

Study on the Survival Consciousness in Coetzee's Novels

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Abstract

Jame Maxwell Coetzee is an extraordinary white South African writer whose excellence lies in the universality and transcendence of his works, he shows a pan-human living situation by describing the living conditions of unique individuals in a specific space-time state, and this situation is a kind of human fate determined by human nature itself. Among them, the deep and painful survival consciousness of Coetzee's soul shows Coetzee's sympathy for the vulnerable groups, his cherishment for individual life, and his concern for the weakness of human nature, which highlights a compassionate humanistic care.

Keywords

J. M. Coetzee; survival consciousness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Although Coetzee's creative achievements are impressive, before he obtained the Nobel Prize in Literature, domestic academic circles on his research were still in the nascent state, after he obtained award, the attention gradually began to rise. However, in general, the research period is not very long, and the research results are not particularly fruitful. Especially the research on survival awareness is even weaker. Researchers often excavate around individual works or from a single perspective to explain the underlying survival connotations. This paper takes Coetzee's multiple novels as the research objects, and uses the method of textual reading to dig and analyze the survival consciousness in Coetzee's novels, so as to better understand the rich humanistic connotations in the works and appreciate the author's deep soul Compassionate and deep feelings. It is hoped that this thesis will provide us with a new perspective on understanding Coetzee and his works, and moreover, it will help to broaden the breadth of Coetzee's research to a certain extent.

2. INTERPRETATION OF SURVIVAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN COETZEE'S NOVELS

Coetzee, as a writer with a sense of historical mission, had been committed to finding and exploring the meaning of human existence. He used non-traditional expressions to dig deeply and explore the proposition of deep and heavy existence, and such writers are few in the contemporary era. It can be said that the writing of survival issues is a basis and starting point for Coetzee's literary creation. His novels depict the struggling existence of ordinary people or small people in the turbulent social life and their loneliness, fear, and helplessness in the face of a rapidly changing world in real pen and ink. The weight of existence reveals the hardship and bewilderment of being born, and strongly condemns the indifference and ruthlessness of human nature; it shows the perplexity and helplessness of humans in real life and the author's deep anxiety about human future.

2.1. Living Conditions of Suffering

Coetzee used a concise word "disgust" summarize a basic state of being in the world and pointed out that this general "disgust" comes directly from the hardships and difficulties that people experience in this world. Looking back at the history of South Africa, "suffering" can best express the reality of this country. For thousands of years, the burden of survival has been heavily weighed on the weak backbone of the South African people, and the suffering of survival has surrounded every one of them. Suffering has become an inevitable choice for individual existence. When reading Coetzee's novels, we can clearly feel a strong pessimistic atmosphere. The tragic sense of existence is manifested through the characters in the works, especially the suffering and fate of the victims. In the face of the cold reality of hunger, violence, and wandering, the humble and fragile life stubbornly bears the pressure from survival and walks on the edge of the world. Coetzee focused on the humblest, most basic, and most trivial desires of human nature, and through the description of hunger, he showed the original ecological dilemma of survival.

Michael K in "Life and Times of Michael K" often suffers hunger, and he often cries because he couldn't suck his mother's nipples on rabbit lips. He was always hungry when he was a child. At Hughes Snow Reynolds School, hunger turned children into animals. They steal food from each other, rummaging in the trash bin for bones and potato skins. At that time, Michael K's only desire was food. On the way out, he was dizzy, hungry and pouring rain, and climbed into the abandoned apple orchard. "Here he bit the good flesh here, chewing fast like a rabbit, his eyes are empty, a piece of Bewildered. After arriving at the farm, skinny, he was chasing after the goats. Although he hated himself like a "barbarian with a butcher knife", he had to chase and slaughter them in order to survive. In the cave, there was no food. He had to eat the rhizomes of various plants, dig out ants' nests, eat petals, and severe hunger caused nausea, nausea, and even collapse. In the process of reclaiming the land alone and waiting for the fruits to mature, he slowly adapted to the feeling of hunger.

