

The Modernization Process of American Literary City Writing

-- Based on New York City Writing

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Abstract

Through the methods of imaginative portrayal, textual analysis and specific case studies, this paper comprehensively composes the urbanization and modernization in the development of New York literature, analyzing the writing of New York city in the colonial period, before and after the War of Independence, the Romantic period and the modern period. It reveals the ruins and decadence of New York city through Docetoro-modern life aesthetics, the present and future of New York people's lives through O. Henry's urban construction development, the lives and values of New York's underclass people through Truman Capote's catharsis of spiritual repression, and finally looks into the future of artificial intelligence and urban literary writing.

Keywords

Literary Development; Urbanization and Modernization; New York; Urban Literature; Artificial Intelligence.

1. Introduction

New York has been conducting trade for more than four hundred years, and with the industrial revolution and the involvement of capital, the city has rapidly become one of the world's metropolises [1]. The ups and downs of its urbanization have stimulated the creative interest of literary writers from all over the world, who have produced a large number of excellent works around the scenes of New Yorkers' lives and the modernization of New York City [2, 3]. Different writers have written about the prosperity and luxury as well as the darkness and helplessness from different perspectives, enriching the connotation of New York City literature. Compared with the original literature, urban literature is an emerging subject, born in the era of peace, focusing on the rapid rise of economic and social development, people living in the city from the countryside, the amplification and even proliferation of desires, and the confusion of ideas that leads to a large number of social problems, etc. [4, 5]. Many writers lived in the city, but the "city disease" made them miss the countryside, and their struggles and criticisms condensed into their works. Among them, New York City is a typical example of the development of capitalist society, and the essence of capitalism can be seen in its literary writing [6].

2. Research Methods

Imaginative portrayal method: The city in literature is based on the writer's imagination, so it needs to be described and understood in depth without the social factors involved in traditional urban literature.

Textual analysis method: In the mode of "reflection theory", we believe that the city's life scenes and social landscape are presented through the writers' literary works, and we intend to select some passages for analysis and detailed reading.

Comparative analysis method of case data: involving the intersection of artificial intelligence, literary creation, statistical analysis and other disciplines, the data used for statistical collation came from Internet databases (World Inequality Database <https://wid.world/data/#countriestimeseries/>, New York Big Database <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/new-york-ny>).

3. Research Content

3.1. A Brief History of Urban Writing in New York

(1) Colonial Period

During the colonial period, New York's urban landscape was mainly written by European colonists, and most of the works were adventure works, recording the hardships of navigation and survival, describing the natural scenery and daily habits of the New World in the form of literary creations, which were also highly utilitarian, in order to arouse the curiosity of the people and attract more people to explore the New World. At the same time, the chronicler was also influenced by the open-mindedness of Europe, and these works are full of renaissance mood, making American literature enter a new era.

For example, "A Complaint Against New Amsterdam" describes the helpless life of a child in a British colony, hoping that more countries would take notice of the city. Another example is when the British colonists took over New York, Daniel Denton's "Introduction to New York" summons more people to come and achieve tribal prosperity by showing people's daily necessities along with the waterfront, beach, river and other city scenes.

As the number of tribes increased, buildings gradually appeared and the general appearance of the city just began to show, when people's minds only had an imaginary look of the city.

(2) Before and after the War of Independence

The literary works before and after the War of Independence were closely focused on the themes of the times, whether the War of Independence was justified, whether the country could be independent, etc. The depictions of this period focused more on the fears, disputes, and pains of the people of New York City about the war, mostly with the authors' subjective consciousness, and created the basic premise for the independent modern American literature in the future.

Ethan Allen, a representative figure of this period, is famous for leading a large army against the enemy several times. As the British invaders kept control of New York City, a large number of prisoners of war were imprisoned in the ship's prisons, and the dark and miserable life created "prisoner of war literature" with political overtones.

In this period, the city of New York was full of panic and helplessness, and the dream of building a city was mercilessly destroyed by the war, and the painful darkness brought by the war was pervasive in the literature.

(3) Romantic Period

After winning the War of Independence, the modernization of America also gradually set off, and native writers began to sing the praises of this period, which was the stage of the budding consciousness of New York city writing.

