

# Exploration on the Embodiment of British Aristocratic Culture in Novels

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**Abstract:** This paper first analyzes the development of the British aristocracy, and then from the British aristocracy's contribution to the creation of fiction and its embodied content; The embodiment of marriage orientation of modern British aristocrats in novels; The slow decline of the English aristocracy in novels and other aspects of the English aristocracy culture in novels for reference.

**Keywords:** British aristocratic culture; Works of fiction; Reflect

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## Introduction

The reason why British aristocrats can survive in the changes of modern society is on the one hand, because they always insist on their own survival value, on the other hand, because they continue to give their own era significance. At the same time, it was inextricably linked with the British aristocracy. From this point of view, the following uses the broad concept of culture, with the perspective of historical sociology, mainly talking about the English aristocratic culture reflected in the works of fiction.

### 1. The development of the British aristocracy

First, from the British class. Britain's unique aristocratic property and title inheritance system ensures the inheritance and loyalty of their families. Many of the children of the aristocracy inherited property together, but from the twelfth to the thirteenth century, English history changed dramatically. British property law divides property into real right and human property right, among which inherited land, title, immovable property and so on are the main contents. Property ownership in strict accordance with the law, the practice of primogeniture, female heirs are completely excluded, property ownership can be owned by children. The aim was to ensure that the land would always be theirs. In this way, the possibility of large estates being broken up by many children was avoided, thus ensuring the stability of the English aristocracy.

Secondly, from the family relationship and aristocratic cultivation. Aristocratic families have had different education and life plans for their children since childhood. The primary goal of the cultivation of the successors of the first class title of the family land is to cultivate their responsibility to the family, that is, the continuation, glory, development of the family and the mission to the nation. This aristocratic education does not need to focus on esoteric knowledge and culture, but focuses on cultivating personality and sense of responsibility, rich experience in political and military aspects, and a certain understanding of territorial affairs<sup>[1]</sup>.

It can be said that the British aristocratic culture still exerts a profound influence on Britain. For example, the world-renowned aristocratic schools not only cultivate a group of political, business and military elites, but also protect and strengthen its long history and aristocratic culture. At the same time, the field of English literature and art also has a profound imprint of aristocratic culture. A large number of classical novels and drama works, from content to language, have a strong aristocratic color.

### 2. The embodiment of British aristocratic culture in novels

#### 2.1 The contribution of British aristocrats to the creation of novels and the content reflected therein

Literary creation in the Middle Ages was mainly focused on the English intelligentsia, which was composed of the intellectual

elite of the church and mainly served the monarch and the nobility. First of all, in Britain, many aristocrats are themselves writers, scholars, poets and art connoisseurs<sup>[2]</sup>. For example, from Henry Howard of Surrey, the aristocratic poet of Henry VIII, to the Earl of Oxford in the Elizabethan era, aristocrats have produced imaginative literature, and in this sense many of the English aristocratic culture embodied in fiction itself is a tangible cultural expression.

For another example, famous British aristocratic women writers include Mary Worsley, Lady Montagu in the first half of the 18th century, and Elizabeth, Lady Montagu in the second half of the 18th century. The former, known for his letters, was also a feminist theorist and essayist. Known for his versatility and eccentric manner. She was the fifth lady of the Earl of Kingston and worked in the arts at her suburban estate in west London. In 1735, *Simplicity* and 52 elegant letters were widely circulated in Europe. The latter was the first member of the Blue Sox. Blue Socks is a chat party held by a group of literate, middle-class women looking to pass the time as a way to get away from playing cards. At the May Fair in London, Lady Montagu's house was a gathering place for intellectuals and the English aristocracy. Her book on the Works of Shakespeare and His Genius was published in 1769.

Secondly, at the end of the 17th century, a group of female writers appeared in England, many of whom began to write for the English aristocracy and their noble families. The playwright Afra Benn is a striking example of this. Many aristocratic ladies began to hold intellectual salons, which brought together the elites and celebrities of the intellectual world<sup>[3]</sup>. Some aristocratic British novelists have already established their position in the history of British and American literature in the Moliere period, and also promoted the formation of women's literary creation groups in the 18th and 19th centuries, which is the earliest place where feminism was launched in the world.

