

Cognitive Criticism of European and American Literary Novels

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Abstract: Taking works of European and American literary novel in the traditional sense as the object of study and cognitive critical thought as the basic conceptual framework, the critical thought embodied in 20th century literature is sorted out. This is an attempt of interdisciplinary research. Using literary theory as the basis for critique and argument, it reveals the forward-looking and multifaceted qualities of cognitive thought in literary works, and points out the educational function unique to literature in raising the environmental awareness of the public in society, and there is much to continue to focus on as far as the study of cognitive-critical thought in 20th century Western literature is concerned.

Keywords: European and American literature; Cognitive criticism; Literary phenomena; Marxism; Literary criticism; Modernist literature

1. Introduction

Presents the two trends of contemporary literary criticism, is a research literature as the core of purely aesthetic criticism, such as Russian formalism, French Derrida's deconstruction of France, the United States of new criticism, etc., they will stay in literary study techniques such as text, words and style, intended to neglect the social function of literature; The other is pure social criticism with cultural philosophy as the core, such as feminism, post-colonialism, Marxism, etc. The common feature of these studies is that they are far away from the literary scene and turn literature into a means to interpret social problems [1]. The course of literature often extends beyond the boundaries of literature to other fields; human research on the intrinsic meaning of literature is constantly changing, human textual studies have undergone different paradigm shifts, and the perspective of the examination of literary works has been in a constant state of uncertainty of redefinition. This paradigm shift and uncertainty has provided the impetus from itself to study the development of literature from new perspectives, perspectives on the connection between cognitive criticism and literature that attempt to bring literature and philosophy together towards a natural ecological vision [2]. The emergence of this situation is closely related to the rise and development of social sciences, which occupied the function of literature at the level of knowledge of society and knowledge of the self, causing literature to be gradually split into an abstract aesthetic form or one of the products of social sciences.

In *On Boundless Realism*, Roger Garaudy reassesses the boundary of realism and extends the understanding of artistic authenticity to the representation of the human psyche and spiritual dimension, no longer limited to the

imitation and reproduction of the external world. From this we see that for modern art, the concept of reality is a proposition to be further discussed [3]. In his literary criticism, Lionel Trilling mentions the issue of "authenticity" several times, and it can be said that his criticism has built an edifice based on the exploration of the essence of literature, including how literature writes the truth through moral crisis, how literature uses irony to achieve the purpose of ethical experimentation, and how literature reveals its influence on our lives. How literature reveals the social will that manipulates our behavior, etc. Trilling's literary criticism is able to reunite aesthetic forms with social and moral functions in a new contemporary social context, enabling literature to recover its ancient functions of social iconography and moral imagination [4]. At the same time, Trilling's public intellectual attributes also help to restore the ethos of intellectuals speaking to society and the public, break through the shackles of academy-style criticism, and enable literary criticism to effectively play its social utility. Based on this, the following contents will study the cognitive criticism of European and American literary novels.

2. Criticism of Literary Theory

As a fundamental part of literary studies, literary cognitive criticism has become a very important discipline, but it is more difficult to say exactly what literary cognitive criticism is and how traditional literary theory is related to literary cognitive criticism, so it is necessary to clarify what literary cognitive criticism is before we can better understand the characteristics of theory and criticism in the 20th century and better enter to the field of research on specific critical practices. In the history of literary cognitive criticism, the concept of "literary cognitive

criticism" is very rich and evolving. It has been used to refer to both the practical criticism of specific art works and the theory of literary cognitive criticism, which is a reflection of critical theory, as well as the whole literature and art, including literary theory, literary cognitive criticism and literary history [5]. Usually, however, literary cognitive criticism in the traditional sense is mainly practical criticism, i.e., specific literary cognitive critical activity, which starts from the reading and appreciation of literary works, and this comprehensive perception is grounded in the linguistic forms and literary images of the works, and when drawing critical conclusions from the works, one cannot use a certain theoretical framework to apply the conclusions in advance, otherwise it will lose some kind of individuality. Many theories cannot be applied to all individual experiences of a particular critic; the critic pays attention to his or her own critical activity, to the product of the exchange between self and text in this reading activity [6]. We can define it in this way: literary cognitive criticism is a critical practice activity facing specific literary works and literary phenomena, which is different from both literary theory and literary practice, but is in the middle position between literary theory and literary practice, playing the intermediary role of communicating and connecting literary theory and literary practice. Literary cognitive criticism takes literary theory as the basis of judgment and argument, and provides literary theory with a large amount of empirical materials because of its close relationship with literary practice, which can in turn promote the development of literary theory. Some commentators argue that among pragmatic critics, we can further distinguish between absolutist and relativist critics. Absolutist critics presume to use only one theory or set of principles in evaluating a work, while relativist critics use a variety of even contradictory theories to critique a text [7]. Literary theory is the basis for either type of critic or either form of criticism. Without theory, practical criticism cannot exist.

