

Rethinking the Wind Won't Blow It All Away from the Perspective of Spiritual Ecologism

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Abstract: Richard Brautigan is an American author who is renowned for his ecological writing. By analyzing and integrating the previous research, this paper find that many scholars have affirmed Brautigan's attempt of ecological protection, and pointed out his desire for natural life, and his criticisms to the rising industrial society. The conclusions of these scholars are similar. They tend to talk about nature itself and ignore the relationship between nature and human beings. Therefore, there are still some blanks in the research on the topic of the interaction between nature and human beings. Because of that, this thesis will use the concept of spiritual circle introduced by the French scholar Claude Alegre, the special circle means the spirit of human and nature are closely related and influence each other like an annular closed chain. Based on this definition, I will analyze the novel *The Wind Won't Blow It All Away*. First of all, this paper will investigate a lot of characters who have spiritual crisis because of the erosion of nature caused by the industry society. Secondly, this paper will analyze the deconstruction of the natural scenery by industrialization and its dwindling rural implications which are mentioned many times in the story, to reveal the nature and the function of the human connection with each other. From that, we can tell that Brautigan is an author who has a strong sense of spiritual circle and pays attention to the fate of human existence.

1. Introduction

Richard Brautigan, the American poet and novelist best known for *Trout Fishing In America*, because his distinctive writing style, has long been regarded by scholars as one of the pioneers of the post-modern literature like Pynchon and Borges. In addition, he is often regarded as a post-pastoral novelist, the reason is he often shows the bleak outlook of post-industrial society in his works, such as the passing of pastoral scenery and the disappearance of the innocence of human spirit. In 1982, Brautigan published his last book, *So the Wind Won't Blow It All Away*. The first-person novel follows the author's disordered childhood memories and describes an accident in which the narrator kills a high school classmate with a gun. In addition, there is a lot of discursions and many different characters in the story, which presents a picture of America's natural landscape and tenuous interpersonal relationship in the post-industrial nation. From the perspective of ecological criticism, this paper uses the perspective of spiritual ecological criticism, to analyze the character who are in the condition of spiritual pollution and feel aimless, to shows that human beings need to pay attention to the erosion of nature and human beings corroded by industrial society.

2. Literature Review

Ecocriticism has always been a popular subject that scholars' research on Brautigan. Related to the papers about ecology, many scholars focus on the perspective of counterculture, arguing that Brautigan holds an opposite attitude towards the mainstream culture that represents the development of science and technology. Brautigan captures the decline of the human spirit in industrial society and raises questions about science and industrial production.

In "Richard Brautigan and the Modern Pastoral" (1973), From the Pastoral perspective, Neil Schmitz discussed several novels written by Brautigan, which including *Trout Fishing in America*.

Schmitz holds that the works of Brautigan portrait the destruction of the environment in the industrial world and the people inside who are suffering from mental pollution. Therefore, many novels written by Brautigan showing the trait of pastoral literature. It was Terry Gifford who first announced the concept of "post-pastoral" in *Green Voices: Understanding Contemporary Nature Poetry* (1995). He believed that the post-pastoral came into being after World War II, which evolved from countryside writing represented by rural literature to environmental journalism. That is works with post-pastoral character tend to focus on the natural environment changed after the industrial society, rather than on the writing of the original pastoral scenery. In his paper, firstly, Schmitz analyzes the first-person narrators in Brautigan's novels. He argues, unlike the protagonist in *The Walden*, who are relaxed and cheerful. The narrator in Brautigan's stories is full of irony, they are characters with desolate and blurred personalities, telling the people behind the industrial age of confusion and bondage, such as the narrator in *Trout fishing In America*, he is erratic, lack of logic and organized. Secondly, the deteriorating natural landscape also belongs to the description of the post-industrial environment, which also reflects the post-pastoral characteristics of the novels. For example, some of rivers in Brautigan's novels, such as he dirty channel for trout fishing, and the river that is no longer clear in "The Cleveland Wrecking Yard," Also, the author thinks that Brautigan is not a writer, who follows the traditional ways of writing. In his works the rivers are not the same as classical ones such as the beautiful and bright scenery written by Hemingway in *Big Two-Hearted River*, which shows a traditional paradigm, clean, bright. Instead, the river waters are opaque and dirty, present withered scenery in the age of past-postal. This paper is unique in its argument and has the meaning of creating an ecocriticism perspective.

To sum up, scholars have reached a consensus on ecocriticism and agreed on Brautigan's criticism in post-industrial society. However, most scholars' researches are often limited to *Trout Fishing In America*. Besides, several scholars noticed the fading of natural scenery and the regression of human spiritual world in the post-industrial society. But their researches lacked the in-depth investigation of the relationship between the two.