Washington Irving, imbued with English Romanticism, was the first Romantic literary figure in New York. Irving's most internationally acclaimed "Notes on Seeing and Hearing" extensively describes the natural beauty of the English countryside and projects nostalgia for New York's past as well as an attack on modern development through comparative satire of New York society. Literary scholar Herman Melville, on the other hand, focused on the times with his unique eye for realism. His literary works attack the extravagance and desolation of urban life, especially of the New York upper class, reflecting a certain inevitability of urban development.

With the modernization of New York City, the literary works focused more on the real society, mainly reflecting the confusion and burden brought by urban development to people's body

and mind. The urban literature of this time lacked integrity and independence, but it had profound significance for the development of literature.

(4) Modern Period

After the end of the Civil War, New York City rapidly entered a glorious period of capitalist development. As shown in Figure 1, the massive accumulation of capital in the U.S. from 1996 to 2001 and the sharp rise in the number of buildings in the city show that the rapid rise of real estate in the pre-capitalist development led to a sharp widening of the gap between the rich and the poor, which inevitably intensified social conflicts.

The literary works of this period are mainly critical of reality, exposing the dirty and ugly social and cultural forms behind the prosperity of New York society. The reckless spending of the upper class contrasts with the misery of the lower class, and the lower class, no matter how hard they try, cannot cross the class gap even if they give up their bodies, and can only perish in helplessness. As the short story writer O. Henry's literary works satirize, the whole society is money-oriented, and the dramatic confrontation between the rich and the poor is maintained.

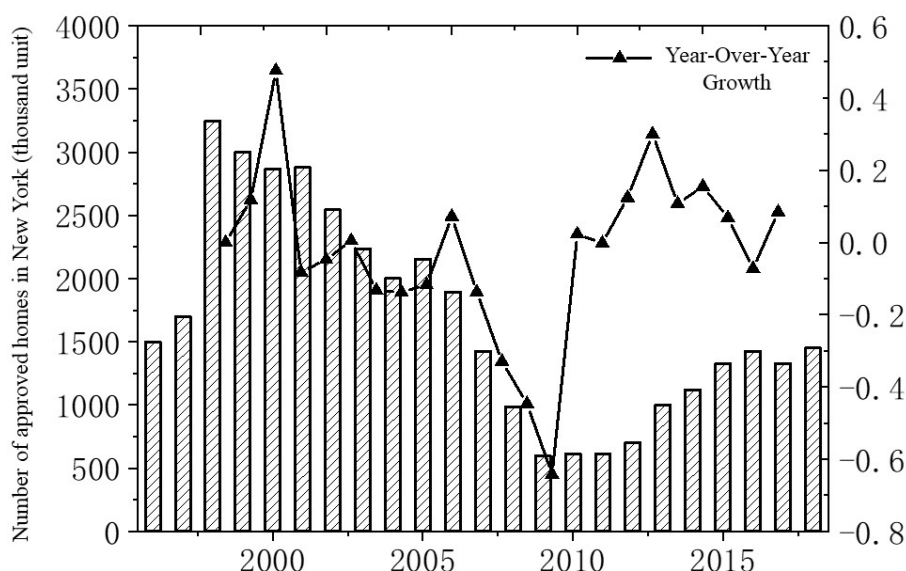


Figure 1. The number of new buildings in New York City from 1996 to 2018

3.2. Cases of New York City Writers

(1) Doctorow: Aesthetics of Modern Life - The Ruins and Destruction of New York City

Doctorow is an American writer of postmodernism and neorealism who lived in the late 20th century. His works mostly adopt the collage method as a way to show the fragmented life in the era of the Great Depression. As shown in Figure 2, the disposable income per capita in New York from 1996-2018, rose year by year with the growth of time. Consumption levels increased, but people were able to save very little money, and social conflicts became increasingly acute.

