

A Comparative Study of Narrative Skills between Haruki Murakami and Fitzgerald from the Cross-Cultural Perspective

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Abstract: Haruki Murakami, a novelist and translator of American literature, has attracted much attention in the Japanese literary world. Murakami's success is inextricably linked with an American writer, who is Fitzgerald. Through the comparative study of Haruki Murakami and Fitzgerald, especially from the perspective of Fitzgerald's influence on Haruki Murakami's writing style, this paper discusses the acceptance of exotic literature in different cultural contexts between the East and the West. with fusion. Haruki Murakami's creation begins with the acceptance and imitation of the narrative skills of Fitzgerald's novels. Fitzgerald's creative view of style coincides with Haruki Murakami, who also focuses on the introduction and absorption of western literary narrative skills. At the same time, it not only integrates the narrative strategy of Murakami and Western literature, but also highlights the strong characteristics of Western literature.

1. Introduction

Fitzgerald is one of the most influential writers in the history of world literature in the 20th century. He is not only the spokesman of the “lost generation”, but also known as the “laureate” of the “Jazz Age” [1]. His novels provide a wide space for us to study the theory of narratology, so they are imitated and respected by many famous writers all over the world, and Haruki Murakami is the faithful receiver of his narrative strategy [2]. Haruki Murakami studied at the Drama Department of the Faculty of Literature, Waseda University. In 1979, his first novel “Listen to the Wind Sings” was published, and it was put on the screen [3]. His creation is not bound by tradition, with novel ideas, natural and unrestrained writing, and does not flow into vulgarity and superficiality. Especially in depicting the loneliness and helplessness of the characters, he did not write this emotion as a negative thing, but raised it to Huawei's elegant style through the mental operation of the characters, a realm of enjoyment, which provides a life mode or life experience for people living in the city [4]. Murakami called Fitzgerald “my teacher, my university, my literary colleague” [5].

The unique style of Murakami's novels is closely related to Fitzgerald. Through the analysis of the creative styles of Haruki Murakami and Fitzgerald, this paper makes a comparative study of the creative styles of the two writers, and discusses the acceptance and integration of foreign literature in different cultural contexts of the east and the west [6]. As a mixed recipient of Eastern and Western cultures, Murakami's works still retain the characteristics of some Japanese novels and a unique oriental atmosphere, which is the difference between Murakami's and Fitzgerald's works [7].

2. Spiritual Isomorphism of Aesthetic Consciousness

2.1 The Combination of Ideal and Ambition Calls for Resonance

Haruki Murakami's imitation of Fitzgerald is subtle, and the most obvious of his imitation is Fitzgerald's narrative strategy about narrative perspective [8]. The premise of Murakami's approval of Fitzgerald is that Fitz's novels represent things that are “homogeneous” with Japanese culture and with Murakami himself. He is extremely fascinated and identified with Fitz and his works. Therefore, in the process of writing novels, Murakami combined Western cultural elements with

Japanese culture, forming a distinct personal creative style: East meets West, traditional and modern. [9]. The “Jazz Age” in which Fitzgerald lived has some similar characteristics with the “highly developed capitalism” Japan in which Haruki Murakami lived more than 50 years later. In his essay political season, Murakami once analyzed the incredible similarities between the two times: “in the 1920s, the United States eulogized the unprecedented prosperity and luxury hedonic culture, once the United States collapsed, it came with dark and heavy days and nights and war [10].

The narrative style of a novel is very important to the structure, style, views and attitudes of the novel. At this point, the Norwegian Wood has more obvious traces of inheritance from *The Great Gatsby*. The two novels have obvious similarities in narrative language style, narrative tense and choice of perspective. Compared with “*The Great Gatsby*”, “*Norwegian Wood*” and “*The Great Gatsby*” both use flashbacks to tell the story, and in addition to the participants in the story, the two authors also enrich the story from the perspective of a third party. It is up to the auxiliary participant to tease out details that the participant cannot express directly. Murakami came into contact with Fitz's works when he was young. The enthusiasm of Japanese youth for politics and youth expanded unprecedentedly, but it was suppressed by the society, followed by pessimism, confusion and nothingness. This spiritual emptiness is consistent with the theme expressed in Fitzgerald's novels, the representative of the “lost generation”, so Murakami shouted “the era of material desire, the confusion of spirit”.