Brautigan's last work, *The Wind Won't Blow it all Away*, also shows its keen to post-pastoral consciousness. As Brautigan's final work, this work is more conclusive. Given this, I will analyze this story by exploring the natural environment and the living environment of the characters. This paper examines the ecological consciousness manifested in the story, which has positive impact to the spiritual liberation of human beings and the protection of the natural environment. One of the innovations of this paper is the novel that the researcher discusses. This paper takes *The Wind Won't Blow It All Away* as example, breaking the limitation that ecocriticism often focuses on Brautigan's previous work *Trout Fishing In America*. The second significance of this paper is the inventive perspective. This paper introduces the method of spiritual ecocriticism, and female ecocriticism focuses on the psychological state of the characters. The reason why the researchers applies there two methods as the way to analyze the text is to reveal correlation between the deterioration of the natural environment and impoverishment of the inner world of the roles in the post-industrial society.

3. Methodology

In 1866, E.H. Haeckel introduced the concept of ecology. Spiritual ecology is one of the branches of ecology criticism. Karl Jaspers said, "Man is spirit, and the condition in which man is man is a condition of the spirit." Spiritual ecology believes that the ecological environment, the social environment, determines the mental condition of the human being. In turn, the spiritual state of the human being also acts on the environment. It is the reference material of the environment, and industrial society destroys nature and also causes pollution to the human spirit, making people feel decadent or alienated. This paper founds that the novel *The Wind Won't Blow It All Away* conforms to the theory of spirit circle and shows the link between man and nature. Many characters are lost, desperate or hysterical. Such as a child loves a funeral, and a child lost his life in a car accident, a couple who fish in front of a pond every day. All of whom live in a bleak and lifeless environment. Because of this, I use the theory of spirit ecological criticism to analyze the character and behavior of the characters in detail and compare them with different environment condition. To explain the

conjunction between the fall of the characters and the decline of nature in particular. The connection between them is essential to understand for readers to realize the universal harmony between human beings and nature.

4. The rise of spiritual ecologism

Modern western ecological thought has long rooted, as early as the 18th century, Jean Jacques Rousseau initiated modern naturalism, advocating a return to nature, seeking peace of mind and meaning in life in the idyll. If Rousseau saw nature as a friend, the humanist mindset that dominated the world of thought from the Western Renaissance and Enlightenment onwards made nature a subordinate to men. Hamlet cried out, "The humanity is a how extraordinary masterpiece. How noble rationality! How great strength! How exquisite a measuring appliance!" By reading Shakespeare, the reader will find that they see man as the center and master of the world. Everything operates on the basis of human needs, and that silent nature is placed on the periphery in the service of humanity. Such a view was also practically validated in the industrial society of the time. After the Industrial Revolution, the rapid development of technology renewed the means of production for the capitalists, bringing with it a steady stream of economic benefits. At the same time, the expense is eroded and sacrificed natural landscape. As a result, the sharp conflict between man and nature emerged. The simple and satisfying spiritual situation of the original idyllic life of man gradually degenerated with the destruction of nature.

In this backdrop, some perceptive writers are aware of the precarious natural landscape and express in their novels their concerns about the emerging industrial productivity. Since then, the deconstruction of anthropocentrism became the fundamental consensus and primary goal of ecological criticism, an idea that was widely disseminated, culminating in the publication of the *Silent Spring* in 1962.

While deconstructing anthropocentrism to save nature, many scholars gradually realized that the process of human development was moving from the pre-industrial era to the post-industrial era. They realized that the ills brought by machine and industrial development not only appeared in the natural but also affected the human beings in it. The French sociologist Chardin proposed the concept of spiritual circle. That is, nature and humankind are inextricably linked, the disappearance of natural beauty and man's spirituality are related in both directions. In the light of the scholars' findings, this thesis re-examines Brautigan's novel and argues that his novel *The Wind Won't Blow It All Away* is an illustration of the chain of human-nature-human reaction. In the close spiritual circle between man and nature, only by addressing the destruction of nature by man at the source can the spiritual world of humankind be rescued again and the natural ecology be saved.

Because of this, the primary attend of this thesis is to examine the characters in the novel. They belong to the industrialized era, and whose inner minds are withering away. To analyze their mental state, it is a probe to the mental condition of people who live in the industry world. Then, in accordance with the connection between characters and nature, this paper will examine and analyze the damaged and ever-shrinking environment, which is a counterpart of the spiritual world in humankind. Finally, in conclusion, this thesis will explore the possible paths to deconstruct anthropocentrism and achieve harmony between men and nature.

