

A Comparative Study of the Cultural Connotations in Chinese and British Landscape Pastoral Poetry

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This article is a comparative study of Chinese landscape pastoral poetry and British landscape pastoral poetry, focusing on their cultural connotations. Many Chinese and British poets take the theme of pastoral landscape as their creative content. By describing the natural scenery of the field, the life and work of the farmers and etc., the poems eulogize the simplicity and purity of rural world, the happiness and unsophisticated life of farmers and also certain emotion of the poets. This kind of poetry is very prevalent among readers. However, due to the heterogeneity of Chinese and British culture, the landscape pastoral poetry created by Chinese and British poets has the same theme and description objects, but there are also marked differences in their content, artistic expression, writing techniques and the creation form that attracted lots of scholars to study. However, there have been few such studies in the differences about Chinese and British landscape pastoral poetry. To this extent, hopefully, this article may be scholastically significant in studying on the difference of their cultural connotations.

Keywords: Chinese and British landscape pastoral poetry cultural connotations

I. Chinese Landscape Pastoral Poetry

Poetry embodies the rich culture of human beings, and nature, which is closely related to human beings, is also described by poets frequently. The definition of landscape pastoral poetry is a kind of literary genre which mostly to chant charming landscape idyllic scenery, to reflect rural life as the main content and so on (Tang, 1995, p. 55). Both in China and British, landscape pastoral poetry is deeply loved by readers and forms its unique characteristics in the long course of history.

The Chinese landscape pastoral poets take Tao Yuanming and Xie Lingyun as their ancestors, then Wang Wei and Meng Haoran pushed the pastoral poetry to the peak. Throughout the development history of Chinese landscape pastoral poetry, it presents a linear and continuous process. During the Wei and Jin Dynasty, this kind of poetry began to step on the stage of history, which established a precedent of landscape pastoral poetry in China. It was closely related to the social background at that time. As a result of political darkness, frequent changes of dynasties and social upheaval in this period, the literati were hard to settle down and their life couldn't be guaranteed. So, in such a situation, it costs a lot of effort for literati to uphold their values. Some of them began to escape from reality and started to live in seclusion. They sought their own fun in the mountains

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and forests, viewed the beauty of the countryside and gained the philosophy of life there. The perfect integration of man and nature is achieved. When literati enjoy the beautiful landscape, they can't help drinking and composing poems. Only then did people begin to appreciate the natural scenery in their own eyes, and the landscape pastoral poetry began to enter people's version (Guo, 2010, p. 48).

Then in Tang Dynasty, especially in the heyday of it, the society was stable and the economy was prosperous. On the basis of material life satisfaction, the state began to pay attention to personal spiritual life and social culture development, so art has been all-round developed at this period especially in poetry. In addition, with the promotion of Buddhism, the thought of pastoral seclusion was prevalent in the whole society. Besides, because of various reasons, the men of letters were unsatisfied with their official career, so they chose seclusion besides mountains and rivers. Once again, landscape pastoral poetry has been developed. The representative poets are Wang Wei, Meng Haoran, Zu Yong, Wei Yingwu and so on. They all choose to depict the landscape pastoral scenery and also put their inner feelings on the landscape. These poets are similar in their artistic styles, so they are called the landscape pastoral poetry school. They wrote a great many of pastoral poems, which created precious wealth for Chinese traditional culture.

In the Song Dynasty, the inheritance and development of landscape pastoral poetry is mainly led by the four greatest poets in Southern Song Dynasty (Lu You, Fan Chengda, Yang Wanli, You Mao). Their poems broke through the confinement of Jiangxi Poetry School and made great achievements in the creation of landscape pastoral poetry. But because of the development and change of society, with the rise of different literary styles (such as Ci, Qu), it has a certain impact on poetry. Since the Tang Dynasty, poetry has gone through its heyday, and as one of the poetry genres, the landscape pastoral poetry naturally has little development. However, it's still popular and plays an important role in the history of Chinese literature.

