with the advancement and development of science and technology, the demand is getting higher and higher. Some people are swaying between various dance parties. The whole society is turbulent, people’s spiritual life is extremely scarce, and there is a lack of minimum concern for their loved ones, even their children. The relationship between people is extremely indifferent. The heroine of the novel lives in this age of vanity and indifference, and her words and deeds are all branded with the times. Through the portrayal of this character, Lawrence completed the tragedy story of little Paul, fully demonstrating the psychological characteristics of the people of this era, and also strongly expressing the author’s anger.

So the sound image creates a materialistic background in it.

3.2 Motivate the Plot

After little Paul talked to his mother, he learned that it was because his mother lack of luck, and tried some ways to earn money, but all failed. So the little Paul wants to earn money to satisfy his mother but doesn’t want his mother know he earns money through horse-racing. After winning the racing, he gave five thousand pounds to his mother as birthday present secretly, but “the house ‘whispering’ worse than ever lately,” and his mother’s voice still cold and absent. This means that only five thousand couldn’t meet his mother’s need for money, and he must earn more money, only in this way can Paul get attention from his mom.

4. Blue Eyes

The symbolic meaning in Western culture is slightly more. For example, “blue” often has the meaning of “melancholy” in Western culture, as explained in the

Oxford Dictionary:(of a person or mood) melancholy, sad, or depressed, “in a blue mood.” “People are depressed and blue”. The evolution of words, there is a saying that Westerners will set the church in blue on the day of commemorating the death of Jesus. People’s psychology is full of sorrow, because “blue” also means sadness. The other meaning is a kind of music form “blues” created by African Americans in hard life, translated into English as “blues”, because the music form “blues” is usually very melancholic, so “blue” also has a melancholy meaning. “blue” has a lot of emotional expressions, such as “blue Monday’s tired or unlucky Monday, blue in the face in vain, meaning that it is useless to insist on doing something green. This article has mentioned blue eyes many times. I will discuss it from two aspects below.

4.1 Depressed

It is said that maternal love is instinct, no mother does not love her own children, and no child does not care for her mother, but it should be a carefree little Paul who lives under the care of his parents, but because of his mother. Extremely eager for money, but not able to be satisfied, so this sentiment is passed on to the child. Every day I complain to the child because I am married to a husband who has no luck, and I am also unfortunate, so I have no money and can’t passing the so-called extravagant life in her mind; and receiving a subpoena, the house made a mocking voice, the little boy was very distressed by the mother, on the one hand Paul wanted to make his mother happy, on the other hand, he wanted to stop the house’s whisper. But he didn’t want to let his mother know that he is winning by gambling, so he becomes depressed.

4.2 Despair

First of all, after the bet the horses again and again, the boy’s guessing about the winning horse is becoming more and more inaccurate, which means that it is more and more difficult for the boy to make money from the bet horse. Secondly, after giving the mother the money, the mother’s demand for money has not only shrunk, but has become larger and larger. In addition, even if the boy gave the money to the mother, he did not get the maternal love he needed, so the boy realized that his dream was shattered, so he felt extreme sadness and despair.

5. The Rocking-horse

The rocking-horse is an indispensable toy for every child’s childhood. It is usually made of wood. The production process is relatively simple and easy to operate, so it is more common in families where conditions are not superior. At the same time, the rocking-horse is a toy that can bring happiness to children and make them feel happy and happy, but in this article, the rocking-horse has become the sustenance of maternal love, predicting the token of the victory horse. But you can’t get the happiness that the child should have. This striking contrast perfectly echoes the theme of the article. From the side, the people in that era blindly pursued money

and neglected humanity, and caused serious damage to the child's young mind and paid the price of life.

5.1 Innocent

The toy rocking-horse came to Hearst's home as a Christmas present, and it was particularly prominent among the "expensive and dazzling" toys. In the original text, the author used "expensive and splendid" to describe them, emphasizing the luxury of this family. In stark contrast to this, the author clearly pointed out at the beginning that the family is not rich, and all the illusions are merely illusions created to maintain social status. Highlighting the glory of Mrs. Hurst, thus showing the innocence of Paul.

5.2 Mother's Love

Because she couldn't get the mother's love for a long time, Paul could only hope for the toy, riding the Trojan to pass the time, the Trojan became a substitute for the mother in Paul's heart, especially when he learned that his father lacked luck and made the family financially difficult. When the horse rider reached the state of madness and was able to predict the horses that won the game, he desperately rushed to the "place of luck" to prove to his mother that he was better than his father. So he madly rides a Trojan, hoping to express his love for his mother in this way, and in this way pretend that his mother is with him. As the story continues to develop, Paul grows into a big child and is no longer suitable for riding a Trojan, but his mother's dissatisfaction with money forces him to continue to run on horseback. At this time, the Trojan is "worn out" but still madly shaking, just like the physical and mental condition of Little Paul: although fragile can collapse at any time, it is still overloaded. Finally, at the end of the story, Paul foresees the winner on the racetrack and earns a lot of money, but he also immediately ended his nine-year-old life. Throughout the story, as the development of the novel's plot changes, the Trojan becomes "somewhat faded" in the author's pen by "glorious" until "drunken", and the specific meaning it represents has been changing, from the beginning. I thought that if I earned money through gambling, I could make my mother happy and get the mother's love and finally make more money. I couldn't satisfy my mother's greedy desire for money, and my mother didn't give him the maternal love that she wanted, and the heart collapsed, which led to the tragedy of the fate of little Paul.

6. Conclusion

The Rocking-Horse Winner is created in a period of high development and steady development of British capitalism, industrial civilization, especially the highly developed era of social material civilization. While highly developed industrial civilization meets people's material needs, it also brings great confusion, imperfections and imbalances to people's spirits, so that spirits and emotions are distorted and devastated, causing tragedies. Lawrence's short story, in the form of

heartbreaking tragedy, provides a negative case for our family education. Strong greed even obliterates the closest mother-child relationship in the world. Because of the father's indifference, the mother's greed, and the lack of spiritual communication between the mother and the child, the protagonist Paul in the novel is called the direct victim of the bourgeois industrial civilization. It is ironic to say that he is the winner of the wooden shake. The identity of this "winner" was exchanged for his life, and his young life became a victim of the sick society of England in the early twentieth century. From this article, we can recognize that the necessary factors for the healthy growth of children, that is, the material life of parents who care for their children and who are not worried about their children, are not necessary conditions for their children's happiness. Whether in a western society with a high degree of material civilization, or in today's reform and opening up, China's pursuit of material should be rational.

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