

A New Interpretation of Autobiographical Novels in “Martin Eden”

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Abstract: In the autobiographical novel “Martin Eden”, American novelist Jack London portrays a successful character based on his own experience and imagination. From two aspects of New Historicism: self-molding in suppression and self-molding in subversion, this article will deeply interpret the autobiographical novel of Martin Eden by analyzing the construction of the self-consciousness of the hero.

1. Introduction

As a representative of literature from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, Jack London's works are very prolific, with more than 50 works in his life, including novels, poems, literary criticism, political articles, dramas and science fiction. In the era of the “American Dream”, [1]he was fortunate to succeed from scratch. “Martin Eden” is considered by Jack London to be the best work, and it reflects the core of naturalism to a large extent. It is an autobiographical novel, the first part of which is mainly based on real life in London, and the other parts are fictional. In the novel, Eden's ups and downs also show London's own disillusionment.a

2. “Martin Eden” Hero and Artistic Achievements

2.1 Protagonist

“Martin Eden” tells about a 21-year-old seaman and manual worker who fell in love with Ruth, a college girl, so he continued to teach himself to write in order to become a bourgeoisie and marry his sweetheart. However, his fiancée Ruth thought he was just a loser and felt that the magazine would not publish his work. In the end, Martin won the honor, but Lars Brissenden's suicide and separation from his class led him to plunge into the South China Sea.[2]

2.2 Artistic Achievements

2.2.1 Successfully Shaped Typical Characters

Not only is the protagonist Martin full and lifelike, but the other characters in the book are also very distinctive. Some of them have the same class status and some similarities in ideology and spirit, but there are differences in the same and the same in the differences. The pretentiousness of the bourgeois lady, the posturing of judges and bankers, and the selfishness of small businessmen

are all described. Jack London is good at portraying characters from the perspective of development, to shape living “round figures”, and is good at gradually showing and completing the personality characteristics of the characters in a real, concrete, and ups and downs plot, showing the characters, especially the main The spiritual world of the characters Martin and Ruth. This kind of artistic description is completely in line with the logic of life and makes people feel authentic.[3]

2.2.2 Accurate and Delicate Psychological Description

Jack fully demonstrated his talents in depicting the inner world of the characters. He sometimes expresses his spirit, revealing the complex and subtle inner activities and thoughts and feelings of the characters through the words, deeds and expressions of the characters; sometimes he expresses the spiritual world of the characters through the characters' own monologues, dreams and illusions; sometimes he is straightforward and adopts large sections. The psychological description of the characters reveals the secrets of the characters' hearts. Because the writer's psychological description of the characters is appropriate, the psychological state of the characters is vividly portrayed, so that the artistic images of the characters in the works are substantial and powerful, and the works contain rich social content and have a touching artistic charm.

2.2.3 Character Language is Highly Visualized

At the beginning of the novel, Martin was a low-level person with little knowledge, so he was full of native language and puppet language, and the language was very irregular. With the growth of cultural knowledge, his language is gradually standardized and correct, and the content of the conversation is also very thoughtful[4]. Ruth is a bourgeois lady with a certain degree of cultural education, so her language is elegant, standardized, and sometimes a little pretentious. The languages of other characters in the works also have their own characteristics, reflecting their different cultural literacy and status. It makes people feel like seeing them and hearing them. It can be seen that Jack London's use of character language is also ingenious.

3. Martin Contradicts Himself

New historicism emphasizes the discourse of power. According to Greenblatt, through the joint forces of society to build a large social system and cultural system, literary and artistic works are inevitably affected by social reality and perform different subversive and compliant functions. New historicism uses the words “subversion” and “inhibition” to emphasize these functions. “Martin Eden” is a product of a compromise between Jack London and the bourgeoisie. Subversion and obedience are revealed in the lines of the novel.

