

THE PROBLEM OF VIOLENCE IN MO YAN'S «SANDALWOOD DEATH» AND WILLIAM GOLDING'S «LORD OF THE FLIES»

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The novels by Mo Yan and William Golding reflect the deep problems of modern society, connected with the conflict between humanity and violence. «Sandalwood Death» by Chinese author Mo Yan and «Lord of the Flies» by British author William Golding, originating from different cultural backgrounds and aesthetic styles, present readers with a cross-cultural and cross-temporal panorama of actual problems in the modern society.

Key words: the problem of violence; comparative study; Mo Yan; William Golding

ПРОБЛЕМА НАСИЛИЯ В РОМАНЕ МО ЯНЯ «СМЕРТЬ ПАХНЕТ САНДАЛОМ» И УИЛЬЯМА ГОЛДИНГА «ПОВЕЛИТЕЛЬ МУХ»

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Романы Мо Яня и Уильяма Голдинга отражают глубокие проблемы современного общества, связанные с конфликтом гуманности и насилия. Романы «Смерть пахнет сандалом» китайского автора Мо Яня и «Повелитель мух» британского писателя Уильяма Голдинга, относящиеся к разным культурным и эстетическим мирам, представляют читателям кросс-культурную и кросс-темпоральную панораму актуальных проблем современного общества.

Ключевые слова: проблема насилия; сравнительный анализ; Мо Янь; Уильям Голдинг.

I. Aestheticization and Literary Expression

Aestheticization and literary expression play crucial roles in both «Sandalwood Death» and «Lord of the Flies», with the two authors employing distinct literary techniques to elevate their works to new heights. Mo Yan's novels often depict and narrate the traditional cultural customs of specific regions. Reading Mo Yan's works provides insights into the authentic appearance of traditional cultural customs in certain Chinese regions. This is a concrete manifestation of the traditional cultural significance in his literary works [1]. In «Sandalwood Death» (2001), Mo Yan (莫言, b. 1955) skillfully integrates elements of catkin opera, infusing the novel with a rich folk atmosphere. This approach enhances the local characteristics of the work, presenting a strong regional style and a unique literary demeanor imbued with Chinese flavor.

Through the use of catkin opera, the novel not only adds vibrancy but also offers readers a completely new literary experience. This innovative writing technique not only breaks through conventional forms but also revitalizes and promotes traditional Chinese literature.

On the other hand, while W. Golding (*William Gerald Golding, 1911–1993*) adopts a traditional novel narrative in «*Lord of the Flies*» (1954), he delves deeply into the inner lives of the characters. Through the psychological portrayal of the boys, Golding demonstrates a profound skill in psychological depiction. The characters in his works, within the microcosm constructed by the author, brazenly reveal human nature, imitating and satirizing reality with features that are highly tragic, unconventional, conceptual, and realistic [2]. The nuanced descriptions and grasp of emotions enable readers to better understand the content and evoke emotional resonance. Aesthetics here is not merely an innovation in form but a focus on the profound portrayal of characters' psyches, pushing the expressive power of the work to its pinnacle.

Through these distinct literary expressions, «*Sandalwood Death*» and «*Lord of the Flies*» paint rich and diverse pictures at the aesthetic level, presenting a vivid literary landscape for readers. Therefore, aestheticization and literary expression in these two works are not merely displays of technique but rather a profound understanding of literary art by the authors. Through the adept use of different literary elements, these two authors successfully inject unique artistic qualities into their works. As they aesthetically scrutinize societal realities, their exquisite literary expressions leave a lasting impression on readers.

II. Violence and Moral Decision-Making

In both «*Sandalwood Death*» and «*Lord of the Flies*», violence and moral decision-making intertwine at the core of the works, delving deeply into the complexity of human nature and the collapse of moral values. Guiding readers to contemplate the ugliness of human nature from an aesthetic perspective, this approach not only conveys ideas but also provides readers with a sense of aesthetic pleasure, deepening their impression of the work.

In «*Sandalwood Death*», Mo Yan confronts the reader with vivid descriptions of brutal execution methods, revealing the cruel essence of human nature. This depiction prompts readers to contemplate the depths of moral boundaries. The executioners themselves become the punished, and the tragic consequences of the recurring violent acts permeate the novel's plot, vividly portraying scenes of brutal punishment. This approach not only imparts a strong visual impact on the readers but also serves as a profound examination of societal morality, vehemently criticizing the feudal society of late Qing.

