

The Interpretation of Lawrence's Poetry from the Perspective of Ecocriticism Theory*

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Based on ecocriticism theory, this paper is to conduct a comprehensive discussion of Lawrence's poetry from three aspects: natural ecology, social ecology and spiritual ecology, to explore the profound ecological philosophical implications contained in Lawrence's poetry, and to expand the breadth and depth of the ecocriticism interpretation of Lowe's poetry research.

Keywords: ecocriticism, D. H. Lawrence, natural ecology, social ecology, spiritual ecology

D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930), who has left a great spiritual wealth for mankind, was one of the greatest and most controversial writers of the twentieth century. In his short life of 44 years, he has produced a lot of works, including novels, poems, essays, reviews, travel notes and so on. For a long time, the researches on Lawrence and his novels have been numerous in recent decades, which can be said to be quite in-depth and comprehensive. However, the author's talent as a poet may have been obscured by his status as a novelist and not fully explored. Lawrence's career began and ended with poetry, and his total number of poems is close to 800. Lawrence's poetry occupies a central and enduring position in the history of 20th century literature. Lawrence has made outstanding achievements in poetry creation, which has important research value. "If Lawrence only wrote poetry, he would surely be regarded as one of the most important poets in English" (Bo Jinsi, 1979, p. 139). However, judging from the current situation of ecological criticism and research on Lawrence's poetry in the academic circle, the domestic research in this field has just started, and the existing sporadic studies abroad are only a spark compared with the number of Lawrence's poetry and its extensive and far-reaching implications. Based on ecocriticism theory, this paper will conduct a comprehensive discussion of Lawrence's poetry from three aspects: natural ecology, social ecology and spiritual ecology, explore the profound ecological philosophical implications contained in Lawrence's poetry, and expand the breadth and depth of the ecocriticism interpretation of Lawrence's poetry research.

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Introduction to Ecocriticism Theory and Lawrence's Concept of Ecological Ethics

Ecocriticism was proposed as early as the 1970s, but wasn't really established until the 1990s. Ecocriticism "deals with the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glottfelty & Fromm, 1996, p. 18). While literary ecocriticism includes the following: Firstly, literary ecocriticism focuses on natural ecology, that is, the expression of natural ecological environment in the text, so as to reveal the philosophical meaning of natural ecology in the literary text, subvert the anthropocentrism in traditional literary criticism, and construct a kind of "ecological holism". Secondly, literary ecocriticism focuses on the social ecology between people. The progress of industrial civilization is bound to be accompanied by the destruction of natural ecological environment, which will lead to the alienation of simple and interpersonal relations between people in the state of nature, and the unbalanced development of social ecology. Finally, literary ecocriticism focuses on the inner spiritual ecology of human beings. Natural ecology, social ecology and human ecology affect and restrict each other. The destruction of natural ecology and the imbalance of social ecology will inevitably lead to the alienation of human spiritual ecology. It is a disease alienated by industrial civilization. The fundamental task of literary ecocriticism is to find out how these three aspects of literary texts are "expressed, described and arranged" in accordance with each other, so as to find out the "literary cultural root of ecological imbalance" (Miao Fuguang, 2007, p. 28). This is the fundamental task of literary ecocriticism. Sex, marriage and love are the themes of D.H. Lawrence's literary, though controversial, has profound ecological implications. Lu Shuyuan believed that ecology should include three kinds, namely natural ecology, social ecology and spiritual ecology. Lawrence's attention to sex, marriage and love, to a large extent, exactly conforms to Lu Shuyuan's ecological dichotomy, because "sexual desire is biological and natural; Marriage is human social; Love, on the other hand, belongs to the inner spirituality of the individual" (Lu Shuyuan, 2007). These three are consistent and complement each other to some extent.

