

# Aesthetic Tradition and Cultural Temperament

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**Abstract:** British and American literature is one of the bright gems in the history of world literature, which has formed a unique literature after many times of historical evolution and integration of national culture. This paper makes an in-depth study of the historical development of Britain and the United States, starting from the three dimensions of "aesthetic tradition", "cultural temperament" and "translation of British and American literature", and discussing from two aspects of literary criticism and aesthetic perception. It is helpful to understand the unique cultural connotation and temperament of British and American culture, so as to better understand the cultural connotation of British and American classics and improve the translation quality of British and America literary works.

**Keywords:** English and American Literary Translation; Aesthetic Tradition; Cultural Temperament

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## Introduction

British and American literature is not only an important part of the world literary world, but also the mainstream of Western culture. On the basis of inheriting ancient Greek literature and ancient Roman literature, British and American literature has created a large number of brilliant and magnificent works in the long history, and has emerged many great figures and unsurpassable mountains that have influenced the history of world literature. Shakespeare is the most dazzling pearl in British and American literature and even in the history of Western literature. Even today, Shakespeare's plays are performed all over the world and are still full, which shows

that his art still has strong vitality and durability; Hemingway, an American Nobel Prize winner, has always been known as a "tough guy in the literary world". His representative works, *The Old Man and the Sea* and *The Sun Also Rises*, show the weakness of human nature and the commonness of human nature. At the same time, it is also the indomitable "tough guy temperament" shown by human nature in the face of the cold reality, which inspires people from generation to generation to move forward bravely in the rough life. Only after going through untold hardships can it flourish forever and leave an immortal classic in the history of world literature.<sup>[1]</sup> Both English literature, which has a long history and profound connotation, and American literature, which is full of vitality and pursuit of freedom, have injected brilliant brilliance into the literary world of the world. In the history of British and American literature, there are countless such classics and famous authors. Therefore, an in-depth study of the historical development of Britain and the United States, an understanding of their unique cultural heritage and cultural temperament, and an understanding of foreign cultures from the perspective of literature and art will also help us to understand the cultural history of Britain and the United States, and help translators to improve their translation quality.

This paper takes the important writers and translated works in the history of British and American literature as the research object, starting from the three dimensions of "British and American literary translation", "aesthetic tradition" and "cultural temperament", and discussing from the two dimensions of literary criticism and aesthetic perception.

### **1. An Analysis of the Aesthetic Tradition of British and American Literature**

British and American literature is heavily influenced by Greek mythology and Hebrew culture in aesthetics. As a representative work of Greek culture, Homer's *Epic* has had a profound impact on the aesthetics of English in history. Whether it is rhetorical devices, narrative structure, or the ideas conveyed, it has had an important impact on the development of British and American literature. Because the Greeks have a strong sense of reverence for heroes, some classical Greek stories are full of strong ideals and emotions. Greek men are mostly tall and powerful, full of strength, while women are gentle and beautiful. This narrative symbol runs through the whole British and American literature.<sup>[2]</sup> In addition, Greek artistic creation has a strong

humanistic color, and every character in its works has the spirit of freedom and daring to pursue dreams, which also enriches the connotation of British and American literature. In addition, Greek literature is full of rational elements, where man and God are the same, and once God makes mistakes, he will be criticized. British and American literature inherits the rational tradition of Greek literature, and the logic of rationality runs through the whole history of the development of British and American literature. The influence of Hebrew culture on British and American literature is also very obvious, so British and American literature has its distinct characteristics of rationalism and romanticism, in which *The Old Man and the Sea* is one of the typical representatives of Hebrew culture, in this work, the protagonist has a strong willpower and strong strength, Hemingway also referred to ancient Greek legends when creating this role.

In fact, the most profound influence on British and American literature is religion. The aesthetic tendency conveyed by the Bible has played an important role in the development of Britain and the United States, and many famous sayings have been quoted by the author. Some classical works in the Bible not only make the literary atmosphere of Britain and the United States more intense, but also further sublimate their thematic concepts. The description of characters in the Bible lays the foundation for the characterization of British and American novels, and British and American writers are often inspired by these allusions. Shakespeare is the best example, because some plots of the Bible can be seen in Shakespeare's novels, which play a key role in the characterization. In addition, the ideas and thoughts conveyed by the Bible have also had a certain impact on British and American literature, and some things about religion can often be seen in British and American classical literature.