II. British Landscape Pastoral Poetry

In British, except the father of British landscape pastoral poets—Bagley, Edmund Spenser, William Wordsworth and Christopher Marlowe are also well-known landscape pastoral poets. Landscape pastoral poetry was introduced into British around 14th-15th century. Influenced by the Renaissance movement, people's imprisoned thoughts were liberated, not only in ideology, but in all fields. They are not fettered by the strict church and began to focus on the nature, so the poetry with the theme of idyllic appeared. Bagley—the father of British landscape pastoral poets, appeared in this period. Marlowe and Spenser inherited the tradition of Bagley's poetry and promoted the development of landscape pastoral poetry on the basis of Bagley's creation.

From the 17th to 18th centuries, Europe was influenced by the restoration of feudal dynasty, humanism gradually weakened in this process, and landscape pastoral poetry was blocked. While in the French Romantic Movement of the 18th century, Rousseau's slogan of "go back to nature" was warmly responded, and the poetry about nature began to flourish again.

In the late 18th and 19th centuries, the second liberation of human nature appeared in the West. As a result of the liberation of human nature, a large number of landscape pastoral poets began to emerge. At this time, landscape pastoral poetry got unprecedented development. It can be said that this time is the peak of the development of landscape pastoral poetry in British and British pastoral literature was finally formed (Zhang,

2017, p. 87). Such as the Lake Poets, Keats, Shelley and other representatives, British landscape pastoral poetry finally formed.

Therefore, social background is the fundamental reason for the formation of this unique form of English poetry. The early British people who returned to nature were not voluntary, but because they were persecuted by religion. So they had to live in seclusion for survival, which was a passive choice. Later, with the continuous bourgeois revolution and the environmental pollution brought about by industrial manufacturing made people begin to reject the evil capitalist society and emphasize that human emotions could only be revealed in a calm and natural environment. In a word, every development of British landscape pastoral poetry is accompanied by the corresponding social and historical events. It is not a linear process and occupies a small proportion in its own literary history, but it still has certain literary significance and academic value.

III. The Similarities and Differences Between Chinese and British Landscape Pastoral Poetry from the Perspective of Blank and Ethereal Traits

The theory of blank means that what is to be displayed in the artistic creation is uncertain, nor is it clear to show the direct meaning, but to leave readers or viewers infinite imagination space, and let the readers fill in the blank alone, which is an essential technique of artistic creation. The phenomenon which arouses rich imagination is that we can leave the real artistic imagination space to those who know how to appreciate or can accept it through simile, metaphor and other rhetorical devices. Not only Chinese ancient poetry stresses the blank art, but also British poetry stresses it. Shakespeare said in his work *Hamlet*: “in addition, there is only silence.” “Only when we talk about seventy percent of the poetry, let the reader pay attention to the left thirty percent and share the pleasure of creation, can they really understand the true flavor of poetry,” said Stéphane Mallarmé, a French poet (Gu, 2006, p. 372). For example:

结庐在人境，而无车马喧。
问君何能尔？心远地自偏。
采菊东篱下，悠然见南山。
山气日夕佳，飞鸟相与还。(Tao, 2005)

Tao Yuanming wrote this poem when he was traveling in Nanshan. We didn't know what he wanted to express in this poem, but only the poet himself knew it. We carefully analyze the main content of this poem: under the glow of sunset, the poet drinking and intoxicating when returning from work and immersing himself in the taste of living in seclusion. He picked chrysanthemum in the east fence and looked at Nanshan. At this time, the feeling of this scene is so carefree, unfettered and peaceful. One of the characteristics of Tao Yuanming's poems is that they are simple, pure, and integrated with inner feeling. We don't know what he met, what he saw and what he thought on the way to pick chrysanthemums. But we know that he is a landscape idyllic poet who loves mountains and rivers. Tao Yuanming once wrote “An Idyllic Land of Peach-Blossom Spring”, which makes us linger on the simple and pure world of the peach land and forget to return. Where is this ideal paradise? We all don't know and we posterity will pursue this paradise on earth. This poem is a kind of life attitude of avoiding the real world and returning to seclusion, which is also a denial of power and fame.