The ecological ethic of Lawrence is directly derived from the living environment of their English society. From 1770 to 1870, the first Industrial Revolution transformed Britain from a traditional agricultural country to an industrialized country. Britain once became the "factory of the world". Large-scale robotic production replaced hand workshops, and labor force needed by industry was obtained through large-scale "enclosure movement". In order to obtain wool needed for the textile industry, farmers were driven off their land, a large number of farmland turned into pasture, a large number of farmers lost the means of production and livelihood and became homeless and beggars. Moreover, the pace of industrialization disturbed Hardy's "idyllic pastoral".

Large-scale production and deforestation take a huge toll on the environment. The use of coal has fogged London, forests and fields have been wiped out, and the clamor of modernity has destroyed the peace of the English countryside. It is no longer an ideal place for animals to live. At the same time, the social structure of Britain also changed, and the process of urbanization began. "The typical Englishman became a city dweller, and Britain became a city state" (Wang Juefei, 1997, p. 260). In addition, Darwin's "survival of the fittest" theory of evolution denied the lofty status of man and overturned modern perceptions. Lawrence lived in such an era. He was born into a miner's family and suffered from bronchitis and lung problems throughout his life. And because his wife is German, the couple traveled to several countries in Europe during World War II, "most of my life trying to get away from the city, looking for ecological wilderness" (Jiang Huiling, 2016, p. 38),

looking forward to living a life like farmers. It is worth mentioning that Lawrence raised a lot of animals during his life in Villa Taos, Italy, and created a lot of animal poems, which reflected his ecological ethics of hating industrial civilization, loving animals and nature, and advocating "equality of all living beings".

Although love is an important theme in Lawrence's early poetry creation, Lawrence's poetry is more concerned with the destruction of nature by mechanical industry and the alienation of human beings. In his poems, Lawrence spoke highly of the beauty of the primitive natural ecology, and deeply loved and feared the animals in the natural ecology. At the same time, human is no longer the subject of the ecological environment, but is alienated by industrial machinery, lost the original natural vitality of the empty shell. Marriage is a microcosm of this kind of human social problems. In Lawrence's eyes, true marriage is the harmonious unity of sexual love and spiritual love. However, industrial civilization has destroyed the natural ecology, resulting in the alienation of the relationship between people and even the loss of sex, which leads to the crisis of human spiritual ecology.

The Natural Ecological Interpretation of Lawrence's Poetry

Natural ecology is the relationship and existence state between organisms and the environment. It has the law of self-centered development and is the basis for the development of the whole ecosystem. Although man is an important factor in the ecosystem, we will take him as an independent whole for the time being. The core content of natural ecological aesthetics in Lawrence's poems first shows man and nature live in harmony with each other. The so-called harmonious coexistence with nature refers to the process of human and nature mutual integration.

It not only realizes the objectification of human essence, but also realizes the humanization of nature. It was at in the harmony and unity of objectification of human essential power and humanization of nature can people truly experience the existence of beauty. Therefore, the nature we will talk about next refers to the natural ecology including flowers, forests, animals and other natural forms in addition to man. Lawrence's thoughts on natural ecology in his poems include the following contents: First, Lawrence's praise and worship of nature (plants and animals). Second, Lawrence's attention to non-human sex—plant sex and animal sex.

Lawrence has always had a special affection for plants. In *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* alone, he covers a variety of plants, including apricot trees, pine trees, cypress, cypress, mountain pears, loquat, etc. Some people even call him the "Poet Laureate of the Plant Kingdom" (Manhood, 2008, p. 146). The poet's love for plants is not only the reproduction of the natural environment in which he grew up and his life experience, but also was closely related to his expertise in botany, which he studied at Nottingham University. He not only learned scientific knowledge about the form, properties and regenerative power of plants, but more importantly, "he also explored the origin of life from the rotational flow of plant cytoplasm and cell fission" (Manhood, 2008, p. 146), "and thus internalized his natural feelings for plants into a deep empathy throughout his life, especially in his poetry" (Yan Jianhua, 2013, p. 47). Therefore, in his poetry, Lawrence praised the plants of natural ecology, endowed with a certain soul or consciousness.