The criticalization of literary theory means that literary theory, after the weakening of the body of theory, which is distinguished by its logical and normative nature, due to the increasing rise of specific textual interpretation strategies, inevitably has a tendency to approach and transform itself into literary cognitive criticism. The criticalization of literary theory is a counterpoint to the separation of theoretical research from literary phenomena and practical criticism in literary studies, and naturally carries a certain degree of rationality and feasibility [8]. However, if it focuses on the empirical description of specific literary works and literary phenomena at the practical level and lacks systematic and normative theoretical observation and doctrinal analysis, the result will only turn the research results into an accumulation of materials or phenomena. The theorization of literary cognitive criticism means that, after moving away from the

traditional subjective perception, factual description or media propaganda criticism and towards theorization, literary cognitive criticism, under the scientific guidance of literary theory, analyzes specific literary works and literary phenomena in a logical and normative way and puts forward new insights on a series of major issues of literature. Such theoretical or theoretical criticism is indeed conducive to enhancing the academic quality and theoretical value of literary cognitive criticism, but if it strays or deviates from the "practical character" of literary cognitive criticism and pursues the logical normative mode of theoretical construction too much, it will inevitably fall into the quagmire of pure theorizing [9]. The interdisciplinarity of literary theory and literary cognitive criticism means that interdisciplinary interpenetration between literary theory and literary cognitive criticism has emerged, and that this crossing and interpenetration has become the usual way of their existence and function, while at the same time, they have also formed interpenetration with other humanities and social disciplines, and have in turn become a model of interdisciplinary interpenetration between these humanities and social disciplines. The test bed.

3. Cognitive Criticism and Practice

The generation of critical theory in the 20th century is no longer based on the interpretation and evaluation of specific literary works and literary phenomena from the bottom up to construct a new literary theory, but independently and autonomously puts forward certain theoretical presuppositions and corresponding methodological paths, which involve some basic aspects of literature and critical theory itself and are necessary premises or starting points for critical theorists to analyze problems. How then can such theoretical presuppositions or assumptions be tested or verified? This brings us to the practical nature of critical theory. As mentioned above, the main characteristic of theoretical criticism, as one of the levels of literary criticism, is that it is based on a specific critical theory, and under the dictates of the corresponding methodological laws, combined with a certain type of literary work, it deduces or proves the critical theory at the metaphysical level in order to construct a theoretical model or theoretical system with a universal quality [10]. We believe that since theoretical criticism objectively involves the analysis of specific literary works and literary phenomena, it necessarily reflects the practical nature of critical theory.

The ultimate value of the "salvation of the soul" in these European and American novels and characters, whether in the manifestation of the ending or in the process of seeking salvation, is a human transcendence achieved or desired by the revelation of God's divine love and faith, in other words, the ultimate care of God's presence. This means that God's presence is a prerequisite [11]. Without

the presence of God, there is no psychological expectation of ultimate care, and there is no religious psychology and spiritual act of "soul salvation". Without God's presence, the "Christian" would not have embarked on the journey to heaven, Robinson would have perished in the catastrophe, Jean Valjean would have lived out his life in prison, and Carden will not walk on the guillotine under the guidance of "resurrection in me, life in me". In the absence of God, Raskolnikov either stepped over pools of blood and corpses, as Smerdyakov's father had done in Ivan's "If God does not exist"; Or go to ruin in schizophrenia. Without the idea of the presence of God or the psychological expectation of the existence of God, there would be no speculation about the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, no such soul torture. Without the presence of God, Andre, Pierre, Levine, Nekhludoff, and so on, might not have walked out of the abyss of confusion or depravity. In the Christian cultural background, for those who are born with sin, evil also coexists with life. Without the presence and redemption of God, no individual can save himself or himself, nor can he be saved from the "other salvation" or other forms of "other salvation" in any family, community or country.

4. Scientific Criticism and Practice

The criticism practice of the new criticism in Europe and America is indeed gradually moving towards scientization, and great efforts have been made on the way of scientization. Under the guidance of critical theory and through the critical practice of generations of scholars, a set of scientific and standardized critical mode has been established. The new criticism regards literary works as the object of literary criticism and focuses on text research, which makes literature get rid of its vassal status to history and obtain an independent status [12]. In the process of critical practice, he has formed a concrete and operable method of close reading criticism, advocating the analysis of the language and structure of works, which has exerted a great influence on later generations and greatly improved people's reading and appreciation ability. In addition, the new criticism pursues the unity and complexity of the complex structure of the text. In their eyes, the standard of good poetry is the contradiction and harmony of internal elements. In short, the critical practice of new criticism has made a big step forward on the road of scientization [13]. But the reason for the decline of new criticism lies in its scientization. From Eliot's impersonal theory, he put the object of literary criticism from one of the traditional literary criticism to the text, the new criticism scholars agree that text splitting, until the late William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley fallacy "intention" and "feel the fallacy" theory, indeed the text highlights to the limit. It completely severed the relationship between literary works and readers and writers. However, literary activities are