The way of thinking of returning to nature and ignoring the outside world can also be seen in William Butler Yeats's poems. Let's take a look at his famous poem "the Lake Isle of Innisfree":

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.
And I shall have some peace there,
for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning
to where the cricket sings;
There midnights all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnets wings.
I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements gray,
I hear it in the deep hearts core. (Yeats, 1892)

The peaceful and beautiful scenery of the lake island makes the poet who living in city yearns for it. "While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements gray, I hear it in the deep hearts core". In poet's view, tranquil countryside and noisy city are two opposite concepts. In terms of expression techniques, the poem used a lot of images close to the natural life, such as clay, wattle, bean-rows, hive and so on. Meanwhile, there are many action descriptions related to daily life, like go, arise, build, live and etc. Through these simple languages, the technique of white drawing shows a quiet and harmonious picture.

The artistic conception of Yeats' poems is particular similar to that of Tao Yuanming's. For example, the following images like cottages, lakes, fences, seedlings, bees, forests and open land, such pastoral images immediately bring people into the quiet rural life. The British poet Alexander Pope once had such a feeling in the *Ode on Solitude*: "these kinds of people are really happy. A few acres of ancestral fields could carry their wishes and all the things in the world they care about. They are satisfied to stand on their own fields and breathe the air of their hometown" (Pope, 1700). The reason for Tao Yuanming's seclusion in the countryside is nothing more than that people always have to find the value of life existence in the world, otherwise he will be in a status of anxiety and uneasiness. However, there is always a set of accepted value standards in society, which most people used as the basis for settling down. In the era he lived in, status, power and reputation were the main values and reference standards. In order to get these, he must devote himself to fighting, pretending, observing and flattering. In this case, it's better to return to nature and find a new value for his life. Such thoughts appear frequently in Chinese poetry, such as Li Bai, Wang Wei, and Meng Haoran's poems.

Then looking back to Yeats's "the Lake Isle of Innisfree". It expressed his strong desire to escape from the social turmoil. Although the reason for his seclusion was not to avoid the official strife, it had something to do with the social condition at that time. At the end of the 19th century, capitalism was fully developed, but it also brought a series of disasters to the social life at that time. The development of industry made seriously environmental pollution and people's health was destroyed. Besides, commercialization and urbanization made people fall into a kind of miserable, lonely and distressed living state. The new face of capitalism is quietly destroyed the simple and honest folk customs, which made some people who pursue freedom, peace, and

tranquility feel sad and upset. In addition, the violence and war at the end of this century made them feel terror and despair, so it's natural to choose seclusion and return to the countryside (Wang, 2009, p. 12). After reading these two quiet and leisurely poems, we are left with endless imagination, that is, the blank we mentioned above. Blank is just a way of appreciation. Blank is a potential ability and feeling we should have in reading poetry and painting.

To sum up, we find that Chinese landscape pastoral poets are more implicit and euphemistic in dealing with blank and ethereal, while British landscape pastoral poets are generous and straightforward through comparison, which is also the difference in poetry expression caused by cultural tradition. Of course, they both have consistency on the issue of blank and ethereal, and they all know how to leave certain imagination space for readers.

IV. The Similarities and Differences Between Chinese and British Landscape Pastoral Poetry from the Perspective of Metaphor and Symbolism

Metaphor is the most widely used technique in poetry writing. The earliest use can be traced back to *The Book of Songs*. For example, Wei Fengzhong's poem "the great rat" is using metaphor to compare the fat rat to the greedy official. Zhu Xi's *Biography of Poetry* is interpreted metaphor as: compared with the other things than this thing. From the simplest and most basic meaning of metaphor to explain, the more unified opinion is that to describe things by comparing to another thing in order to convey the thoughts. Symbolism is also one of the usual ways of expression in classical poetry, which is used to express concept, ideology and emotion through specific images that are easy to cause association. There are some similar characteristics between symbolism and noumenon, which can be connected through readers' imagination and association. For example, the dragon symbolizes the supreme power of the emperor; the ape is a sad expression of the traveler's parting time; the crane is the incarnation of eternal life; the mandarin duck is a symbol of love; the wild goose brings news to the separated lover, the peony is the symbol of wealth, and the chrysanthemum is a symbol of noble, tenacity.