In his poem "Almond Blossom", the poet likens the bare branches of almond trees to rusty steel and twisted weapons that, which by early spring, can blossom. *Nay, what a heart of delicate super-faith,/Iron-breaking,/The rusty swords of almond trees. /Trees suffer, like races, down the long ages/They*

wander and are exiled, they live in exile through long ages/ Like drawn blades never sheathed, hacked and gone black/... /Yet see him fling himself abroad in fresh abandon/From the small wound-stump (Lawrence, 2002, pp. 241-242). It is a beautiful hymn to life. The almond flower is a symbol of resurrection. It is endowed with delicate emotion and tenacious vitality. It has a "holy, beautiful" heart like human beings. After being persecuted by the outside world, they still rush to the outside world "heartily and angrily" after "wandering and exile", germinate and blossom, and continue their colorful life journey.

Lawrence also pays attention to the sex of plants in his poetry. "Fruits are all of them female, in them lies the seed. And so when they break and show the seed, then we look into the womb and see its secrets" (Lawrence, 2008, p. 3). Lawrence describes in his poem the likeness between the fruit of plants and the sexual organs of men, "and breaks down the barrier between plants and men in the 'central fire' of sex, just as he breaks down the barrier between animals and men" (Yan Jianhua, 2013, p. 47). In the "Pomegranate", its "pink, tender, shining" crack leads to the most secret place in the female body; In "The Peach", the fleshy, round peach, together with the round pink tips on its tips, forms the female breast. Through this "vegetative person" with both form and spirit, the poet shows the reader the image of "the plant and human being with the same root and same branches" (Yan Jianhua, 2013, p. 10).

In addition to plants, Lawrence also paid attention to a large number of diverse animals in his poems. It should be pointed out that Lawrence's attention to animals in his poems overturns the traditional animal literature and more depicts those inferior animals that are despised or even hated by the world. Mice, bats, snakes, mosquitoes and so on became the main characters in Lawrence's poetry creation, and were affirmed, accepted and even praised. In the Western tradition, the snake is an animal condemned to hell, but in "The Snake", Lawrence instinctively developed a sense of awe and love for the snake. When the poet's "education" tells him that the snake must be put to death, the poet hesitates because he is "very fond of him," and is "extraordinarily pleased to see him come here quietly" and "so honored" (Lawrence, 2002, p. 45). In the eyes of the poet, the snake is like an emperor, "like an emperor in exile, deposed to the hell" (Lawrence, 2002, p. 45). The whole poem basically describes the snake in positive terms. In "The Mosquito Knows," the mosquito knows deep down that, though small, he is a bloodthirsty beast. But after all, he would only fill his stomach, not bank my blood. In five short lines, the poet understands and praises the mosquito, which the world hates. They know that they are "small", just a small species in the natural ecology, and their way of living is to feed on the blood of others. However, although they are "bloodthirsty", they are not greedy, as long as the belly can be filled. The poet calls snakes and mosquitoes by "he", which on the one hand expresses the poet's praise and love for them, and on the other hand also makes a deep irony to human beings.

Lawrence wrote extensively about animal sex in his poems. In poems such as "Tortoise Shout", "The Ass", poets write about the sex of animals. In "Tortoise Shout", Lawrence graphically depicts the male tortoise's pursuit of sexual satisfaction: *Male tortoise, cleaving behind the hovel-wall of that dense female,/Mounted and tense, spread-eagle, out-reaching out of the shell/In tortoise-nakedness,/ Long neck, and long vulnerable limbs extruded, spread-eagle over her house-roof,/And the deep, secret, all-penetrating tail curved beneath her walls,/Reaching and gripping tense, more reaching anguish in uttermost tension/Till suddenly, in the spasm of coition, tugging like a jerking leap, /and oh!/Opening its clenched face from his outstretched neck/And giving that fragile yell, that scream* (Lawrence, 2002, p. 297). The tortoise, in pursuit of sexual satisfaction, has

