

An Analysis of Naturalism in Jack London's White Fang

Ziru Cheng, Chenhui Bi

Changchun Guanghua University Jilin Changchun 9862 China

Abstract: Jack London is one of the representatives of naturalist in America. Among his novels, White Fang has a distinct naturalistic color. In White Fang, Jack London shows readers the scenes of human cruelty to animals and destruction of the natural environment, which reflects the author's awareness of ecological distress and resentment towards human violence against animals. This paper strives to deeply analyze Jack London's view of nature and explore its value. This article explores the relationship between man and nature, express the concern on the reality of human survival and the call for civilization.

Keywords: Naturalism; White Fang; Jack London

1. Literature Review

Jack London is a famous writer in the history of American literature. His classic work White Fang has been widely praised for its profound significance.

1.1 The Introduction to Jack London

In the late 19th century, there emerged a group of writers whose main purpose was to expose the social reality, and Jack London was one of them. In all of his major works, there is a true portrayal of human life at that time. His childhood was so poor that he worked as a child laborer at an early age. Jack London was a writer with a rich mind. Jack London indiscriminately absorbed and adopted many of the ideas that influenced history. In terms of philosophy, Jack London not only believed in Marxism, but also was influenced by Spencer's evolution and degeneration and Darwin's natural selection. These influences are evident in his animal novel, White Fang.

1.2 Introduction to White Fang

White Fang is a famous work on animal life. White Fang is a Wolf, with three quarters of wolf blood. It fought against the harsh environment in the wilderness, experienced lots of suffering, finally changed from Wolf to dog under the call of the master's love.

2. The Analyses of Naturalism in White Fang

The concept of naturalism encompasses a summary of London's various ideas, including his attitude to nature, and the idea of harmony between man and nature.

2.1 The Theories of Naturalism in White Fang

Naturalism first appeared in France in the second half of the 19th century and did not gain influence in the United States until the late 19th centuries.

2.1.1 Theory of Hereditary Determination

Galton first created the theory of genetic determinism,¹ he emphasizes the importance of innate genetics. The importance of this genetic trait is reflected in White Fang.

Born in the cold desert, White Fang was descended from a wolf and a dog, three-quarters wolf. In this wild land, civilization did not develop and maintained a consistent style - the survival of the fittest. Here, only a strong physique and cunning intelligence can animals survive. White Fang has wolf genes, which also makes him better adapted to the environment full of brutal struggle. White Fang has won many victories by virtue of the genetic superiority directly inherited from his ancestors, who have hunted for generations.

2.1.2 Theory of Environmental Determinism

Just as materialist dialectics believes, the external causes are indispensable conditions for the change and development of things. Environmental factors are undoubtedly external factors. The importance of this environmental factor is reflected in White Fang.

Although White Fang was baptized by the cruel and ruthless law of survival, the environment full of benevolence and caring made him finally embark on the road of naturalization from wildness to civilization. The qualitative change that occurred in White Fang's body also showed us the enormous power of the environment. The process of White Fang returned from barbarism to civilization, shows London's call for the love in people's hearts.

1 Palmer S. The vast and terrible drama : American literary naturalism in the late nineteenth century[J]. Modern Language Review, 2004, 103(7):833-834.

2.2 The Naturalism in the Character Development of White Fang

When we read *White Fang*, we recognize Jack London's insights on naturalism, especially when it comes to portraying the image of White Fang.

2.2.1 The Wild Side of White Fang's Character

White Fang, who was born in the wilderness, and his wolf nature made him understand the natural law of survival of the fittest. While being ostracized by his own kind, White Fang struggled to survive in the camp by relying on the nature of a shrewd and savage wolf. During the time that White Fang was growing up in the camp, he slowly lost his innocence because he had been suffering from the pain of his own kind.

2.2.2 The Docile Side of White Fang's Character

However, living in such an environment can only stimulate the supernatural development of one part of its nature, namely hatred and cruelty, another part of its nature has never been discovered, which is love.

When White Fang was rescued from Smith by Scott, its character was finally formed. Scott irrigated White Fang's heart with kindness, and love, which had long been shaped into murderous and ruthless. It couldn't deal with this change quickly. With Scott's persevering patience, it eventually repaid its owner with loyalty and love from deep within its genes. What keeps it alive is not its indestructible ability, but the kindness of an educated person.

2.3 The Naturalism in the Theme of White Fang

When reading *White Fang*, it is easy to perceive that its theme is an appeal to the harmony between man and nature, and there are some ideas of naturalism.

2.3.1 Reasons for Choosing This Theme

The first point is the historical view of nature. Because of the rapid development of science and technology, human civilization has also entered the modern society. In this era, human wisdom has received unprecedented attention. From a certain point of view, although naturalism is an ideological revolution, it is also the product of the development of modern natural science.

2.3.2 Harmonious Relationships between Man and Nature

The first relationship is a harmonious relationship based on common interests, based on the relationship between White Fang and his first owner, Grey Beaver. For Grey Beaver, he could extract benefits from White Fang, so Grey Beaver would provide White Fang with food and shelter. White Fang's own dignity is not satisfied, the harmony expressed in this is not harmony in the true sense.

The second one is based on love. The third owner of White Fang was Scott, and the relationship between him and White Fang also reflected the virtuous relationship between man and nature, a harmonious relationship based on love. Scott believed that animals should be treated with the same respect as people, so the relationship is a true harmony.

3. The Value of White Fang

When evaluating the value of a book, it is necessary to consider not only its content and the meaning of expression, but also its contribution to literary and social reality.

3.1 Literary Significance of White Fang

White Fang is a novel about animals, and it is the object of description. An important factor in describing animals is portraying their nature, so London did not create fiction out of thin air. His work comes from real animal life. In the general social background, the gold rush events in American history are the background for the creation of this novel.

3.2 Realistic Significance of White Fang

In *White Fang*, the relationship between the ruling class and the ruled class in real life is vividly manifested through the relationship between White Fang and its master. Marx once pointed out that only the individual can control himself. According to the laws of nature, creatures should be equal. In a capitalist society, however, this view is only ideal. The existential crisis encountered by White Fang also reflects the social and ecological crisis faced by human beings in the process of survival.

4. Conclusion

Today, more and more writers are devoted to the study of harmonious coexistence between man and nature. This article focuses on analyzing the view of nature reflected in *White Fang*. *White Fang* seems to depict the survival of a wolf dog, but it reflects the struggle of human society.

In conclusion, Jack London, who is passionate about ecology and has a high degree of ecological responsibility, makes him an important contributor to solving ecological problems.

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The first author: Ziru Cheng, English student, School of Foreign Languages, Changchun Guanghua University, born in December 1999, female, Han Nationality, born in Xuzhou, Jiangsu Province.

The second author: faculty adviser Chenhui Bi, Teacher of English Department, School of Foreign Languages, Changchun Guanghua University, born in June 1981, female, Han Nationality, native of Changchun City, Jilin Province, master degree. Professional Title: Associate Professor, Research direction: Cross-cultural communication, English Language and literature.