The beauty of British and American literary works is mainly embodied in the beauty of language, artistic conception, structure, humanity and tragedy, so the aesthetic tradition of British and American literary translation becomes whether the beauty of the original works is embodied in the process of appreciation of the translated works. To express the beauty of the original work, a good translation can not only adopt a simple text translation, but also show the connotation and thought of the literary work. However, the beauty of different literary works is also different, and the creative ideas of different writers vary greatly, so it is obviously difficult to embody the aesthetic value of the original works in translation. It is for this reason that we should further

analyze the aesthetic tradition of British and American literary translation, which is helpful to improve the translator's translation level of British and American literary works.

## **2. An Analysis of Cultural Temperament in British and American Literature**

### **2.1 Critical Consciousness**

After an in-depth analysis of British and American literature, this paper finds that a remarkable feature is the courage to criticize. American literature, in particular, has a strong critical spirit, and many works have carried out in-depth criticism and reflection on reality. Compared with Chinese literature, American literature shows a more youthful and energetic feature, but American literary criticism is more intense, such as the famous writers Fitzgerald, Dreiser, Mark Twain and so on, from their novels to see a strong sense of criticism.<sup>[3]</sup>In particular, Mark Twain, known as the American critic, is known as the founder of American critical realism literature. His works are highly critical. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is one of his most representative works. His criticism mainly focuses on American school education, religious consciousness and bad social atmosphere. His writing is natural, and he is a fierce critic of children's thoughts and actions.

The most prominent feature of critical consciousness in British and American literature is that its strong critical attitude is often expressed through the art of humor. After a series of artistic treatments, the critical consciousness of British and American literature will use humorous language and cheerful style to create an infectious dramatic atmosphere and give people a philosophical feeling. Here, the communication of humor is multifaceted, in which the humorous style is its main form of expression, but the critical consciousness of life and the real society is the core value it wants to express. In the first chapter of *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet said, "When Mr. Bingley comes to you, I can write to you and assure him that whatever daughter he wants to marry, I fully agree with him." What Mrs. Bennet wanted was such a sarcastic remark. Although it seemed absurd to the outside world, the beginning of her humor and mockery showed that in that era. Women's power and marriage are inseparable from money. Another novel is<sup>[4]</sup>*Oliver Twist*: "a child must wipe a dish with a spoon until it becomes brighter, and when they finish doing something (of course, it doesn't take too long, because the spoon is almost as big as

the mouth of a bowl), they just stare at it." It was as if they were going to eat it with it, and they were sucking their fingers hard, trying to get free from the paste dripping from it.<sup>[5]</sup> These descriptions vividly show the plight of children's hunger, that is, the accusation and criticism of the hypocrisy, cruelty and indifference of the workhouse.

## **2.2 Focus on Reality**

British and American literature originated from ancient Greek and Roman cultures, and after a long period of development, it has formed a unique school. In Greek literature, gods and heroes are the most common subjects. But after analyzing the gods in the Bible, it is not difficult to see that they all have human characteristics, and the writer describes them from the perspective of God. It is one of the reasons why British and American literature has been enduring for a long time to reflect on reality and criticize reality from time to time. Therefore, after a period of development, British and American literature has gradually developed a trend of caring for the public and reality. From the analysis and investigation of the content of British and American literature, we can find that there are many tragic stories about the protagonists in many British and American novels, which reflect the real life, the real society, the warmth and coldness of human feelings, so that people can understand the cruelty and cruelty of the world through their lives. This kind of British and American literature, although it seems to be a kind of tragedy in appearance, is the writer's attempt to express his concern for the real world through tragedy, such as *The Shackles of Human Nature*, which is a great book about society. It describes all kinds of situations in the real society.

## **2.3 Advocate Freedom**

British and American literature is derived from two different types of cultures, the Greek and the Hebrew, which have laid a solid foundation for the development of British and American culture, so today's British and American literature has a strong humanistic color. From British and American literature, we can see that their desire for freedom has never stopped, especially in the Renaissance, this desire is more obvious. As far as the Renaissance is concerned, the humanistic spirit is its center, and the inheritance of this aesthetics is from the ancient Greek civilization to the present. During the Renaissance, works on human enlightenment, freedom and human freedom emerged one after another, such as Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*, which is

a poem like this: "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" This poem is Shakespeare's Hamlet, which inspires human nature and seeks freedom. It describes the struggle between Hamlet and Claudius, shows the opposition between the dark feudal society and humanistic ideas in Britain, and fully demonstrates the lofty pursuit of human enlightenment and human freedom.<sup>[6]</sup>

### **3. Translation of English and American Literature**

British and American literature includes both English literature and American literature. Compared with American literature, British culture has a strong historical background. It has a special elegant and dignified temperament, while American literature is a relatively new work full of freedom. The traditional culture of England was further deepened after the Middle Ages, especially in the Renaissance. After the founding of the United States, the country's rapid economic development, American modern literature has been freed from the shackles of Britain, and showing a liberalization of characteristics, British literature has rarely appeared in American works, it is regarded as a special national works. It is worth pointing out that in the course of the development of British and American literature, there have been a large number of excellent works, which were created by the excellent works of Britain and the United States, especially the three artists in the Renaissance, whose works are of great significance to the development of British and American literature, national development and even cultural development around the world.