suffered all kinds of hardships, even being crucified, but in order to complete the rebirth, the tortoise successfully completed the “fellowship” and issued the “last sound/strange, weak fellowship cry”. Sex makes the tortoise realize the wholeness of life. In the poem, the poet also mentions the cries and screams of frogs, bullfrogs, wild geese, nightingales, rabbits, heifers, cats and horses after sexual gratification, and equates them with the screams of a woman in labor. In the poet’s view, these cries are “the cries of divine nature for the continuous multiplication and perfection of life”, “the natural laws in the process of life which no one can control” (Yan Jianhua, 2013, p. 10). They are cries for the wholeness of life. Through this poem, readers can see the connection between bestiality and humanity. In this sense, Lawrence opens up a channel of equal dialogue between man and beast in the deepest part of life, thus creating a real sense of identity with non-human life by nature.

In Lawrence’s view, animal sex is quite different from the sex in the modern mind that the world condemns and despises. Animal sex is instinctive, unconscious and pure. Lawrence’s depictions of plant and animal sex not only deconstruct the traditional “human-centered” view, but also have important ecological implications, that is, readers can have an understanding and sympathy for non-human creatures. From Lawrence’s ecological thought, the poet’s sex has the significance of ecological salvation. Lawrence was convinced that “only by reading the relationship between men and women, and by allowing sex to develop freely and healthily, could England get out of its present state of decline” (Simpson, 1982, p. 81). Lawrence advocated the free and healthy development of sex, which was to advocate the original ecological development of nature, so as to save the alienated human relations in decadent Britain, especially the sexual relations.

The Social Ecological Interpretation of Lawrence’s Poetry

Social ecology is the living condition of interaction between people and society. Karl Marx believed that man is the sum of all social relations, which indicates that “sociality is the essential attribute of man” and “man cannot exist in isolation from society” (cited from Liu Hongtao, 2007, p. 8). However, social ecology is not only inseparable from natural ecology but also cannot get rid of the development of natural ecology. As mentioned above, Britain was the first country in the world to complete industrialization. The link between human and ecological nature was cut off by the sharp edge of industrial machine. The pure and beautiful relationship between people is replaced by pure money and interest relationship; Then the original ecological balance of human spirit is completely broken. In order to survive in the industrialized, mechanized society, people began to cutthroat competition, day and night to work hard, there is no joy of life. Human beings became extremely slaves and vassals. In the poem “Why”, Lawrence expresses his criticism and antipathy to industrial civilization with a series of why’s. The copper stench of money pervades human society, whose financial system “strangles us all in its octopus arms”; Society’s industries and machines only make us their slaves, forcing us to “become parts of the machine”; Where is the joy in life? So in the poem “Kill Money”, Lawrence calls on people to kill money, to destroy money: *Kill money, put money out of existence/.../We must have the courage of mutual trust/We must have the modesty of simple living/And the individual must have his house, food and fire all free like a bird* (Lawrence 2002, p. 401). The destruction of natural ecology inevitably leads to the imbalance of social ecology. Lawrence believed that industrial civilization greatly destroyed the natural ecological environment on which human beings depended for survival (that is, the “sexual desire”

mentioned by Mr. Lu Shuyuan), and then alienated the simple interpersonal relationship between people. In order to survive, people use all means to compete with each other, which leads to unbalanced development of social ecology.

Besides the negative influence on the simple interpersonal relationship between people, the other direct manifestation of this imbalance is the failed marriage of modern people. Good husbands make unhappy wives, as evil husbands often do; However, the misfortunes of the wives of good husbands are more painful and tragic than the misfortunes of the wives of bad husbands. In the poem "Good husbands Make Bad Wives", the tragedy of social marriage is revealed in five short lines: no matter the husband is "good" or "evil", their wives are unhappy, because the industrial revolution brought people social civilization, but also brought alienation between the couple. The unhappy marriage described in the poem is only a microcosm of social ecological problems. Lawrence once said that "the misfortunes of human society are, to a large extent, the misfortunes of man and woman in marriage" (Miao Fuguang, 2007, p. 146) and unhappy marriages are, to a large extent, the direct consequence of the stresses of the mechanical industry.