5. Industrialization and the metaphor of the bullet

The most prominent distorted image is narrator himself, who once belonged to an idyllic life and enjoyed a comfortable, leisurely time. First of all, the narrator has always loved fishing, often getting his trousers wet from walking around the pond, and he has a detailed knowledge of everything about fishing. Moreover, in his spare time, he loved to go and pound apples in the apple orchard near the school. The silence of the orchard and wandering in it gave him the peace of mind. Finally, the protagonist is curious about animals. A few fish, a frog in the pond, a few feral cats stumbled upon along the way, all gained his attention and sparked his thoughts and imagination.

The personalities of the narrator are continually changing. As industrialized society deconstructed the idyllic landscape, trucks drove into the vicinity of fishponds. The pond was decorated like living rooms for others, and the river was furnished with furniture. Where had been a small river was converted into a viaduct, listening to radios replaced fishing as a new way for children to have fun, and gas replaced fire and went into people's kitchens. The spiritual world of narrator gradually moves towards loneliness. The once happy idyllic life was just like "Rustle in the wind like ghost swords in battle, and there is the steady lapping of the pond at the shore edge, which I belong to my imaginations."

A pistol is a vital metaphor in this story. The thing inside the pistol, the bullet, is the keyword for the spiritual degradation of the protagonist and represents the severe erosion of the human spirit and natural environment caused by post-industry. The story opens with the narrator recalling, "I wish I had been hungry for a hamburger instead of bullets." Because he bought a bullet instead of a burger one afternoon, he shot his best friend with a pistol in an accident that he will regret later in life. After that, the phrase appears several times throughout the novel, as the narrator's mind jumps through memories of the past, relentlessly flashing back to childhood scenes of buying bullets. In the West, the origins of the bullet can be traced back to the early nineteenth century, at the rise of industrialization. But the mass use of bullets occurred during the transition period between pre-industrialization and post-industrialization. Bullets and guns were widely spread in the two world wars. As weapons, they disturbed world peace, killed countless people and completely destroyed countless natural landscapes. *The Wind Won't Blow It All Away* is not a war novel. Still, several times in the story, the narrator deliberately introduces the concept of war. Brautigan uses words like "the war is over" and "after the war" as division of the time. Such as "It was the second year after World War II ended when they rattled down a rutted, mud-hardened road toward the pond in an old pickup truck that had their fishing furniture piled on the back."

In my view, this is what Brautigan intended, it not only implies the indelible and deep memory and harm brought by war to mankind, but also naturally leads readers to connect the recurring keyword "bullet" with war. The protagonist's friend's death was caused by a noon bullet purchase many years ago, and he was disturbed by the bullet for years. The bullet becomes a shadow that lingers over him. On the surface, this is only the protagonist's remorse for the purchase of bullets, but in fact, the bullets represent the negative impact of the rapid development of productivity and technological advances in post-industrial society on humankind. In industrialized societies, wars become more brutal, destroying people's lives in worse and more violent ways. Human invented the bullets in search of victory in war, and the consequent decrease in mankind's sense of security and increased insecurity in the spiritual world.

6. The death of children and the metaphor of urban material

The dust of industrial society brings about the decay of the spiritual world for the narrator, while his two richer, more modern neighbors are directly seen as victims of the industrial world, who are arranged to die. In the novel, the little boy and girl used to live next door to the protagonist are in sharp contrast to the narrator. The protagonist was not well off. He lived in cheap hotels, the only bicycle belongs to him was faded, and the radio recorder at home often failed. By contrast, another rich girl made him feel very envious. She has a large home, also has a yard of so many toys. The narrator's thirst for toys and cars is representative of the people of modern society who have been eroded by commercialism. They compete for material things and worship money. In addition to admiration, through the narrator, Brautigan also expresses concern about the plethora of toys for kids: "I wondered how those girls avoided serious injury from falling over their toys and breaking their necks or cutting their heads off with broken toys." In fact, toys don't often cut off children's heads. They are a sign of the pitfalls of commercialization and consumption. That is, when people have too much material, it is inevitable to be swallowed up by material desire, the spiritual world is also eroded.

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7. The metaphor of fishing.

The plot of the book revolves around activity of fishing, which the author devotes a large number of chapters. The place where fishing takes place in the pond and the pond in this article is no longer primitive. They are eroded pond now, which represents the human government and possession of nature. In the beginning, the pond and the river, flow in the field——They belong to nature , and no one disturb this rural landscape. Later, the viaduct was built, and the river was polluted by human beings. It was polluted by the dust brought by the bridge. Finally, it was transformed into a pond, and it no longer had its own self but became a vassal of human beings. "Once the pond had been just another field, but now it was an overpass and a place for me to fish and an opening living room for furniture." Next, the pond was reconstructed by trucks and planks, adding other elements roughly: "A plank has been crudely engineered with the help of a small log at the end and some stake-like pilings to format best the world's saddest fishing dock." It can be seen that in the novel, fishing is not a symbol of a happy, idyllic life, but clear evidence of human encroachment on nature. With the action of "fishing", human beings enslave the river, which should be free.