In contrast, the depiction of violent behavior in «*Lord of the Flies*» is more subtle, resembling the conflicting dynamics among the boys in their daily lives. The work illustrates the gradual descent of the boys into savagery on the deserted island, expressing the individual's delicate balance between power and morality in exceptional circumstances. In this enclosed space, the perpetrators of violence – the "savages" – utilize brutal means to erode the living space of the "civilized" individuals, ruthlessly

stripping away Ralph's democratic rights. At the cost of taking human lives, they achieve their goal of dominating the entire island. The once paradisiacal setting inevitably succumbs to the tragic fate of transforming from a paradise into a hell [3]. Through the in-depth portrayal of violence and moral decisions, these two works provoke questioning the fundamental attributes of human nature, encouraging readers to deeply ponder the ethical foundations of society during the process of literary reception and imagination.

In «Lord of the Flies», the depiction of violent scenes undergoes more profound aesthetic refinement compared to «Sandalwood Death». Golding seamlessly integrates violence and beauty through his portrayal of conflicts between group power and individual autonomy. The pleasure derived from slaughter gradually awakens the inherent evil within the children. Granting immense power to the «Lord of the Flies» devours their rationality and civilization, severing the connection with civility and compelling the children to reveal their primal evil [4]. However, the moral decisions triggered by violence are a common concern in both works. In «Sandalwood Death», characters often find themselves in conflicts of thought when facing brutal punishments and moral choices. For the executioners, morality and responsibility become internal contradictions. This profound moral contemplation renders the portrayal of human nature in the work more nuanced. Similarly, in «Lord of the Flies» the boys on the deserted island descend into moral decay, and the betrayals and compromises in moral choices among different characters form the core conflict of the work. Through an in-depth analysis of this theme, both works raise profound questions about human nature in multiple dimensions, allowing readers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of human nature within the resonance of emotion and reason.

This comparative analysis not only holds academic value but also provides readers with a richer perspective in literary understanding. Through the in-depth exploration of violence and moral decision-making, we can not only better comprehend the literary significance of «Sandalwood Death» and «Lord of the Flies» but also draw profound insights into human nature, society, and morality.

III. Impact of Society on Individuals

In both «Sandalwood Death» and «Lord of the Flies» the interaction between society and individuals is portrayed through conflicts such as rescue efforts and hunting, as well as the depiction of conflicts between law and destruction. The works express a profound concern, aiming to reveal the mechanisms of society through literature and showcase how society manipulates the destinies of individuals. In Mo Yan's «Sandalwood Death», the portrayal of the reality of late Qing society (1636-1912, Chinese feudal dynasty) in China reveals the harsh lives of the vast majority in marginalized groups. Countless individuals navigate through the social structure, their choices and destinies constrained, crushed beneath the wheels of history. By exposing the mechanisms of society, the novel provides readers with a deeper understanding of the social structure and folk culture of late Qing society.

In contrast, in Golding's «Lord of the Flies», the portrayal of absurd events occurring randomly on an uninhabited island illustrates the collapse of social structure and

its profound impact on individuals. In this isolated environment, the disappearance of social order leads to the loss of control over individual behavior, with the boys gradually descending into savagery. In reality, the group seemingly dependent on each other while awaiting rescue perceives each other as "others" from the outset. The characters in the story continually oscillate between the notions of "self" and "other." On this colonized and desolate island, the piglet, initially from the lower strata of the island's society, is an "other," the "little things" whose significance is downplayed by everyone is an "other," and Ralph, who loses his leadership position and is pursued and hunted by the "savages," ultimately becomes an "other" [5]. This narrative design directs the focus of the works towards the struggles and pursuits of individuals in complex societies, prompting readers to engage in profound reflections on how societies shape individual behavior.

In conclusion, the relationship between society and individuals is a central theme in both «Sandalwood Death» and «Lord of the Flies». By revealing social mechanisms and expressing concern for individual destinies, these two works present rich and profound insights into the interaction between society and individuals. In the following section, we will focus on the analysis of cultural and historical backgrounds to better understand the deep messages conveyed by these two works.

Conclusion

This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the literary works «Sandalwood Death» and «Lord of the Flies», revealing the creation of unique literary pieces shaped by diverse cultural backgrounds and influenced by aesthetics, violence, society, culture, and history. These works employ distinctive and captivating methods of expression, demonstrating the profound reflections of the authors on human nature, social structures, and cultural traditions.

In summary, although «Sandalwood Death» and «Lord of the Flies» differ significantly in cultural background, aesthetic expression, and narrative techniques, both profoundly explore themes such as human nature, society and morality in unique ways. These two works offer us a deep reflection on the human condition under different cultural backgrounds, allowing us to understand better how literary works, through words, transcend time and space to guide readers into profound explorations of humanity and society. The depiction of violent acts is not the main message the authors intend to convey but rather an exploration in the midst of violent conflicts to find the light of humanity.

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