3.1 Aiqing and Loss of Self in Class

Jack London named this novel “Martin Eden”, “Martin” means a warrior, and “Eden” means Eden. In “Eden”, Martin was “tempted” by Ruth to fight for success. In the end, his dream was shattered and he was driven out of “Eden”. In “Martin Eden”, subversion is clearly presented and manifested in the following two aspects: self-lost in class and love, and the disillusionment of the American dream. At the beginning of the novel, Martin is presented as a poor boy with no social status. When he met Ruth, he immediately fell in love with this bourgeois lady at first sight, and was promised to take care of him after he achieved economic and social status. Can be engaged to. In order to marry his sweetheart, Martin taught himself to become a writer. Unfortunately, his work has been rejected by the publisher's editor. In the end, Ruth had no hope for her writing career and broke off her engagement with Martin. However, when Martin became famous, Ruth took the

initiative to reconcile, but Martin did not change his mind[5].

From Eden's perspective, social class is also a pivotal theme in this novel. Eden was born into a self-loathing working class and worked as a seaman. However, when he first met the bourgeois Moshi family, his heart was inspired. When he had dinner with this family for the first time, he felt "fascinated by everything around him, and didn't know what he was eating." As he improved, he found that he was constantly moving away from the working class, and Liz no longer Get close to it. Finally, when Eden found that his education level had far exceeded the bourgeoisie he respected, he felt more lonely than before. This led to his loss in class. He saw the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie, his dream of becoming one of them was shattered, but he could not return to the working class he had previously despised.

"Martin Eden" is a particularly successful educational novel, and when it was published, it became popular overnight. The reason is that one of its themes is about self-struggle, which is the American dream. Martin Eden, a working-class seaman, has continuously achieved success through self-struggle. This is consistent with the social value at that time: poor young people from a bad background, through their efforts to change their destiny, finally gained a prominent position. However, after Eden got everything he had originally pursued, including money, honor, and love, he realized that these were all vain. When he became famous, those editors who refused him when he was poor and had nothing but invited him. Martin gave all his money to Leeds and rejected Ruth's reconciliation. He realized the disillusionment of the American dream, jumped into the South China Sea and ended his life.

3.2 Inhibition: Forward Self-Shaping

"Self-shaping involves absolute power outside the self or the obedience of authority. If both authority and dissidents are outside of oneself, they will be experienced as internal needs at the same time. In this case, obedience and destruction are always internalized." Just as Green Blatter said that subversive forces are destined to be restrained by rights and will inevitably be affected by mainstream ideology. Although Martin tried his best to avoid this influence, he still stayed in it, obeyed and controlled by this system of rights, but eventually went to destruction. In this novel, the restrained self-shaping is expressed from two aspects: dealing with the balance between art and demand and compromising with mainstream society[6].

Jack London uses many words to explore Martin's artistic motives: how does he deal with the conflict between art and demand? From the reading of the text, it can be seen that Martin has adopted a "two-step" strategy: first he writes stories that cater to the market in order to earn money to marry his sweetheart Ruth, and then he spends enough time studying and writing, and Write a work that can truly be called art. This strategy also reflects Martin's helplessness in this world. Not only a society controlled by rights, but also want to seek the true self. After reading Brissenden's works, he realized that poetry is a real art. The enlightenment of thought He despised everything he pursued, but he was at a loss for it[7].

Martin realized his "American Dream", from struggling for nothing to becoming a prosperous one, which inspired the people of society at that time and made him an example for the people to follow. However, he chose to end his life to reach a compromise with the world he lives in. In that world, what he pursues is what he wants to avoid. For him, death is just a way of restraining his self-modeling, and he enjoys that "light and radiation surround him, invade him, and permeate him."

4. Conclusion

Jack London's autobiographical novel "Martin Eden" clearly shows the contradictions of

London's own emotions and beliefs. Martin lost himself in love and class. He lost his beliefs, experienced the disillusionment of the American dream, and the suicide in the South China Sea. This is his self-molding in the discourse of subversion and suppression.

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