

Aesthetic Tradition and Cultural Temperament of British and American Literature

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Abstract: British and American literature occupies an important position in the history of world literature, which has rich literary connotation. The contents of British and American literature reflect the long national culture and historical characteristics of Britain and America, vividly display the unique culture, and deeply express the philosophy of life and social form. This paper mainly analyzes the relevant content of British and American literature, and makes an in-depth study of the aesthetic tradition and cultural temperament, hoping to provide some reference for people to better understand the characteristics of British and American literature.

1. Introduction

British and American literature not only occupies an important position in the history of world literature, but also is a major literary school in the West. British and American literature is developed on the basis of ancient Greek and Roman literature. After a long history of development, many literary treasures have been created. At the same time, many world-famous literary writers appeared and created many world-class literary peaks. Shakespeare is a famous poet and playwright in the Renaissance. Many of his works have become the pearls in the history of British and American literature and even the history of Western literature. Many of his masterpieces still play an important role in the world today, recording the development of human history, the fragility of human nature, and reflecting the indomitable temperament of human beings in the face of the dark forces. His literary spirit constantly influences and inspires people to move forward in the thorns. Studying the aesthetic tradition and cultural temperament of British and American literature can promote people to better understand foreign literature from the perspective of literature and deepen their deep understanding of foreign culture and history.

2. Overview of British and American Literature

British and American literature is developed on the basis of ancient Greek and Roman culture, and has been deeply influenced by European and American culture in its development process, which makes British and American literature rich in creative materials. Ancient Greek and Roman mythology is its important literary material, and it has laid the foundation for the aesthetic tradition and cultural temperament in British and American literature. The emotional expression, heroism and adventure spirit in British and American literature are inspired by ancient Greek mythology. At the same time, Hebrew culture, as one of the sources of British and American literature, makes the aesthetic tradition and cultural temperament in British and American literature also influenced by Christian culture.

British and American literature contains two kinds of literature. British literature has a long history of development and profound literature, while American literature is younger, full of vitality, yearning for freedom and bold critical spirit. The development of British literature has a long history. In the process of its development, there are many different periods, such as Renaissance, the neoclassical period, Romanticism, realism and modernism. American literature gradually separated from British literature in the 19th century, and in the 20th century, American literature has shown a

mature state and developed into an independent national literature.

3. Analysis on Aesthetic Tradition of British and American Literature

The origin and development of British and American literature are influenced by the ancient Greek and Roman culture and Hebrew culture, and many literary materials are obtained from them. Therefore, they have an important influence on the aesthetic tradition of British and American literature.

Homer's Epic came into being in the classical period, the heyday in the development of ancient Greek culture, and became the representative literary works of that period. *Homer's Epic* has a rigorous narrative structure and mature rhetorical devices. The most widely used device in *Homer's Epic* is metaphor, which describes the magnificent scenes of social development, historical changes and various spiritual images of the characters. From the characteristics of ancient Greek literature, we can see the shadow of the aesthetic tradition of British and American literature, which is mainly reflected in the following three aspects. First, there is a strong sense of idealism. Ancient Greek culture and literary works have a deep expression and profound love of idealism, which can be fully illustrated by the worship of power and heroes in their works, as well as the aesthetic thought of greatness as beauty. Therefore, in the process of literary creation, men are usually the main characters, and they have extraordinary strength, beautiful appearance and developed muscles, while women are usually the images of extraordinary beauty. Deities in the literary works had the same appearance and emotion as human beings, so deities were the idealized state of human beings in the aesthetic tradition at that time. Second, the characteristics of humanism are very distinct. The ancient Greek traditional culture attaches great importance to personal value, pursuing freedom and enjoyment. Therefore, when describing the attitude and concept of life, the literary works was influenced by the traditional culture, reflecting the values of people at that time. Ancient Greek mythology is an important embodiment of aesthetic tradition. Generally, deities have humanized emotions and expressions, participate in human activities, and there are even many heroic images of demigod, fully reflecting the characteristics of humanism. Third, idealism is obvious. In ancient Greek literature, people and deities can communicate with each other, and even human beings can criticize and reflect on deities. The rationalism shown in ancient Greek literature also has an important influence on British and American literature. For example, *The Old Man and Sea* is a masterpiece of American writer Hemingway, successfully portraying the hero's noble image of perseverance and fighting bravely. The fighting scene between the old man and the shark not only reflects the hero's tenacity and bravery, but also reflects the praise of power and the worship of heroism in literature at that time. Therefore, it fully illustrates the ancient Greek cultural shadow reflected in the aesthetic tradition of British and American literature.