Cultural exchanges under different cultural backgrounds have led to various research direction from the artistic, thematic and poetic point of views. This paper focuses on the analysis of the culture of landscape pastoral poetry in British, which is dominated by animal husbandry, but in China, which is dominated by agriculture. In British landscape pastoral poems, there are flock of sheep, shepherd children sitting under trees talking about love, and pasture with boundless setting sun in spring. In Chinese poetry, there are many idyllic scenery, such as fruits, mulberry and hemp, peaches and plums in front of the hall, elms and willows behind the house, along with continuous Zen sounds, singing and dancing (Wang, 1988, p. 151). What's more, rose is a symbol of love in British poetry, but in Chinese culture, it is just an extremely common flower, which has not much symbolic meaning before been influenced by western culture. Cuckoo is a "happy visitor" and an auspicious bird in British poetry which people like it very much, but in Chinese poetry, it's the voice of plaintive complaint and pain. So different cultural backgrounds and various cultural phenomena have great influence on poetry creation, as well as poetry culture.

Chinese poetry was influenced by Confucian culture, while British poetry was influenced by Greek and European literature. The culture of Chinese poetry is implicit and deep, while that of British poetry is enthusiastic, bold, humorous and optimistic, which mainly influenced by Humanism.

Tao Yuanming and Wang Wei are outstanding representatives of landscape pastoral poetry. They are both the integrators of landscape pastoral poetry. However, because of the difference of their life path, personality and cultural background, they finally choose different ways of life. The former chooses to completely retreat into the secular life, while the latter regards retreat as a way to escape from the real life, just to seek for the temporary comfort of the soul.

少无适俗韵，性本爱丘山。
误落尘网中，一去三十年。
羁鸟恋旧林，池鱼思故渊。
开荒南野际，守拙归园田。
方宅十余亩，草屋八九间。
榆柳荫后檐，桃李罗堂前。
暧暧远人村，依依墟里烟。
狗吠深巷中，鸡鸣桑树颠。
户庭无尘杂，虚室有余闲。
久在樊笼里，复得返自然。(Tao, 2003)

At the beginning of the poem, the poet said that he didn't adapt to the mundane world when he was young, and he was born to love the natural scenery. "By mistake I sought mundane careers", this sentence shows a sense of remorse. Comparing the official circle with the "dust net", we can see the poet's disdain and disgust for the dirty official arena. Both birds in cage and fish in pond are animals that have lost their freedom. Tao Yuanming used this metaphor to show that he is just like a bird's love for the forest and a fish's love for the beautiful nature. Returning to nature that means to regain freedom. Next, he described the natural and quiet countryside. Tao Yuanming lived at the foot of Lushan Mountain when he was young, so he is very familiar with the hills and villages here. But this time, he broke away from the fetters of officialdom and returned to the free world, so he had a special feeling of joy and freshness. The empty room, which refers to the quiet room superficially but more important is to show the poet's leisure and idle mood. The last two sentences "When I escape from bitter strife with men, I live a free and easy life again" respond to the beginning of the poem. The personality shown here is neither a hermit in a villa nor a farmer in a field. The scholar bureaucrats who retired from office have superior material life, and the farmers who hoe the fields lack Tao Yuanming's spiritual life. Therefore, Tao Yuanming is a poet and philosopher who can really appreciate the interest of nature and get the peace of mind from his work.

A slumber did my spirit seal
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.
No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course

With rocks, and stones, and trees.