## **2.2 The embodiment of the marriage orientation of modern British aristocrats in novels**

First of all, when choosing a spouse, aristocratic families in England from the 16th century to the 18th century would consider wealth, status, age, religious belief, personal qualifications, and mutual affection. Economics is a big part of this, but emotions are still part of the mix, in different order from person to person. In terms of the overall trend, however, the British aristocracy did change when it came to choosing a mate. This is also reflected in many works of fiction<sup>[4]</sup>.

Jane Austen, for example, was born in 1775, and his book *Pride and Prejudice* reveals the views of the English aristocracy on marriage and money. Mrs. Bennet, the squire, had worked hard to find opportunities for her five daughters to marry into the nobility. The love and hatred of the protagonist Elizabeth Osbennett and the hero William Darcy reflect the British middle class's mating philosophy: besides beauty, blood and wealth, it also includes moral character and so on. At the same time, this novel also reflects the important position of love in marriage. In the end, Elizabeth marries Darcy and she really falls in love with Darcy, not because of his wealth and status.

In the 18th century, for example, the *New Responsibilities of a Man* was popular, which argued that Christian marriage was based on the feelings and privacy of the two people. Ethical preaching and public behavior guidance also promote marriage based on love. These novels spread widely and changed people's traditional ideas. Secondly, while pursuing love, the young aristocrats of modern Britain have strongly rebelled against the traditional ideas and patterns of marriage. For example, in his *History of European Love*, Edward Fox writes that both men and women consciously and unconsciously seek a perfect union, and subconsciously imagine the emotional world of being completely melted by the other. In the long-term marriage life, if both men and women can not be satisfied for a long time, they will naturally have a desire to enter the arms of the other sex, in order to obtain happiness. Most families in the English aristocracy had extramarital affairs well into the 19th century. In 1805, for example, William married Caroline Ponsonby, daughter of Lady Bessborough, who had met the poet Sir Byron by chance at a party in 1812 and soon became his lover, widely known in high circles. Caroline, who also wrote a long novel called *Grognon*, made no secret of her love affair with Byron and attacked the Melbourne family<sup>[5]</sup>.

## **2.3 The embodiment of the slow decline of British aristocracy in novels**

As prime minister from 1940 to 1945 and again from 1951 to 1955, Churchill presented himself as a member of a divided class, on one level the best politician of a fallen nation, on the other the last return of the aristocracy to British democracy. British aristocrats, like their politicians, went from majestic lions to rare unicorns as the world changed in the 20th century. "The sun never sets on the Empire," said a Victorian hymn in a reverent, ominous tone. From this period, the British aristocracy slowly declined and appeared in a large number of novels and literary works in the later period<sup>[6]</sup>.

For example, Oscar Wilde, a famous contemporary cultural figure, thought that the English aristocracy was the most fascinating part of many novels. Peter Winsey, Duke of Dorset, was the best pupil at both Eton and Oxford. He won the DSO Medal for outstanding service in the First World War, became seriously ill during the Second World War, but his underdog character made him the "18th

century Mr Whig”. Well aware of the decline of his class, he wrote in a war diary during the second world war: “See yourself in the eyes of history and remain silent about your own weakness.” He self-mockingly wrote his own inscription: “In the fog of hope for the next life, there is a man who is out of step with this age.” Lord Winsey’s words are a perfect illustration of the decline and demise of the English aristocracy.

## Conclusion

The development of British aristocratic culture in novels and British and American literature is not only reflected in the value level, but also includes the understanding of spirit, such as religion, art, painting, sculpture and so on. The former is the embodiment of spirit, intangible and without quality, which can only be felt through corresponding behaviors and rituals. It reflects more the cultural characteristics of “hidden in”. The latter, on the other hand, is a kind of spiritual externalization, most of which are visible and touched, and can better reflect the “explicit” cultural characteristics.

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