composed of several interrelated and interacting subsystems, which are an organic whole rather than rigid and static. We can't isolate it from the subsystem for long. Modernism and postmodernism successively cover all literary schools of the 20th century, which can be divided into symbolism, futurism, expressionism, stream of consciousness, existentialism, theatre of the absurd, black humor, magic realism and other specific schools. But in fact, in many disciplines in the development of fusion in the 20th century, the influence of modernism and postmodernism has far beyond literature field, especially in the late 20th century "postmodernism" is seen as has the concept of plural value orientation and prefix attributive, has been applied to the philosophy, science, architecture, art, etc in the process of the construction of the new ideas [14]. New criticism scorns the relationship between history, culture, author, reader and work, completely isolates the work, simplifies the object of study and excludes all external factors, which is the fatal point of new criticism. We should realize that literary activities are about human activities, and human beings are emotional individuals and complex individuals. Therefore, the New Criticism ignores "human nature" to some extent and becomes a kind of cold literary criticism.

Modernism, which sprouted in the early 20th century, is a concept opposite to traditional literature. Under the influence of a series of philosophical theories, such as Kant's "rational departure", Schopenhauer and Nietzsche's "voluntarism", Freud's "psychoanalysis", Jung's psychological theory (especially the "collective unconsciousness" theory), modernist literature presents a strong color of cultural criticism. In main western countries from the end of the 19th century into the industrialization urbanization speed up the development of society and history background, the traditional agriculture and ecological beauty of lakes and mountains are continuing expansion of industrial instead, western countries people's traditional values are constant challenges and subversion, oppression and distortion of social rights of the individual, the individual character and social contradictions become sharp, Literary works are increasingly concerned with the inner world of characters. In this era, the characteristic of modernist literature is to pay attention to four kinds of relations in the process of shaping literary images: individual characters and the whole society; Individual character and nature as a whole; Personal networks with others around them; Individual self-growth [15]. Nietzsche and others declared that "overthrowing the traditional evaluation system and establishing a new value system" played an important role in promoting the formation of a new literary system. Compared to traditional means of literature, modernism literary works present a significant new features, which is more emphasis on activities the depiction of the inner world of the characters in the works, performance means also more

rich than the traditional literary works, through the deformation characters, three-dimensional multiple narrative perspective and multiple clues crisscross, and with the aid of symbol, metaphor, stream of consciousness, To achieve the purpose of depicting and revealing social reality.

As an important school of formalism, the pursuit of science is undeniably the dream of new criticism, and we can see the pursuit and efforts of various generations of critics for scientization, which objectively does make the practice of criticism scientific, but I think this scientization is not equal to science or not scientific. Because the scientific nature of literature is not only scientific in form, but also has the humanistic characteristics and humanistic spirit of literature and art science, which should stand the test and interpretation of the times. The new criticism in Europe and America neglects this point in the process of criticizing practice and pursuing scientification, and pays no attention to reality and validity. If the scientization goes to the extreme, it will become absolutism and simplification, which is exactly the mistake made by the new criticism. From William Empson's search for the meaning of poetry to Tuter's exploration of language tension to Brooks's advocacy of irony and paradox. In the past, it was used as a rhetorical device, whether it is polysemy, tension, irony or paradox, but the new criticism raises them from traditional rhetoric to literature as the noumenon and fundamental thing of literature. Is it true that literary works are not literature without such rhetoric? Their attempt to find a universal principle without regard for reality is extremely biased.

The critical practice of new criticism is based on the ontological principles provided by the theory of criticism, the focus of the theory, through a specific analysis of a certain type of literary works, according to the new trend to check and revise the theoretical presupposition put forward by the theory of criticism, so as to achieve its dream of building a universal theory. It can be said that through theoretical deduction and experiment of critical practice, the theoretical effect of new criticism has changed the image of literary criticism in an era and improved its taste and quality. However, the critical practice of the new criticism in Europe and America, although combined with specific literary works, and also carried out a very detailed analysis of the works, in some parts and links showed that literary criticism as a practical criticism or practical criticism of some temperament. But from the overall point of view, although critical practice is criticism, it is still theoretical, the so-called practical color or practical quality is only used for the decoration of critical theory.

5. Conclusion

European and American new criticism is not only an important link in the development of western literary theory

of formalism in the 20th century, but also an important part of western modern literary theory. It originated in the United Kingdom in the 1920s, appeared in the United States in the 1930s, reached its peak in the 1940s and 1950s, and declined after the 1960s. This school of scholars, the theory is complex, focusing on criticism. Criticism in the 20th century, with the emergence of critical theory with practice across and transformation, it began to literary criticism from the traditional sense, through to the traditional literary criticism and the 20th century literary criticism, criticism theory and the theory of criticism and criticism to the connotation of the theory and critical practice, research, literary criticism has brought new thoughts, ideas, methods and perspectives, However, our country cannot blindly absorb all of them without discriminating them. There are still some problems such as separating the essence from the essence and localization. We should avoid blindly copying and piling up terms in critical practice.

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