2.2 Similar Interests and Personality

Although Fitzgerald's works reflect the characteristics different from those of Japanese literature, they are consistent with Japanese writers' aesthetic ideas in a certain personality. Fitzgerald thought: “If you want to describe something different from people, you have to describe a language different from people. Their novels are relatively peaceful and refined, with poetic language art. At first glance, *The Great Gatsby* has a very simple storyline. It can be said that this is not a novel that is known for its plot. The most attractive part of it is that it tells the story in a calm, slow narrative language. The profound themes and artistic sentiments behind the stories that come out. Haruki Murakami and Fitzgerald's preference for the perspective of first person narration makes their works often have a sense of distance and scale. This narrative technique began with Fitzgerald and developed in Haruki Murakami. Its core is distance. Haruki Murakami respected and practiced Fitzgerald's creative concept.

Their novels are relatively peaceful, elegant and poetic. Therefore, compared with Fitzgerald's works, Murakami's works have similarities and differences in language style. “Fitz's style wins with sincere feelings. Narration and description are concise, implicit..., with a strong lyrical flavor. However, his gorgeous style and elegant words hide a trickle of sadness, which will make the reader's heart throb. “The image of the moon and the flower, which is very popular in Japanese literature, and the typical oriental artistic conception often appear in the text. At *Gatsby's* party, the banjo clanged, and “I” saw a pair of triangular silver scales floating in the bay under the hanging moon, trembling slightly with the music. Haruki Murakami inherited the plain and fresh language in Japanese traditional literature, but he also avoided the verbosity of Japanese novels. This style of writing is quite oriental and coincides with Haruki Murakami's narrative technique.

2.3 Similarities and Differences

Japanese literature has created a unique custom of “things sorrow” since “*The Tale of Genji*”. Fitz's novels express a negative sense of beauty, which is unified with the Japanese literary tradition of “matter sorrow”. It is precisely because Fitz's personal literature quietly coincides with Japanese literature that Haruki Murakami can so naturally accept a seed from a foreign land. “His unique design of the narrative subject, both inside and outside, has shortened the distance between the reader, the text and the author to the greatest extent, making people feel real, credible and easy to participate.

The flexible use of the first person in Murakami's novels stems from his admiration for Fitzgerald's novel narrative skills. Although they did not create the first person narrative style, they used it freely, which really avoided the problem that the first person narrative style in the traditional

concept would loosen the novel structure and easily lead to the intervention of the writer's main idea. The night Nick first saw Gatsby, just as he was about to walk over to say hello to Gatsby, he saw Gatsby's sudden move, "he stretched out his arms toward the dark water, looks very strange", when Nick looked in the direction Gatsby looked at, he only saw "a lonely green light like a small star in the distance", this small "green light" is the dream pursued by Gatsby, is the incarnation of the Daisy he loves. He pinned his thoughts and hopes on this "little green light". Looking at the little green light, Gatsby would feel that Daisy was not that far away from him. These seemingly unrelated stories are actually led by an implicit main line, that is, looking for self. They minimize the impact of cultural differences on reading, and inject a fresh feeling into their writing with a humor that most people can accept and agree with.

3. New Qualitative Construction of the Blending of East and West

3.1 Differences of Several "Attitudes"

If Fitzgerald wrote *The Great Gatsby* in order to convey the connotation that dreams can't be realized, people are born alone, people can't get to know each other and can't go deep into their hearts by describing Gatsby's tragedy, then Haruki Murakami obviously has a completely different attitude towards all this. Before *The Great Gatsby* was written, Fitzgerald expressed his desire to create a novel with a new and complex way of writing. In addition to innovations in language and narrative perspective, Fitzgerald's attributes of the narrator's character are also striking. Nick adds his own comments while telling stories in the whole story. He has his own value system and evaluation criteria, so his personality traits are also shown with his personal views and positions. He said: "he has made new changes since the years of New Haven. He is in his thirties, with a strong physique, grass yellow hair, strong mouth and arrogance. In *Norwegian Wood*, Haruki Murakami gives Watanabe the responsibility of narrator. Murakami did not directly describe Watanabe's uniqueness, but let Watanabe tell the story in a bland tone. Murakami's writing is beautiful and unbiased. He gave Watanabe a gentleman's character: he never made arbitrary comments or made subjective assumptions, and he only made fair and objective evaluations.

It has to be said that Fitzgerald holds a pessimistic attitude towards the state of human beings getting rid of "loneliness" to a certain extent. In his view, loneliness is one of the characteristics of modern urbanites, no matter how hard they try. The indifference between people and the loneliness of individuals cannot be eliminated. This is reflected in Gatsby's life experience. In the *Norwegian forest*, Haruki Murakami gives a completely different view of "loneliness" and the way to solve it. Gong Watanabe felt that he had no place to go in the bustling city. Even with his beloved Naoko, the two men were just "wandering aimlessly around the streets of Tokyo, going uphill, crossing the river and crossing the railway crossing, just walking on and on. Since loneliness is a part of self, it is only natural to deal with it lightly. On this issue, Haruki Murakami's attitude is more detached than Fitzgerald's.

