

Dickens's Humanitarian Spirit: The Tale of Two Cities

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Abstract

Based on the French Revolution, *A Tale of Two Cities* reveals the evil of the feudal aristocracy from the perspective of the humanitarianism of the bourgeoisie. Starting from the concept of humanitarianism, the author expounds Dickens's Humanitarianism in detail, and dialectically analyzes the progress and limitations of his humanitarianism in the times. He describes the people at the bottom with the writing method of historical narration, shows the miserable life of the people at the bottom with the detailed description, denies the bourgeoisie's view that poverty is attributed to moral degeneration. But, he did not realize the bottom layer misfortune was caused by the bad social conditions. He could not identify with the means of revolution when trying to solve the underlying problems.

Keywords

Dickens; *The Tale of Two Cities*; Humanitarianism; Bottom story.

1. Introduction

The great revolution in France in 1789 had a profound impact on the European countries at that time, and the baptism of the ideological values it gave to the scholars of various countries was self-evident. The tale of two cities is a historical novel written by Dickens against the background of the French Revolution. The plot of the story shocked the soul, the description of the scene was magnificent, and the words showed the artistic charm of the language. It is one of the world's classic literary works.

The tale of two cities was written in 1859, the famous Victorian era in British history. During this period, with the rise of the British Industrial Revolution, the British capitalist economy has developed unprecedentedly. Additionally, in order to extract the maximum surplus value, capitalists have carried out cruel exploitation on the workers, and their lives are very difficult. The working class has been in the exploitation of the bourgeoisie for a long time. The contradiction between the working class and the bourgeoisie has been intensified and gradually reached an irreconcilable level. The Charter movement, which broke out in 1836, is an interpretation of the workers' strong dissatisfaction with the exploitation of the bourgeoisie. Although the movement did not achieve the desired result of the working class for various reasons, it caused great repercussions in the British ideological circle at that time. Dickens's description of the social unrest and uneasiness brought about by the French Revolution in the tale of two cities reflects his worry about the current situation of his motherland, so he wrote this book with the function of warning the world.

2. Character Analysis

At that time, France was still a typical European feudal monarchy in politics. The lives of the royal family and the aristocracy were extravagant and lecherous. They satisfied their luxurious lives by occupying a large amount of land and collecting money from other social classes. They ignored the miserable situation of the people who didn't have a living. It seemed that the cruel exploitation and repression of the civilians were justified. In the eyes of the

aristocracy, the lives of the civilian class have no value at all. The common people are nothing but livestock in their eyes, just as the noble uncle of Charles Darnay, the man in the book, said to him - "hatred of the superior is an involuntary loyalty of the inferior, and repression is the only eternal philosophy. My friend, the dismal obedience born of fear and servility will make those livestock submit to the whip, as long as this If a roof can cover the sky, this philosophy will not change.. " (Volume II, Chapter 9) There is a very detailed description in the book about the uncle's attitude towards the ordinary people's lives, so there is no need to talk about it here. Dickens made these descriptions, one is a deep criticism of the aristocracy at that time, the other is to let the readers feel that the irreconcilable class contradictions in French society at that time, which laid the foreshadowing for the next great revolution. In addition, it also has the deep intention to warn the British rulers at that time not to repeat the French mistakes.

Charles Darnay, the hero of this book, was born in a French aristocratic family. At this time, he had already married in England. After receiving a letter from his former housekeeper in Paris, he knew his identity might be killed in the chaotic French society at this time. He still decided to go to the motherland alone to rescue him. It was just because of a sense of justice and his patriotism. That made him so determined - "Just like the sailor in the old story, the swift wind and torrent drove him into the magic magnet attraction range, which was sucking him in, but he had to go. Everything that emerged in his mind was more and more rapid, and more and more firmly rushed him to the place with terrible attraction. He felt uneasy all the time, in his misfortune country, all kinds of evil means are used to achieve all kinds of evil purposes, and he is not a person who does not know that he is like them, but he does not try his best to stop the bleeding and extend compassion and humanity "(Volume II, Chapter 24). It can be said that the author praises patriotism from the side through the actions of the male Lord.

