

## Book Review of *The Medical Empire in 20th Century American Literature*\*

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As a book review of *Medicine Empire in American Literature of the 20th Century* by Jiang Tianping's team, this paper provides an examination of the developing process of the western medicine's interaction with the imperial politics in the 20th century. It points out that the book has made a great contribution to the interdisciplinary research, medical research, especially western colonialism research.

*Keywords:* American literature in the 20th century, medicine, empire

This book is the research result of the National Social Science fund of China project achieved by Professor Jiang Tianping and his team. His research team aims to use the theories and methods of Michel Foucault and Edward Said's theories from a post-colonial perspective to explore the relationship between medical imagination and imperial politics in American literature of the 20th century, revealing how the natural science medicine evolves into social medicine and medical cultural history under specific historical conditions, and how medical terms become the medical discourse intertwining and interacting with imperial politics, and participating in the construction of empire. The team has selected 13 medical themes or novels with the medical descriptions from different historical periods as cases. The content of the book is rich and diverse, covering colonial medicine, eugenics, obstetrics, nursing, surgery, psychiatry, virology and many other fields. This book is closely related to the theme of the connection and interaction between literature, medicine and imperial politics. The combination of close reading of the text and theoretical interpretation makes it a significant and innovative monograph on American literature research in the 20th century, bringing readers a brand new reading experience and rich associations and some enlightenment.

First of all, the research in this book conforms to the contemporary development trend of literature. Contemporary literary research attaches importance to interdisciplinary and interdisciplinary reading strategies, and enriches the experience and interpretation possibilities of literary reading with a broader vision and a diverse

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and inclusive way. As early as 100 years ago, British historian Thomas Babington Macaulay said: History as a discipline is between the two distinct fields of fiction and theory, and the boundary is sometimes unclear. Today, with the development of discipline theory and the progress of research methods and research methods, on the one hand, the classification of disciplines is not only more refined, but the division of scabs has become blurred; on the other hand, it is the empty advancement of science and technology and the return of humanistic spirit. In the “gray zone” or “urban-rural junction” between disciplines, new growth points of research interest will often appear, new research fields or research paradigms will be formed, and marginal disciplines or interdisciplinary disciplines will be born. In recent years, overseas studies such as “big history” and “new translation theory” are examples of this. This research paradigm has two common characteristics: one is a large perspective and a large dimension, such as the former placing historical events in the macroscopic social and economic structure and the broad perspective of Chinese and Western comparison; the second is the intersection and integration of disciplines. For example, the latter integrates translation theory and practice, comparative literature, and overseas sinology studies. The research on this book reflects this trend of contemporary academic research.

Secondly, because the literature is placed in a large historical context, the research has a large pattern, which is conducive to the overall investigation of writers and works of the same period, and to explore the historical implications and contemporary meaning of literary phenomena. After studying the classic works of the 18th and 19th centuries, Said proposed a reading strategy related to literature and imperialism, so that he can read the rich middle-class life of the heroes and heroines in Austen’s novels and the British Empire abroad. The relationship between expansion and colonial plunder has deepened the understanding and interpretation of the works. According to the needs of the subject, Professor Jiang Tianping’s team has divided the history of the United States in the 20th century into three periods: “Early Empire-Colonial Expansion”, “Mid-Empire-Cold War Hegemony”, “New Empire Period-Budding of New Imperialism”. The historical background, the main context of the characteristics of the era and its internal logic have been comprehensively sorted out and explained, and this historical consciousness and vision are integrated into the analysis of the work, throughout the entire work, plus the observation of related theories, to make the research. At the same time, it has the thickness of history and the depth of theory.

Again, this research is a good example of the combination of innovative awareness and desk work. The premise of academic innovation is solid research and strict academic standards. The topics from the determination of research objects, research goals and research questions, to the theoretical framework, research ideas and work definitions, from document combing and text reading to the argumentation of opinions and the extraction of conclusions, all reflect a strict academic training and rigorous style of study. 197 kinds of Chinese references and 222 kinds of English references reflect the overall solidity of the previous work. All 400 kinds of Ai Xian in both Chinese and English are cited in the book, and each citation has a page for betting. Hundreds of notes, detailed and standardized, testify to the foundation of research and the conscience of scholars, and also enhance the persuasiveness of the argument.

Finally, the research has reflected a spirit of the times and has important practical significance. The broad vision and pattern of this research that integrates tradition and modernity, interdisciplinary and cross-field, and the bold innovation based on strict and standardized academic exploration, embodies the craftsman spirit of a big country culture. In addition to meticulousness, excellence, and persistent pursuit of decades of sharpening a

sword, a craftsman in a big country must have a big vision, a big pattern, a heavy sense of history and a sense of mission of the times. Related to this may be greater humanistic care and a stronger sense of innovation. Contemporary foreign language workers may wish to have a “big foreign language” awareness, cultivate deeply, cultivate and accumulate, cultivate the land of foreign language and literature, and at the same time give full play to their strengths. With full cultural self-confidence and high professional level, he has devoted himself to the work of cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries, and made a unique contribution to foreign language speakers and foreign literary workers for the construction of the “Belt and Road” and the realization of the Chinese dream.