3.2 Fragmented Narrative Structure

A common feature of the works of Haruki Murakami and Fitzgerald is that their narrative structures are very ingenious, and the stories that seem to exist independently are actually inextricably linked. They write across time and space, and do not describe a single event, but break a story into several fragments, "fragment" the story, and then form the effect of time and space interlaced. This kind of structural arrangement seems random, but in fact it mainly depends on the choice of the narrator. Taking the *Norwegian forest* as an example, the narrator Watanabe's own character is random, and his whereabouts and thoughts are uncertain. Therefore, we have an uncertain feeling when reading. It seems that there is always a line pulling us and stimulating our reading interest, and the narrator and the narrator's character have become the key to threading the needle in the work. In addition, Murakami's works also incorporate traditional oriental culture, especially Japanese culture. Japanese culture usually reflects people's indifference to material interests and their openness and free and easy, which is well explained by the description of details

and characters' inner world.

In my opinion, Fitzgerald is a serious writer, and his language needs to be carefully tasted. Perhaps in Fitz's view, life is not something to be ridiculed, but something we must work hard to face, although Sometimes you can find some sarcasm in it, but it also contains a serious attitude. On the surface, we can say that the *Great Gatsby* is an “urban novel”. The theme of the novel is urban life. Fitzgerald shows the economic structure, social structure and modern lifestyle of the American metropolis New York at that time, as well as the living conditions of the characters of all classes and strata in the City, and the crazy songs and dances of the urban people The endless emptiness and loneliness behind the seemingly colorful life, such as the crisscross of contributions, and the disillusionment of ordinary people's idea of entering American metropolis to realize the American dream.

3.3 Differences in Novel Themes

Compared with Fitzgerald, Murakami's novels are different in nature. Traditionally, Haruki Murakami's novels are often regarded as “private novels”. A unique form of fiction produced during the Taisho period in Japan, also known as “self-fiction”. The term “private novel” began to appear in the newspapers at that time. In addition to the differences in language style, there are also great differences in the subject matter of the novels of “*Norwegian Wood*” and “*The Great Gatsby*”. In *Norwegian forest*, Murakami doesn't describe urban life in thick ink, but only some props with Western characteristics to reflect the sense of city, such as whisky and brandy, various western pop music, classical music and Western food in the refrigerator. In a word, the colorful urban weather in Haruki Murakami's novels is not obvious. We can't even read the bustling scene and lively atmosphere of Tokyo, which is also a metropolis. It seems that the hero doesn't live in the city, but just lives in his own world. Although he writes in a different style or with different materials, as pure Japanese writing, his readers are Japanese, and his novels reflect Japanese society and culture. Even at the initial stage of writing, he was not oriented towards the West. The application of style and criteria is to reshape Japanese literature from the inside, so it can be said that Haruki Murakami's novel creation has its own set of criteria.

Haruki Murakami absorbed the essence of Fitzgerald's literature and combined with his own life experience to create a new literary expression, especially trying to integrate this culture with local culture, thus forming his own unique creative style. This also explains why in Murakami's novels, what we often see is not the magnificent scenery and weather, or the bustling metropolis, but some freehand brushwork that is close to nature and used to create a poetic atmosphere. This is one of the reasons why Murakami's novels are far away from the label of “popular literature” and have a more “pure literature” temperament.

4. Conclusions

From appreciating, learning from, to accepting and transcending. Murakami's reference and acceptance of Western literature has opened up a successful model for literary creation, which not only enables the perfect integration of local literature with Western literature, but also creates a new perspective for literary creation. Like all accomplished artists, Murakami has gradually realized that it is not feasible to abandon local culture and completely westernize it. In addition to Murakami's repeated emphasis on Fitzgerald's profound influence on his creation, in fact, many similarities between the two writers can be found from their own growth and experience, which can also explain the similarities in their creative styles. In a word, Haruki Murakami's imitation and reference to Fitzgerald stems from his admiration and recognition of Fitzgerald's narrative theory. He not only accepted Fitzgerald's ideas, but also surpassed and innovated. Therefore, Haruki Murakami's hybrid narrative skills between the East and the West won him the love of readers all over the world. Obviously, local literature is inseparable from traditional elements, and the fusion of local and foreign cultures adds new literary colors. Murakami's acceptance of Fitzgerald's literature has far-reaching influence and profound significance.

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