We can see that in a turbulent era, in an authoritarian country, one's basic material needs cannot be guaranteed at all. Under the persecution of the desire for existence, human behavior is gradually distorted and evolved into an animal behavior. This is not an original return to the original but an instinctual response to physical functions under external pressure; it is a war against modern society, and is a great irony to bring people suffering. Moreover, when facing the rights struggle of the authorities, Michael K chose to flee, he searched for the "habitat" of his own life in the "Rainstorm" and was weak, weak as he was, he could not resist the powerful power mechanisms, can only maintain our "independence" by hunger strike and silence, and keep his hearts pure desire for freedom.

The old chief executive in "Waiting for the Barbarians" has also been threatened by hunger. After returning the barbarian girls to their tribe, he was convicted of "treason against the enemy" and imprisoned overnight from a former imperial official. The solitary confinement of the interrogation room tortured him to the utmost, the most intense of which was starvation. Like a dog fed three meals a day, he crouches in the dark corner of the prison room every day in fear of the sound of the rice bell, hope for something to eat. As soon as the food arrived, it was devoured. However, the food provided by the prison was always insufficient. He had to endure hunger and pace anxiously back and forth in the narrow prison room. After the restoration of freedom, he often went hungry, looking for food to satisfy his hunger. When he woke up in the morning, he was "so hungry that he could hardly wait to wander around." first, he smelled oatmeal near the barracks gate and waited for the burnt pot; second, he coaxed the children to pick some mulberry for him from the tree; third, he sneaked into other people's orchard to steal some peaches while others were not paying attention; third, he begged along the street with a smile on his face; third, he went to the barracks kitchen to fetch some water and move some

peaches Some jobs like firewood can be mixed with food; or they can go to fishermen's tents to help wash fish and share food. If you are still hungry at night, you should stay outside the barracks. When the dog's whistle rings, you can ask the maid for some leftovers to fill your stomach. In order to get rid of the nightmare of hunger, he tried to find food and was eager to gain weight. "I want to feel the satisfied purr on my belly; I want to bury my chin in the fat pile of my neck; I want to walk with a shudder on my chest. In fact, as long as the simple life I am satisfied. I will never feel hungry again. "The terrible memory of hunger is engraved in the old chief executive's mind like a steel seal. He is thinking about getting fat to drive out the fear of hunger.

Under the absurd and oppressive administrative system, the old chief executive became the "victim" of the power struggle. From the ownership of rights to the loss of rights, the change of status brought about a sharp decline in the living conditions. From the former full of food to the later starvation and thirst, the old chief executive suffered from the pain and hunger. He lived in a mess, desolation and misery, like an animal. In such a strong contrast, we see the most primitive desire of human nature, and also feel the importance of material basis for life.

In these two works, Coetzee shows the most basic survival dilemma of human beings-the lack of food and material poverty, the lightness and weight of life are in the face of hunger, in the face of hunger, man has only one will, and that is to live.

2.2. Violence

In the West, human nature is considered evil, and it is pointed out that man must repent and atone for sin in order to save the soul. Among them, violence is one of the most authoritarian, cruel, and innocent acts in the sin of human nature. When reading Coetzee's works, people are often amazed by the naked sharpness in his cold and plain words. In his writing, the warmth of the world is pale and weak in the face of this weak and powerful world, and cold and cruel violence can be seen everywhere in the works.

In "Waiting for the Barbarian," Colonel Joel, who was brutal and cold-blooded, used violent torture to innocent people in order to make a confession. An old man was mistaken for a thief and was beaten to death. One boy was also tortured to death; the knife was inserted straight into the child's thin body like a key, turned left and right, and then pulled out. The absurd pattern of forced confession disdains life, and the attitude of ignoring life is shuddering, the living life is so fragile and humble in the front of the cold torture. These innocent indigenous civilians are like a beetle trampled on by imperial sergeants. The fierceness and brutality of human nature are revealed in this bloody scene. Sadly, however, the barbarians were not the invaders envisioned by the empire at all, they were just nomadic tribes that migrated between the highlands and the lowlands every year. The term "enemy" is just a term conceived by officials of the empire who lived comfortably. Unarmed people became prisoners of the empire, subjected to relentless blows and destruction by power and tyranny. The non-human penal system is like a faceless demon devouring life and desecrating civilization.