The greatest characteristic of the 19th century New York city is the grid, and this grid New York allows Doctorow to revisit it, thus generating a unique perspective, fragmenting time and space, and establishing a new mechanism of visual observation. In his understanding modernization must remove and dismantle the primitive day after day, constantly constructing new values, which is the best explanation of the modern New York city. New York's modern architecture has three stages: transition, passing and eternity, and after the completion of these three stages, the building is reduced to garbage. This is a kind of beauty of ruins, which is also the characteristic of New York city determined by the unique nature of New York and the background of the times.

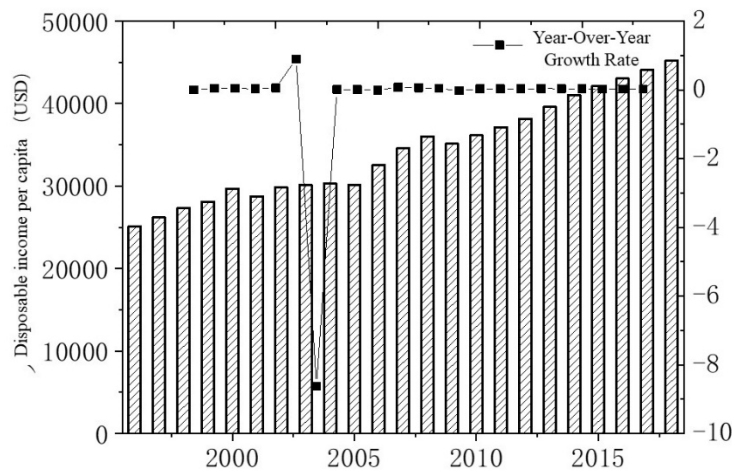


Figure 2. Disposable income per capita in New York City, 1996 to 2018

(2) O. Henry: City Building and Development - The Present and Future of the People of New York

O. Henry is a famous master of urban writing in the history of American literature. He mainly highlights the characteristics of the city with the most realistic and vivid details of the life of the ordinary citizens of New York. In his works, he explained the new way of life and values, which brought a great impact and transformation to the people of that time. His writings include inns, cafes, bars, streets and other urban buildings, which on the one hand provide the setting for the stories, showing the identity, relationships and living conditions of the characters, and on the other hand represent the "soul" of the city, i.e. the internal construction, collaborative conflicts and other social conditions.

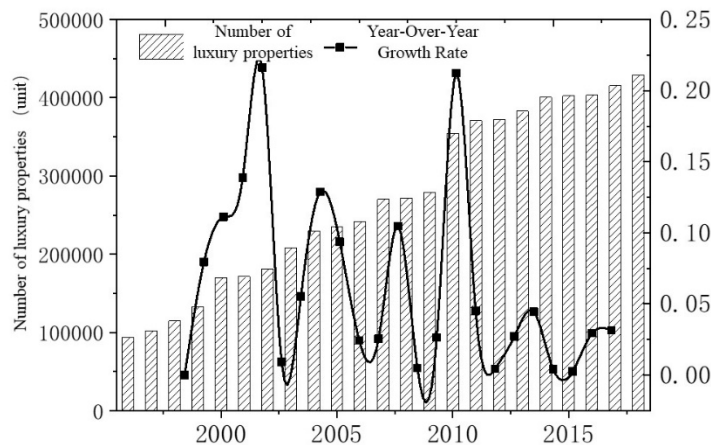


Figure 3. Number of luxury homes in New York City, 1996 to 2018

As shown in Figure 3, the number of luxury homes in New York increased over time from 1996-2018, with a peak growth rate near 2000, a sharp slowdown after the 2008 financial crisis, and a new high in 2011. As shown in Figure 4, the number of restaurants in New York also increased over time from 1996-2018, with the fastest growth rate near 1997, a large number of restaurants going bankrupt in the 2008 financial crisis, and a gradual rebound three years later. If housing is a symbol of status, restaurants are a symbol of consumption, and the two growth change trends are basically the same. But while the social divide, with the interests at the top

relevant and the despair and pain at the bottom, is difficult to read from the data, classic literature provides a valuable sample.