——*A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal* William Wordsworth

Wordsworth's large number of poems about nature are the artistic crystallization of the transition from describing reality to expressing feelings on mountains and rivers, burning the poet's unique spiritual flame, whose duty is to awaken people's awareness of natural feelings and impressions. Wordsworth always regards "humble rural life" as the seedbed of germinating poetry, and the sunset, moon, twilight at dawn, flowers in the field and flying birds in the clouds are all his favorite images.

In Wordsworth's eyes, nature is not the center of a kind of beautiful scenery, but the inner spiritual power of its interpretation of life theme. Nature guides Wordsworth to feel what love is and what beauty is (Zhang, 2006, p. 84). On February 1, 1793, when France declared war on Britain, he suffered unprecedented shock in his mind. Thus, he began to look for new reasons for existence. He was thinking about the new relationship between man and nature, man and the world. Therefore, when exploring the source of the poet's creation, we can't help thinking the influence of nature and the contemplation of the human world on his poetry. Nature is the eternal theme of the poet (Yang, 2003, p. 81)

Then, let's see the Chinese version of Sun from Baudelaire

当他像诗人一样降临在城中
他让最微贱的事物有了高贵的命运
他好像一个国王，没有声响，没有仆从
走进所有的病院和所有的王宫 (Tang, 2006, p. 9)

In this poetry, the poet is the angel of truth, goodness and beauty, and the sun is a common but unique item that the poet found and viewed as the most noble symbol. "He gave the humblest things a noble destiny", this is his hope, the same lofty and great as the sun.

So, metaphor and symbolism are the most widely used rhetorical devices in landscape pastoral poetry writing, which make the poetry more connotative and colorful.

V. The Similarities and Differences Between Chinese and British Landscape Pastoral Poetry from the Perspective of "Self-State" and "Selfless-State"

The commonness lies in the situation of self-state and selfless-state in the process of poetry creation, which is a cultural phenomenon in both Chinese and British poetry. However, some critics think that the difference between Chinese and British landscape pastoral poetry is that the former one is the selfless-state, while the latter one is the self-state. From a literary point of view, this division is not accurate. Some people may ask, "when a poet uses some selected images to form a landscape or poetry of selflessness state, it is also developing towards the poet's certain feeling or psychological state". But there is no such thing as a complete "selfless state". Therefore, it's wrong to use the way of "one-size-fits-all kind". We can't generally say which is "the state with me" and which is "the state without me".

Let's see a poetry excerpt from Tintern Abbey by William Wordsworth:

Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect

The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
 The day is come when I again repose
 Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
 These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
 Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
 Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
 'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
 These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
 Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
 Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
 Sent up, in silence, from among the trees! (Wordsworth, 1798)

Here, the poet's memories are combined with the landscape in front of him, forming a "convolute-cycling" article structure. If we compare Wordsworth's poem "Tintern Abbey" with Chinese landscape pastoral poetry, we will find that the poet and nature are separated into two poles. Through the communication between the poet and nature, the unique cultural significance of poetry has created. This kind of communication is presented by time. However, Chinese landscape pastoral poetry is relatively independent of the time order, and the process of poet's creation is just like painting, which is shown by juxtaposition and synchrony. British landscape pastoral poetry gives readers power and magic imagination, while Chinese landscape pastoral poetry gives us peace, leisure, harmony and nature. Such a poem would rather be called a world. Buddhism believes that "A world in a wild flower, and a bodhi in a leaf". It is also a poetic world composed of interrelated and unrelated images, as well as Zen thoughts. "The self-state" and "the selfless-state" are Chinese philosophical theories, but we can also find them in British poetry.

In Chinese landscape pastoral poetry, the relationship between poets and nature is not as the linear one as in England. Chinese poets and nature coexist in this vast world. They perform together as a whole. This is because under the influence of the thought of "the harmony between man and nature" in traditional Chinese culture, man is regarded as a part of nature. Hence, people and nature should live in harmony and respect the laws of nature. This is a unique human emotional sustenance and psychological state. Therefore, the distinction made by Wang Guowei between "self-state" and "selfless-state" only refers to the emotion of two kinds of poems. One is the passionate integration into the world life, that is, the trivia of the world, such as love, parting, death, etc.; the other is a kind of affection of calm, harmonious, almost detached or as if transcending the universe.