New houses, new furniture, new streets, new clothes, new sheets/everything new and machine-made sucks life out of us/and makes us cold, makes us lifeless/the more we have (Lawrence 2002, p. 365). In "New Houses, New Clothes", the poet deplores the crimes of industrial machinery in short words. Although "industrial machines" have made new things for human beings, they have done so at the cost of "sucking our life". Without life, man is an empty shell. Material civilization makes human beings have no vitality, and human beings become callous and heartless, and become mental patients of ecological alienation.

The Spiritual Ecological Interpretation of Lawrence's Poetry

Spiritual ecology refers to the "interaction and existence between spiritual beings (mainly people) and their living environment (including natural environment, social environment and cultural environment)". On the one hand, it is related to the healthy growth of spiritual subjects, on the other hand, it is related to the balance, stability and evolution of an ecosystem under the coordination of spiritual variables (Lu Shuyuan, 1996, p. 3). Although spiritual ecology refers to the relationship between people and themselves, it is inseparable from the natural ecology and social ecology which are mutually restricted. According to Lu Shuyuan's ecology, sex belongs to the level of natural biology, marriage belongs to the level of social ecology, and love belongs to the level of spiritual ecology and influenced by the natural ecological environment, especially the social ecological environment. The destruction of ecological environment and the imbalance of social ecology (in Lawrence's poem, it refers to the destruction of nature by industrial machinery and the alienation of modern people) will "spoil love", and love will become the love that distorts the mind, the love that distorts the agreement and the love that distorts the self. What men should do is to destroy money and build a fresh house of life. Then they can fall in love. The poet proposed the world true love, that is, to overthrow the industrial machinery (down with money) and return to the primitive ecology (the house of life), so that people can achieve true love.

Lawrence emphasized that a marriage which is sexually and spiritually compatible is perfect. However, along with the process of British industrialization, the beautiful natural ecology was destroyed and the relationship between people was alienated, which led to the imbalance of social ecology and the spiritual ecology of modern people also fell into an unprecedented crisis. The natural and simple primitive vitality of

modern people under industrial machinery is gone, instead of “the spirit of ecological civilization alienation, a disease of civilization” (Miao Fuguang, 2007). Because of the industrialization, English people especially males have lost their spirits and become empty inside, as Lawrence depicted in the poem “How Beastly the Bourgeois is”, males are like mushrooms, “*he’s stale, he’s been there too long/Touch him, and you’ll find he’s all gone inside/Just like an old mushroom, all wormy inside, and hollow/Under a smooth skin and an upright appearance*” (Lawrence, 2002, p. 339). From this poem, we can see people in the upper class have no vitality and are stale under the development of industry, they are hollow inside. The poet points out the hypocrisy and emptiness of modern people alienated by industry. Materials enrich the appearance, but hollow out the modern man’s heart. At the same time, there is no true love between men and women, and the spiritual ecology of human beings is completely collapsed. To emphasize the loss of vitality of modern man, Lawrence created a series of “natural persons” in his works. They were strong, vigorous and, above all, possessed of raw sexual prowess. The forester in “The Shadow of Spring” with “strong chest and strong body”; Hadrian, “full of life” in “You Touched Me”; The powerful farmer in “The Sun”, “young and passionate”; The “tall and sturdy” Mexican tour guide in “Princess”, etc. These are all “natural persons” in Lawrence’s works.

Conclusion

From the perspective of natural ecology, social ecology and spiritual ecology, we can find the profound ecological and philosophical implications of Lawrence’s poems. These three aspects are closely linked and mutually restricted. The non-human beings, sex, marriage and modern people’s spiritual problems that Lawrence pays attention to in his poems are the literary embodiment of Mr. Lu Shuyuan’s ecological dichotomy, which will not only help readers understand Lawrence’s poems and his concept of ecology easily, but also help to widen the scale of research on his poems from another perspective.

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