The development of Hebrew culture has experienced hundreds of years of heroic struggle of Jewish people, and Christian culture appeared in its later period, which made the *Bible* have worldwide influence. Hebrew culture itself is one of the sources of British and American literature, so many British and American literary works are influenced by Christian culture, showing its aesthetic tradition. The first is the quotation of the *Bible* in British and American literature. By quoting the characters and sentences, the tone of literary works is established. The second is to use the storyline in the *Bible*. British and American literary works are deeply influenced by Christian culture in the process of character description and depiction, such as learning from their allusions to express different meanings.

4. Analysis on the Cultural Temperament of British and American Literature

4.1. Pursue the Liberation and Enlightenment of Human Nature

The common influence of ancient Greek culture and Hebrew culture laid a cultural foundation for British and American literature and showed strong humanistic color in the literary works. In particular, the pursuit of liberation consciousness and enlightenment spirit of human nature never

stopped, which was most obvious in the Renaissance. Humanism is not only the core theory of Renaissance, but also the aesthetic tradition of ancient Greek culture. Therefore, in the process of British and American literature creation, there are a large number of works on the liberation of human nature and the pursuit of enlightenment spirit. For example, “If winter comes, can spring be far behind?”. This poem, which is widely spread in our country, is from the poem *Ode to the West Wind*, clearly showing the desire for the liberation of human nature and the urgent pursuit of enlightenment spirit in British and American literature at that time. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* describes that Hamlet’s fought against feudalism for his ideal. It is also an important embodiment of the author’s desire for human liberation and the pursuit of enlightenment. British and American literary works in the romantic period took the yearning for freedom as the main line, reflecting the process of human liberation and enlightenment.

4.2. Pay Attention to Applying Realism

In ancient Greek and Roman literary works, god and heroic deeds are often used as creative subjects, but god is endowed with human characteristics and personality, which reflects the application of realism in literary works and reflects the author’s realistic criticism and reflection by using literary works. Influenced by it, British and American literature pays more attention to real events, social forms and public life in the process of literary creation. Many British and American literary works use the fate changes of the protagonists to reflect the reality at that time, the coldness of the society, and then present the cruel and merciless social reality to the readers. Most of the time, the author expresses his concern for the society and sympathy for the people at the bottom by describing the tragic life and experience of the characters.

4.3. Have Strong Spirit of Criticism

There were a lot of critical thoughts in British and American works, especially a lot of critical reality and reflective literary works appeared in American literature. Although American literature appeared and formed in a short time, young and full of vitality, it showed strong critical consciousness and bold critical behavior towards realism. Mark Twain and Fitzgerald are famous writers with critical consciousness, whose works reflect a strong critical spirit. Among them, Mark Twain is also known as the founder of critical realism in American literature. His *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* fully shows the hypocritical and vulgar social situation and customs in the United States at that time. At the same time, he deeply satirizes and criticizes the hypocritical religious etiquette and the stale education system, and uses relaxed and happy language and mood to describe children’s liveliness, cheerfulness and freedom.

5. Conclusion

British and American literature occupies an important position in the history of world literature development, having rich literature content, profound connotation and outstanding achievements. The literary works are numerous and have a wide and deep influence. Many of the works are still in circulation. The origin of British and American literature mainly comes from ancient Greek culture and Hebrew culture, so the aesthetic tradition and cultural temperament of British and American works have more characteristics of ancient Greek and Hebrew culture. This paper mainly analyzes the relevant content of British and American literature, and makes a more detailed analysis and research on the aesthetic tradition and cultural temperament of British and American literature. Through the content of this paper, we can see that British and American literature has a long history and far-reaching cultural influence. It was deeply influenced by ancient Greek and Hebrew culture. Many of the works show the desire for the liberation of human nature, the pursuit of enlightenment, the concern for realism and the spirit of criticism. After the precipitation of history, British and American literature has gradually formed its own unique aesthetic tradition and cultural temperament, and has also contributed a lot to the progress and development of world literature.

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