The new and old hatreds of blacks and whites aroused violent conflicts one after another in, the flame of hatred burned the truth, goodness, and beauty of human nature, blinded people's rational thinking, and led people to commit unforgivable crimes. The bottom line of ethical consciousness and morality was fragmented in the face of violence, and the value of life was also emptied into the vacuum of existence. Coetzee's descriptions of bloody, violent, angry, desperate scenes and emotions are unique and obscure, in the concise description and plain explanation; there is a terrifying atmosphere of violence. From the implicit expression of violence, we also see Coetzee's manifestation of human suffering.

2.3. Wandering

For Coetzee, wandering is not a strange word. From South Africa to the United Kingdom, from the United Kingdom to the United States, from the United States back to South Africa, and finally emigrated to Australia from South Africa, Wandering through different countries and cultures is an important part of Coetzee's life trajectory, the resulting sense of wandering lingered in his heart became an inevitable feeling, and had an important impact on his spirit and creation. In his writing, wandering is a kind of misery situation forced by life to settle. Choose wandering, because of survival, because of dreams, or other things. When wandering, the body is running around, and the wandering of the soul is accompanied by pain, hesitation, and loneliness.

Michael K lives with his mother in *Life & Times of Michael K*, and they plan to escape from Cape Town. Because they cannot obtain the pass, Michael was forced to push his mother on the journey to his hometown secretly. They eat and sleep on the road, eat cold food, sleeping in wet bushes with a rotten smell, deciduous beds, sleeping in the middle of the night, and they cuddling under each other, curled up under the tree to protect themselves from the rain, and the rain wet them. A blanket covered with rain above your head. Later, when they encountered robbery again, their mother screamed in horror when the gangsters showed a bright knife. Without letting go of the plan, Michael K yanked out a gang of iron rods and attacked the robbers. During this wandering journey, Michael K and his mother encountered heavy rain, robbery by gangsters, and police inspections. They were struggling to return home. During the journey, his mother's passing made the wandering a little heavy desolation, only Michael K walked alone in the deserted jungles and mountains.

In "Youth", John escaped the vulgar and false moral life and escaped in order to get rid of South Africa., escape from the shame of history, came to London with a dream of art. In the stunned city, indifferent crowds, he fell into a spiritual island. Solitary, frightened, and indifferent persecution made him to flee. For this reason, he chose cinemas, art galleries, museums, and bookstores as refuges, and always left until the British Museum closed or the bookstore closed. Nevertheless, on the night of the weekend, he still wandered alone among the bustling crowd, pretended to be happy, but lonely, he finally had to return to the remote and cold residence. He wrote, but found that his poems became shorter and shorter, no connotation, no poetry, just some boring phrases. He turned to prose, but after writing the story, he found that the background of the story was South Africa, and he was worried that he was still writing South Africa.

John realized that his passion was gradually fading, wear a black suit every day, do office work to destroy the soul, endure the loneliness and life without desire until his death, but his dream is getting farther and farther from himself. He walks in the vast sea of people, surrounded by young people of his contemporaries, and he fell like he is prematurely aging. But he is still a child, very ignorant of his status in the world, Full of fear and overwhelmed. In this city without a sense of belonging, he is lonely, confused, helpless, and traps in the wandering and anxiety of the spirit. Wandering is a kind of turbulence, a kind of displacement, a kind of wandering, wandering through the body and mind, hunger, disease, homeless material dilemma and the lonely, anxious, confused spiritual crisis haunt every wanderer. Nevertheless, Michael K and John still adhere to their beliefs and resolutely embark on this winding and bumpy road of wandering.

3. CONCLUSION

Coetzee is a knowledgeable writer with a sense of mission and morality. South Africa's unique living environment has shaped his distinctive thinking and creation. With an unwavering humanism, he pays close attention to the living conditions of the people at the bottom, and strives to build a country for the ideal of human existence; he deeply integrated his feelings

about life, his perception of existence, and his anxiety about human future into his creation, each of his works contains a strong sense of existence and a deep sense of history.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Ecological Deconstruction of Coetzee's Literary Works in the Context of Post-colonial Criticism (Number:19WWE296; Project supported by Heilongjiang Province)

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