People enslaved the pond. The pond was no longer part of nature; it was separated from the river and the sea and became like a sink for fun. When viewed in a broader context, fishing itself confirms the decline of pastoral significance in post-industrial societies.

Fishing often appears in American novels and is an essential symbol in literature. Starting with Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, Hemingway's "Clark Valley Nostalgia", to William Faulkner's *The Sound and Fury*, T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*, and till *The Wind Won't Blow It All Away*. The meaning of fishing constantly rewriting by different writers, the meaning of fishing starts from the grand and ends up with petty. In *Moby-Dick*, "fishing" represents the cannot be overcome or unknowable god of evil. in "Clark Valley Nostalgia", the beautiful valley is full of trout river, manifests the primitive life and happy. In the works of William Faulkner and Eliot, fishing is no longer joy, it became a fishing itself, is boring, tedious, daily activities without any innovation. Brautigan further deconstructs the once-great paradigm of behavior. The meaning of fishing has evolved from being even a regular entertainment choice for ordinary people to the grotesque practice of their oddly-mannered, bulky neighbors. The vast ocean that once pitted the white whale against the white whale no longer exists. There is only a run-down pond, the captain who died for the whale is long gone. In the pages of the book, we find only the idle next-door neighbor sitting on the bench.

The change of the meaning represented that people's hearts gradually move from abundance and perfection to emptiness and pallor. People's life is changing each day, the economy is thriving, the food, clothing, housing, and transportation have already obtained considerable satisfaction. However, the modern people are immersed in the spiritual emptiness and helpless, they lose the goal, no longer pursue grand and noble, and finally fall into trivial and ordinary.

8. The faded pastoral landscape

In addition to the pond, there are many cases in the novel where the pure pastoral consciousness is dispelled by the machines and modern facilities that brought by industrialization. Brautigan portraits the unimpeded bridge in the village, the extensive railway, the profitable coal mine, the three

sawmills that have sprung up, and so on. Besides, Brautigan repeats scenes such as the pond and the viaduct in order to highlight the book's theme, the damage that industrialization has done to rural life. The children felt that their playgrounds were being invaded, and the poor children even mistaking the coal mine for a huge black diamond and naively thinking that they would be rich from then on. In the novel, the only thing left intact is the place where the hero killed his friend, the apple orchard: "There were two previously planted and domesticated orchards that had been totally ignored, abandoned for having unknown and had reverted to the wild. " The only remaining apple orchard is the last trace of idyllic scenery, it should have retained the beautiful trails of pastoral life. However, the accidental death case broke the peace and tranquility of the orchard, which also means that the orchard has been transformed like the river, its quiet has been broken, waiting for it will be changed and wither.

9. Conclusion

In the late 1980s, the French scientist Claude Allegre discussed the concept of spiritual circle in his book *Écologie des Villes Écologie des champs*. It means that human beings and nature form a circular structure and are connected. Through the "spirit circle", mankind and nature form a whole community of common destiny.

This article, through to Brautigan's fiction *The Wind Won't Blow It All Away* further reading, and thinking of predecessors' research results. This paper found that in addition to the natural ecology itself, this novel also presents many human characters. They are in the center of the spirit of life, suffer from infringement and become desolated in the environment of damaged nature. Given this, this paper introduces the concept of the spiritual circle into the analysis of Brautigan's novels and uses the idea of spiritual ecocriticism to examine literary works. This paper both analyzes the fate of characters and nature, aiming to point out the connection between them. That is, industrialization shrinks the natural scenery and then squeezes the spiritual world of human beings, which compresses the spiritual world of human beings and further brings about the withering of pastoral meaning.

According to the theory of spirit circle, human beings are a vital part of the spirit circle, and literature and art, as an essential emotional and creative activity of human beings, are in the spirit circle. With the further development of industrialization, people have now come to a post-industrial era where the conflict between man and nature is more acute. It is an urgent mission for modern people to repair the cracks in the spiritual circle and improve the ecological condition of the earth.

In view of this, this thesis takes care of reality, with the perspective of spiritual ecological criticism to analyze *The Wind Won't Blow It All Away*, both with other scholars' research conclusion, to prove Brautigan is undoubtedly an environmental consciousness author. Also, this paper pointed out that the ecological idea of Brautigan is not only criticism of excessive industrialization, but also realize the correlation between human and nature. From my point of view, Brautigan not only concerned with nature but also pay attention to all mankind.

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