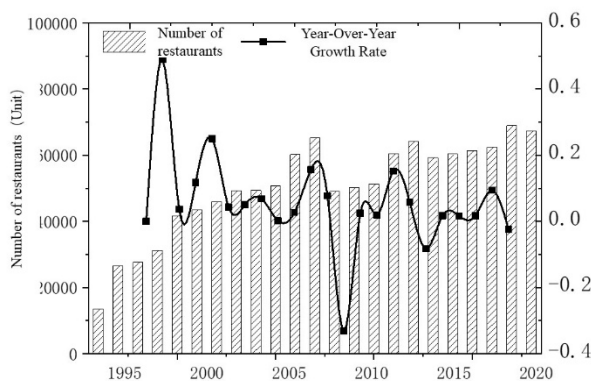


Figure 4. Number of restaurants in New York City, 1996 to 2018

(3) Truman Capote: Catharsis of Spiritual Repression - Life and Values of the Underclass in New York

"Daytime novels", which usually portray happy dreamers, use light-hearted and witty language to express the yearning for a better life and evoke empathy; in contrast, nocturnal novels, which are Truman Capote's specialty, reflect the alienated psychological state of modern people such as loneliness and fear through a lot of darkness, snow, trains, paintings and mirrors. He often connects the city with its history, tapping into social and cultural memories.

As shown in Figure 5, looking at the average wealth income of residents in different cities from 1986-2018, the disparity of individual wealth income in New York City is significant among a sample of six cities. Reflected in Capote's writing are the tragic stories of the characters, especially the spiritual pointers and survival status of the urban marginalized, which sound the alarm for the development of New York.

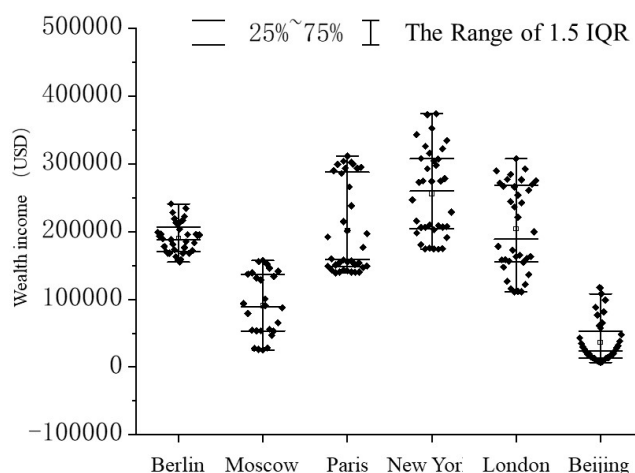


Figure 5. Average wealth income of residents in different cities, 1986-2018

3.3. Reflections on the Development of Artificial Intelligence Literature

(1) Creative subject

In the view of humanists, human beings themselves have unique emotions, intuition and wisdom, and machines simply learn and recreate. The main body of literature creation must be

human itself. In the literature created by artificial intelligence, it is more likely that the characteristic elements are extracted and reintegrated on top of the original literature (such as the modernized and urbanized writing works in New York).

(2) Emotional machines

Humans are capable of "thinking their own thinking", using emotions to experience, express, and make universal connections. There is much knowledge that humans can express without words, a unique "literary" approach that is difficult for artificial intelligence to learn. For example, in the expression of New York City writing, machine learning will never be able to capture the care and compassion for reality, because humanistic emotions are difficult to achieve through machine programming.

(3) Co-Building Mutual Constructs

We need to face the "literary creation" of artificial intelligence, to awaken people to think about their own shortcomings, and to explore the collaboration mode from the differences to find a balance. At the same time, readers are also authors, and AI can provide help to literary scholars from the perspective of readers, so as to achieve the purpose of mutual construction of human and machine [7].

4. Summary

From a brief historical perspective, New York city writing is roughly divided into four major stages: the colonial period, the period before and after the War of Independence, the Romantic period, and the modern period. During the colonial period, the city's appearance gradually emerged; before and after the War of Independence, fear and suffering were resorted to literature; capitalism and romanticism were interwoven and parallel; and in the modern society, the gap between the rich and the poor increased, and humanistic concern became the biggest highlight of urban writing. In the future of artificial intelligence creation, we expect a more harmonious and collaborative way to record the development process of human urban civilization in detail.

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