

An Analysis Of Narrative Themes In British Children's Fantasy Literature In The Victorian Period

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Abstract: With the vigorous industrial revolution, English literature has developed by leaps and bounds, promoting the germination of the awareness of "writing for children", coupled with the increase in social education and family education investment, the development of British children's fantasy literature has a solid economic and ideological foundation. The Victorian period was the first peak period of British children's literature. During this period, the number of children's literature works was not only large, but also highly accomplished, which had a profound impact on the development of children's literature in later generations. This article briefly analyses the narrative theme of British children's fantasy literature in the Victorian period, and extracts its aesthetic pursuit and artistic transformation process from it, hoping to be helpful to the development of children's literature in my country.

Keywords: Victorian period; Children's Fantasy Literature; Narrative Theme

Children's literature in the modern sense originated in England in the 18th century. Based on the unique knowledge and understanding of children in English literature, the creation of British children's literature has entered the British literary stage with a particular identity. Especially in the Victorian period, British children's fantasy literature was always based on children, which was in line with the characteristics of children's physical and mental development, so that it gained a broad space for development. It has played an enormous role in promoting the progress and development of children's literature in later generations. The narrative themes of British children's fantasy literature in the Victorian period mainly include three categories: love, death and growth, each of which has a high research value.

1. The theme of love

Love is an intense emotional awareness and positive state of mind. This kind of feeling stems from the close relationship between people and between people and things, emphasising that relying on selfless giving can bring endless warmth to the world. In the English fantasy literature narrative of the Victorian period, the expression of love is mainly reflected in the two aspects of love for nature and love for others, showing the pattern and power that human beings should have been as the leader of all living beings. For example, "The King of the Golden River" by British children's literature writer Ruskin is a classic in British children's literature. The protagonist of the story, Gluck, is upright, kind and fraternal, and has a heart of compassion. In the pursuit of wealth, instead of being insatiable, selfish and ruthless like his brothers, he used the precious holy water in his hand to save the elderly, children and puppies. It was this act of Gluck that moved King Jinhe, so that the curse of Treasure Valley was lifted, restored to its former vitality, and turned into a beautiful garden and granary. The whole story interprets the power of nature and the true meaning of love. In particular, the upright, kind and loving human beings represented by Gluck know how to be grateful for the gifts of nature, and are willing to dedicate their love to nature, and finally, get the kind treatment of nature. The greedy, vicious, and ruthless human beings represented by the eldest and the second child always demand from nature unchecked, ignore the laws of nature's ecology, and wantonly kill the creatures without reward, and are eventually punished by nature. This novel takes the equality of all things and animism as the philosophical basis, emphasising that human beings are a part of nature, and interprets the rights, responsibilities and obligations that human beings should perform in nature from multiple perspectives. Human beings should respect and appreciate nature, share the same destiny with nature, and consciously consolidate the "family affection" with all things in nature. At the same time, human beings should abandon the arrogance of conquering and transforming nature, and have a dialogue with nature on an equal footing. Only then can we coexist with nature, receive gifts and shelter from nature, and

then realise the healthy, stable and sustainable development of human civilisation ^[1].

2. The theme of death

Death is the way back and the end of life. As an eternal theme in literature, it can present a lot of philosophy. Although death was far away from children's lives and was very different from children's psychology, based on the fact that the mortality rate of children in England was very high at that time, "death" became a way and means for writers to express their emotions. This also explains why "death" plays a vital role in British children's fantasy literature in the Victorian period. The novelists of this period portrayed the death situation of children incisively and vividly, not only expressing their special emotional care for children, but also arousing the emotional resonance of more readers. "Behind the North Wind" by the famous British children's writer MacDonald presents the happiness and beauty of "death", rather than casting a terrifying haze over death. The story's protagonist, Little Diamond, lives in a parallel world, living in reality during the day and living a bleak and tragic life. The night lives in a dream, and travels through a mysterious and peaceful country. Little Diamond made a friend named Beifeng. Driven by curiosity, he began to explore the secret behind Beifeng, and finally passed through Beifeng's body and came to the back of Beifeng, to an unimaginable place. (Indicating that the little diamond is going to die). When describing the death situation of little diamond, the author did not use too "pen and ink" to describe the death of little diamond in reality, but used a lot of plot to define the dream world, to explain that the end of human beings after death is heaven, the destination of love and beauty. In the Victorian period, many writers thought deeply about life, and most of them believed that death was the only way to break through the constraints of natural society and pursue spiritual freedom. In reality, if you cannot dream of beauty and happiness, then death will surely bloom beauty and find the true meaning of happiness ^[2].

3. The theme of growth

Growth is a constant theme. The process of growing up is full of bitterness and pain, and contains countless trials and tribulations. Only by stepping over the thorns on the road of growth can we reap the fruits of growth. There were many growth-themed narratives in British children's fantasy literature in the Victorian period, and many works explained the meaning and value of growth. For example, in Wilde's "Star Child", Star Child is a child with a golden key and reasonable expectations. But he is selfish, ruthless, and has no empathy, and gradually grows into a shameless "villain". The turning point of the story is that he drives away his mother, loses his beautiful face a little bit, and loses the good life he has. Then step by step toward the road of repentance, he finally experienced all kinds of difficulties and dangers, overcame many difficulties, and completed self-redemption, thus regaining his true nature, regaining everything in the past, and becoming a generation of kings. This story shows that people must endure trials and tribulations before growing up. No matter how vicious they are, they can achieve self-redemption and become a winner in life as long as they get lost. In MacDonald's "The Princess and the Devil", Adi, a young absentee from work, defied danger and escorted Princess Irene and the protection back to the castle in the mountains. On the way, he experienced many dangerous trials, grew into a man who is indomitable, and finally fulfilled his mission. This story shows that people are always in pursuit of growth, and they must make the right choices and find their own direction. Only by experiencing the trials of growth can you achieve success in life and finally live the happy life you want. In much Victorian English children's fantasy literature, children's most tremendous success is not how much they have achieved in life, but getting home safely. Home, as a place for children, is full of love and warmth, and is a paradise for children to grow up. Children's fantasy literature ends at home, which not only meets children's psychological and emotional needs, but also meets children's real-life needs ^[3].

4. Conclusion

To sum up, the British children's fantasy literature in the Victorian period occupies an essential position in the whole world of children's literature. It is a product based on the changes of the British era and social development at that time, and is full of changes in ideology and values brought about by cultural changes. During this period, children's writers created many excellent works based on their understanding of children, which were in line with children's life vision and psychological needs, and provided a lot of spiritual support for children's growth. Therefore, strengthening the thematic narrative analysis of British children's fantasy literature in the Victorian period can accumulate valuable experience for the development of children's literature in my country, and also has practical significance for the progress and development of children's education in my country.

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