In the book, Lucie's nanny, Ms. Pross, is also a memorable role in the author's works. Although she has a strange personality, she is kind-hearted and has always been loyal to her mistress. In her eyes, Lucie, the heroine, is the incarnation of the perfect goddess. She takes everything of the heroine more seriously than herself. When she follows the heroine to Paris after the revolution to rescue the heroine, she is even more reckless of her personal safety. Every time, she takes a great risk to go to the streets of Paris full of violence and bloody life necessities. She is willing to sacrifice her happiness for the safety of her mistress Lucie, and she is willing to sacrifice her life for Lucie. At the same time, she is such an English aunt who is an out and out patriot. In her words - " I am a subject of his Majesty King George III, the most honorable king. And as his subjects, my maxim is "destroy their treachery, frustrate their intrigue, bless our king, and hope our system"! "(Volume III, Chapter 7). According to the book, at that time, French revolutionaries sent monitors to control everything of the masses and wandered outside the residential areas, while a seemingly strange and ordinary British woman was in Paris shrouded in such a horrible atmosphere. But she dared to say such words to lose her head. When she talked about the monarchy which was abhorrent to French revolutionaries, she did not hide her sincere love. Ms. Pross's love and support for the British royal family, which symbolizes the British national symbol, reflects Dickens's thought of supporting the British constitutional monarchy against the French style violent revolution.

As a representative of the French revolutionaries in the book, Madame Defarge is a victim and a character not favored by heaven. Mrs. Defarge's fate should have been sympathized, because her family suffered major changes when she was young (her relatives were persecuted by Darnay's uncle), but Dickens did not portray the miserable figure living at the bottom of the society as a positive image, but highlighted her characteristics of ferocity, horror, ruthlessness and so on. From the death of her nephew, Darnay and her family, who was determined to kill her enemies, it can be seen that the disappearance of her humanity. In fact, this is what the author intends to do out of his opposition and hatred for the violent revolution. In Dickens'

opinion, the violent revolution can not solve any practical problems, on the contrary, it will distort human nature. Violent revolution will bring more disasters to the society, and violence will bring more threats to people's lives.

Through Dickens' writing, Madame Defarge, who should have been pitied, has become a "bloodthirsty goddess", whose human nature has been destroyed. It was the pain she had suffered and the thought of violent revolution that made her human nature distorted, and the image of Defarge was the representative of French radical revolutionary party during the revolution. It was the spread of violent revolutionary thought that made France have countless "Madame Defarge" during the revolution, which made France shrouded in the atmosphere of terror. Dickens tries to tell us that violent revolution is the road to destruction through the tale of two cities. Violent revolution did not save France. Instead, it brought long-term social unrest and thousands of innocent lives. He has always believed that only the gradual improvement of the bourgeoisie is the most suitable way for the development of Britain, and only in this way can all social disadvantages be eliminated. At the same time, he hopes to warn the world that class contradictions cannot be ignored through this book.

3. Humanitarianism in the Tale of Two Cities

The tale of two cities, published in 1859, reveals the damage of feudal oppression to human nature, reflects the sharp class contradictions and fierce class struggle, and exposes the evil deeds of feudal aristocrats against the background of the French Revolution. The humanitarianism thought throughout the novel is one of the main reasons for its long-standing and wide spread.

Humanitarianism is a trend of thought and theory about human nature, mission, status, value and personality development. It is a philosophy category of development and change. Humanitarianism thought germinated with the human being entering the civilization period, but as a kind of ideological trend and theory of the times, it was gradually formed after the 15th century, initially expressed in literature and art, and then gradually penetrated into other fields. Humanitarianism is an ideological system originated from the Renaissance in Europe. It advocates caring and respecting people. It is a people-oriented, people-centered world outlook. During the period of French bourgeois revolution, the connotation of humanitarianism was concretized into slogans such as "freedom", "equality" and "fraternity". Humanitarianism played an active role in fighting against feudalism during the bourgeois revolution.

Dana, a famous French literary critic, attributed Dickens's humanitarianism to "Charity and love" [1]. As a bourgeois humanist, Dickens not only sympathizes with the sufferings of the working people, but also opposes the armed revolution. When the laboring masses ruled the aristocracy, he turned his sympathy to the aristocracy. He placed his hope on the enlightened rulers to carry out some reforms and advocated the spirit of benevolence and forgiveness to resolve hatred and ease class contradictions. This is the humanitarian thought contained in the tale of two cities. The humanitarianism thought given by Dickens in the tale of two cities has obvious progress of the times, and also has obvious limitations due to the limitations of his class and historical conditions. The spirit of "fraternity and sacrifice" advocated by Dickens in the tale of two cities is the basic element of building a harmonious society, which has great historical and far-reaching practical significance.