Professor Xi Mi, a researcher of Chinese poetry, believes that it is better to analyze the structure of poetry than to use such general and impressionistic descriptions as "self-state" and "selfless-state". She analyzed Liu Zongyuan's famous poem "Snow River". She thought that there was not a single central image in this poem, but the fusion of a series of images, and the significance of poetry lies in the relationship between images. Only in this way can we realize or show the significance that the poet brings us or the poetry gives us. Let's see this poetry:

千山鸟飞绝，万径人踪灭。
 孤舟蓑笠翁，独钓寒江雪。(Liu, after 805)

The first sentence of this poem shows us a vast space and gives us a sense of emptiness between heaven and earth. There are mountains and snow, and the rest let us imagine. This is a world that the poet has created for us, a very empty nature without any trace of life. Then we will analyze the philosophical significance of this poem. If the difference between Chinese and British poetry does not lie in “self-state” or “selfless-state”, then where the difference exists? Professor Xi Mi thinks that the difference is mainly reflected in the different structural ways. Romanticism shows a dialectical relationship between the poet and nature. This dialectical relationship refers to the continuous communication and mutual answer between these two. This kind of communication and mutual answer exists in the whole process of the poet’s creation. It’s also on the time axis and it is a process of development and evolution of communication between mind and nature. Looking at the images of “solitary boat”, “fisherman”, “fishing alone”, “the snowed river” and “straw rain cape”, this poetry combined these independent images together and displayed the “self-state” and “selfless-state” that the poet wants to express in the short twenty words. Then by comparing Wordsworth’s Tintern Abbey, we can feel the philosophical thoughts of Chinese and British landscape pastoral poetry.

The cultural differences between Chinese and British landscape pastoral poetry are mainly manifested in the following aspects: the differences in artistic conception. British people are deeply influenced by Christian culture. The precise thinking makes them feel incomprehensible and unintelligible for the expression of “borrowing scenery to express feelings” and “seeing the things makes one think about somebody” in Chinese landscape pastoral poetry. Because of the differences in traditional cultural cognition, Chinese landscape pastoral poems are often composed by poets in one stretch when inspiration comes, and cannot be delayed for a moment. But even when they are most excited, British poets are not completely captured by emotion, which is more or less inevitable. Therefore, they think that their poems are the result of “the quiet memory after the strong emotion overflows”. In terms of emotional expression, most of the British poems are very passionate and intense in order to reproduce this feeling, while the ancient Chinese poetry is concise and has a huge of artistic conception. Chinese poets will not write out all the meanings they want to express, but leave some blank for the people to imagine.

Conclusion

To sum up, the above analysis shows that both Chinese and British landscape pastoral poetry shared something in common, such as the using of blank traits, metaphor, symbolism, self-state and selfless-state. But on the other hand, it is obvious that each has their own distinctive characteristics. For example, Chinese landscape pastoral poets are more implicit and euphemistic in leaving blank, while British landscape pastoral poets are generous and straightforward; Chinese landscape pastoral poetry shows a state of selflessness under the influence of Taoism, while due to the influence of Christian precise thinking, focusing on the rational participation of people, British landscape pastoral poetry is mostly a kind of self-state. The most fundamental reason for the difference lies in the different cultural traditions between China and Britain, that is, the different cultural backgrounds. This cultural phenomenon fully proves the fact that different cultural traditions produce different literary creations and different poets create different styles of cultures. To some extent, this paper could also make up for this kind of research by analyzing the causes of the similarities and differences between these two countries’ landscape pastoral poems from the cultural connotations. What’s more, through the

in-depth understanding of heterogeneous cultural works, we can better promote the literary intercommunication and mutual learning between these two countries.

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