Translation is simply a process of translating from the source language to the target language, which is often accompanied by cultural exchanges between the two countries. When translating British and American literary works, translators should not only have high-level translation skills and theories, but also consider the influence of different cultures and values between different countries. In particular, we should understand the historical background of the development of British and American culture and its inherent spiritual value, so when translating British and American literary works, the translator must be very familiar with the translated works, through understanding the humanistic value behind them, so as to accurately grasp the meaning of the works to be expressed, and grasp the translation scale. It shows the readers the ideas and inner meanings of literary works.

### **4. Aesthetic Value in the Translation of English and American Literature**

#### **4.1 Beauty of Writing Style**

From the perspective of British and American literary works, in order to achieve the aesthetic purpose, the method of "literal translation" can not be widely used in the process of translation, but to "localize" literary works, we need to "localize" the interpretation of its internal natural attributes. The translator should analyze the original text from the two aspects of thought and style, according to the writer's creative characteristics, adopt the analysis method of "different from person to person", some writers' style is delicate and tactful, some are magnificent, some are free and unrestrained, if we want to translate, we must try our best to reflect their style, we must master the style in advance.

#### **4.2 Beauty of Literary Imagery**

It is the translator's tireless pursuit to establish the image of British and American culture, but how to express it in an aesthetic way is a great challenge and a great test of the translator's ability, because the aesthetic translation usually leaves infinite imagination space for readers, so there is also a vague feeling in the aesthetic translation. It's like the saying, "a thousand Hamlets appear in the eyes of a thousand people."<sup>[7]</sup> When translating the original text in a standard way of faithfulness, elegance and expressiveness, the interpreter should give full play to the aesthetic meaning of the original text, not to express it in a conclusive way in essence, but to give full play to the aesthetic meaning of the original text, and to bring the aesthetic factors such as difference and ambiguity into the translation so as to retain the "poetic nature" of the source text.

### **5. Aesthetic Features in the Translation of English and American Literature**

#### **5.1 Precise Expression of Emotion**

In literary works, emotional expression can not only express the overall emotions, but also stimulate the emotions of the audience. If there are errors in the translation, it will affect the translator's overall understanding and feelings of the text. In British and American literature, there is often an aesthetic implication of emotional color, which is difficult to grasp accurately. The first thing a translator should do is to read and figure out the content of a work repeatedly, then refine it accurately, determine the emotions it expresses, and then express them through the author's language. To master

the specific details of the above work, we must master the rhetoric and structure of language skillfully, otherwise it is easy to make mistakes in language, leading to poor reading experience.

## **5.2 Tight Organizational Hierarchy**

In many classical masterpieces in China, the author's elaborate writing and ingenious writing will make people have spiritual resonance, and British and American literature is no exception, its composition and language performance, like the connection between bone and flesh and blood, constitute a vivid and vivid body. British and American novels usually arrange the narrative structure according to a specific theme, usually using narrative methods such as forward narration, inserted narration and flashback, but the grammatical characteristics of English make it necessary to pay special attention to the arrangement between sentences when translating long and difficult sentences, which not only shows the writer's ingenious conception of details, but also reflects different cultural differences.

## **5.3 Rich Intentions of Language**

The use of language in literature and art is the most able to arouse people's aesthetic feelings. Vivid and appropriate language can make people realize beauty more deeply. Therefore, in the process of translating English and American literature, the translator must make full use of the diversity of Chinese language in order to reflect its style. English works of different regions, different countries and different nationalities have great stylistic differences, so when translating and introducing them, we must fully understand their cultural environment, combine with their actual situation, and re-create them in order to achieve the purpose of high quality.

## **6. Conclusion**

The reason why British and American literature is different from any other literature is that it is based on the Bible and Ancient Greek and Roman Mythology, and is deeply influenced by religious and mythological stories,<sup>[8]</sup> thus forming its unique narrative and aesthetic value. Therefore, in the cross-cultural study of British and American literature, we should pay attention to the differences between British and American literature and Chinese literature, and appreciate art in the spirit of "literature is not divided into territories". Of course, because of the different cultures of the two



countries, in the process of translating English and American literature, we should first understand the history of the country and the development background of the literary creation period, so as to better understand the national literature and excavate the cultural temperament and aesthetic value of literature.

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