The limitations of Dickens' humanitarian thought are mainly reflected in two aspects: dealing with revolutionary violence and solving class conflict. In dealing with the problem of revolutionary violence, he opposed all hostile violence and all forms of oppression, both against the feudal aristocracy and against the dictatorship of the people over the aristocracy after the victory of the revolution. In solving class conflicts, he advocated the peaceful way to

solve them, fantasizing to solve all conflicts with a utopian emotion. Dickens revealed that the outbreak of the French Revolution was a historical trend, but he did not really fully understand the social significance and historical progress of the revolution. He sympathized with the oppressed peasants, and when the aristocracy was suppressed by the peasants, he turned to the aristocracy. Through the portrayal of typical characters such as Defarge and his wife, the author clearly expresses his hatred of the armed revolution, and strongly advocates the way of "Return with kindness" to resolve all conflicts. By depicting two groups of characters with distinct contrast, the novel vividly depicts the hatred of violent revolution. Take the revolutionaries as an example. There are the hotel owner Defarge, his wife, the vengeful goddess Teres, Jacques three, and the small sawmen. Among them, Teres is the most representative. Tess's experience is extremely miserable, because Marquis Evergrande takes a fancy to his elder sister, which leads to a disaster: elder sister is trampled to death, brother-in-law is tortured by labor, father is angry to death, elder brother is killed by Marquis for revenge. It can be imagined that Tess's hatred for Marquis is extraordinary. At this point, Dickens sympathizes with Teres. However, when the great revolution broke out, the whole society was in a state of disorder and irrationality. The hatred, resentment, jealousy and dissatisfaction accumulated in the hearts of the lower class people for a long time were just like the eruption of the volcano, which was unstoppable and became a force leading the revolutionary trend. In such an atmosphere, the hatred in Terese's heart occupied all of her, her soul was distorted by hatred, her conscience was submerged in the irrational evil, and she appeared in front of the readers as a bloodthirsty person. Before the revolution, she was silent and kept knitting, recording the evil of her enemies. During the revolution, she held an axe in her right hand, carried a pistol and a sharp knife around her waist, and cut off the head of the warden with a sharp knife. In order to avenge, Teres hopes to put more innocent people on the guillotine. Tess tried her best to send the innocent Charles to the guillotine just because he was the nephew of the Marquis, and even killed his wife Lucy and her daughter.

Through the appearance of another group of characters, the novel indirectly expresses the revolutionary situation that the author advocates. They are Dr Manette, Charles, Lucy and lawyer Carden. Their presence is undoubtedly in sharp contrast to that of Teres. Dr Manette, for example, suffered 18 years in prison only because he presided over justice. His wife died of melancholy. His daughter was in exile. After he was released from prison, he was gray headed and sometimes fell into the agony of delirium. Dr Manette was deeply hostile to the Marquis. However, when facing Charles (the nephew of the Marquis), the suitor of his daughter Lucy, in order to complete the happiness of her daughter's life, he conquered his hatred and accepted the marriage with an extremely broad mind. Charles is a progressive young man, out of the mud but not stained. He is a rebel of the nobility, hateful of the evil deeds of his parents, giving up privileges and property, living in exile, and choosing an innocent but hard way of life. In order to save the innocent housekeeper Gabelle, he can go to France in crisis, regardless of his own safety. The young lawyer, Carden, was intelligent, regarded fame and wealth as dirt, and lived a little down and out. He loved Lucy as much as Charles, but when Charles was to be sent to the guillotine, Carden tried to die for Charles. The author expresses his admiration for this kind of humanitarian spirit, which shows the greatness of heroism and dedication. It is through these noble, broad-minded and loving characters that the novel pushes the humanitarian thought to the extreme.

4. Bottom Story

4.1. Personal and Experiential Perspectives

Novel is a kind of literary work with narrative as its main content, and narrative perspective is necessary to advance the plot of the novel. The structure of English novels is relatively

complete, and the sense of time and space sequence of the stories is very strong. Therefore, the novels give people the feeling of "easy to read" and "easy to understand". Many Victorian novels realize the moral function through the perspective of omniscient narrator, that is, there is no role of "I" in the works, but all the characters are described by name and third person. Such a narrative perspective is from the perspective of the author and the reader. When writing, the author takes into account the feelings of the reader as an observer who jumps out of the story, so as to observe the context of the novel more clearly and understand the meaning of the story. But Dickens uses the dual perspective to narrate the story in the tale of two cities. In addition to the conventional third person perspective, he also uses the first person to state the environmental background and the inner changes of the characters, which is the driving force to promote the development of the story.

The first person retrospective perspective is very obvious at the beginning of "two cities" -- as a prisoner of Bastille, Dr Manette explained his unfortunate experience, laid the emotional background of the whole story, and also explained the French social environment that the author wanted to describe, that is, the darkest period before the revolution. This part of the description is in the form of retrospection. After retrospection, there are many experiential descriptions corresponding to it, that is, Doctor Manette, as the main line of the whole plot development of the novel, on the basis of the story development of this character, leads to the story of other characters. When describing the plots of other characters, the way of first person review is used again to explain the characters' skills and experiences. From Doctor Manette's words, readers can learn a lot about Marquis evermont. The intersection and transformation of these two narrative perspectives have achieved a good effect of moral admonition. [2]

4.2. Multi Link Perspective

In the creation of the tale of two cities, Dickens created an unclosed circular narrative mode. The work begins with Doctor Manette's miserable experience in the Bastille prison, and after Marquis evermont's carriage ran over Gaspar's children, Gaspar assassinated the Marquis as the beginning of the French Revolution in the work. Then, the father and daughter of Manette saved Charles Danai, who was charged with espionage with their own testimony, as the beginning of the love between the hero and the heroine. It seems that there is no direct connection between the three. Any event can exist as a separate event. The reader must carefully read the first and second chapters of the work before he can have a general impression of what the whole work is about. This narrative mode leads many readers and literary commentators to have negative comments on the works. The narrative of the tale of two cities is very chaotic, with a wonderful beginning, but with a long and messy middle section.

However, this is the key to discuss and appreciate Dickens' narrative from the perspective of multi link. In the story of two cities, the narrative mode of "pluralism and oneness" is adopted, that is, the plot and characters of the novel are placed in an unclosed circle, each task represents a single ring clue, each ring clue has an intersection point, which is the key to push the plot to the climax. For example, on the clue of Marquis evermont, the decadent rule of nobles led to the tragedy of Doctor Manette and the tragedy of the Defarges. The intersection of the two characters led to the love between Charles Danai and Lucy and the plot of Danai saving Gabel. In the circular clues of Danai and Lucy, there is the representation of Doctor Manette's personal spiritual world -- to give up hatred and accept Danai as the descendant of the enemy, and then there is the plot of saving Danai again, which shows that Madame Defarge is submerged by the emotion of revenge and becomes a bloody "female revolutionary". At the end of the story, everyone's ending is actually the intersection of all the

ring clues. It is precisely because of the foreshadowing of multiple ring clues that the novel can reach the final climax.

Therefore, the narrative perspective of multiple links applied by Dickens in the tale of two cities is to combine, influence and interact multiple seemingly scattered closed narrative clues through certain links, so as to form an orderly and complete whole on a macro level. This is not seen in previous British novels, which is enough to prove Dickens's originality in his creation. [3]

5. Summary

Through the three novels of Dickens, orphan in the fog, tough times and the tale of two cities, it can be found the contradiction and complexity of Dickens' bottom story. This is mainly reflected in his sympathy for the bottom as well as his distance and imagination. In the face of the structural bottom group, he sincerely expressed his concern and sympathy for the poor people. In the novel, he made no secret of the miserable life of the bottom people, exposed their economic embarrassment, poor living environment, low social status, and spiritual numbness and indulgence, even jumped out of the plot of the novel in the way of commenting on thousands of expectations, calling on people to pay attention to the poor people and improve their lives and try to come up with solutions to the underlying problems. But Dickens did not really understand the problems and demands of the bottom, nor did he realize that it was the unreasonable social system that led to the misfortune of the bottom. This determines that Dickens's bottom story is full of imagination and fiction, and the poor are described as a dangerous place full of crime and evil, in which dirty and chaotic, theft and murder happen from time to time, which coincides with the moral imagination of the middle class to the slums. The workers who gradually lost themselves under the pressure of the factory owners realized their situation and tried to unite against oppression, but this behavior was funny and ineffective in Dickens' narration. The revolutionaries who try to fight for individual rights by revolutionary means are just like the irrational and cruel people in the French Revolution. In addition, the narrative strategy adopted in the novel also shows this point. Dickens uses the third person omniscient narration to look at the bottom from the perspective of God. The promotion and solution of the contradiction in the novel mainly depends on the good and evil of the characters, and only the moral perfect people can be saved. The major conflicts in reality have been solved in an idealized way.

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