

An Analysis of the Impacts of Cultural Differences on British and American Literary Criticism

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Abstract: With the ongoing trend of globalization, countries around the world are experiencing deeper and closer cultural exchanges and communications. However, significant cultural differences persist among nations, which can affect the types of literary works produced in a country and, consequently, the substance of literary criticism within that country. To achieve a better understanding of British and American literature and to enhance the comprehension of the literary criticism systems in these two developed countries, it is crucial to grasp the specific manifestations of the significant cultural differences existing in the cultures of the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (USA) fundamentally. This study primarily analyzes the overview of the cultural differences between UK and USA, delves into the state of literary production and literary criticism in both countries based on this overview, and finally provides an in-depth exploration of how these cultural differences fundamentally influence their literary criticism. The aim is to enable a better appreciation and interpretation of British and American literary works in the future.

Keywords: Cultural Differences; British and American Literature; Literary Criticism

1. Introduction

Different countries possess their own cultures, and various ethnicities also have unique cultural identities. Culture is a product of human daily activities and exhibits characteristics such as historicity, ethnicity, and continuity. As the trend of nationalization continues to progress, various countries worldwide will face a more in-depth and close cultural exchange and cultural communication. However, among various countries a huge

cultural difference still exists, the impact of which is profound. Cultural differences will affect the entire types of literature in a country, as well as the contents of the literary criticism. For example, there are literary criticism on poetry, drama and prose in English and American literature, truly exemplifying the factor of cultural differences that contributes to the diversity of English and American literary criticism. Hence, in order to achieve a better understanding of British and American literature and their literary criticism system, it is necessary to fundamentally grasp the specific forms of the great cultural differences embodied in both the developed countries. This study at first briefly explains the differences between British and American cultures, generates an in-depth discussion on the relations of British and American literature and its literary criticism, and then gives a detailed exploration of the specific forms of the cultural differences on British and American literary criticism. Finally, British and American literature works can hopefully be better appreciated and read in the future.

2. The Development of British and American Literature

In the course of the development of British and American literature, numerous renowned literary figures have emerged, such as Shakespeare and Hemingway, whose contributions to the literary world are widely recognized, exerting a profound influence on the entire literary landscape. British literature underwent two significant phases during its development: the Classical literature period and the Renaissance period, ultimately achieving the evolution of realistic and romantic literary styles. American literature, starting from the nation's founding, initially drew heavily from the development patterns of English literature. During this period, American literature lacked distinctive innovative features. However, as the sense of

autonomy among American literary figures grew, American literature underwent continuous innovation, gradually developing its own unique characteristics. The increasing number of outstanding literary works signifies that American literature has entered a new phase, possessing a literary identity distinctively its own.

3. Cultural Differences and Literary Criticism

Currently, there are many types of literature, with the most typical being drama and poetry, as well as literary criticism and novels. Therefore, literary works can be considered one of the most culturally significant forms in literary history [1]. When people engage in the process of critiquing literary works, they typically rely on their personal accumulated evaluative experiences and long-standing knowledge structures, often influenced by their preferences. However, it is essential to note that literary criticism exhibits clear variations, with one of the fundamental reasons for these differences being the cultural distinctions between nations. Real-life experiences form the foundation of literary creation, closely connecting the author's life environment with the work, establishing a direct link between the two. With the ongoing globalization among countries worldwide, there is a rich exchange and communication of cultures between nations, resulting in evident cultural differences and, subsequently, an impact on the literary works produced in each country. Moreover, these cultural differences directly affect the composition of the literary criticism systems in different countries [2].

Regarding language and cultural content, there are significant differences between the United Kingdom and the United States. These differences encompass various aspects such as history, environment, and religious beliefs. The existence of these differences directly leads to distinct variations in literary criticism between these two countries. Our practical findings indicate that to gain a comprehensive understanding of the British and American literary criticism systems and to enhance the comprehension of literary works, it is essential to achieve a thorough understanding of the cultural differences between these two nations. Essentially, British and American literary forms reflect their native cultures. As global

interactions and exchanges between countries continue to strengthen, cultural exchange and fusion will also be deepened. Within this context, differences in various countries and environments will directly influence British and American literary criticism. Therefore, the British and American literary criticism systems will achieve diversified and effective development within this overarching context, a trend that cannot be reversed [3].

4. The Overview of Cultural Differences between the United Kingdom and the United States

When it comes to culture, it usually refers to a shared psychological framework that most people have in common. These individuals share common social experiences and have received similar educational content. However, due to differences in educational levels and variations in social and work environments, there are distinct differences among different groups and countries. These differences also manifest in styles of dealing with situations and ways of thinking.

In the current developmental context of the United Kingdom and the United States, there are still evident cultural differences between the two nations, primarily stemming from differences in geographical environments and historical development. These differences have led to the formation of distinct national characteristics, ultimately resulting in significant cultural disparities between the two countries. For the United States, the history of the United Kingdom is very ancient, and there is a long-standing process of cultural and historical development. With the continuous progress of history, the United Kingdom has gradually formed and developed a unique historical and political structure, which has in turn facilitated the effective formation of distinctive cultural characteristics in this country [4]. For the USA, its history is relatively short, compared to that of the UK, and it has experienced substantial cultural diversity due to its history of multicultural integration. The geographical environment in the USA is also unique, and its historical development context is complex, contributing to the novelty of its cultural vitality. In contrast to the UK, known for its rich and solemn culture, American culture is characterized by two main aspects: individualism and freedom.

These factors have a direct impact on the country's literature, society, and even politics [5].

The British and American literary works have a significant role in literature. Influenced by cultural differences, people of different races may interpret the same literary work from different perspectives. This leads to varying literary criticism of the same piece of work among individuals. The influence of differences is not only reflected in the work itself, but it also influences readers' comprehensive understanding and reception of the work. The same piece of literary work may receive entirely different literary critiques due to cultural differences between races. Therefore, the impact of cultural differences on the criticism of English and American literary works is evidently significant.

5. The Manifestations of Cultural Differences between the UK and the US on British and American Literary Criticism

5.1 The Differences of Cultural Connotations

In terms of the actual cultural essences of the UK and the USA, it becomes evident that British cultural history is deeply rooted. As a result, this cultural system exhibits significant depth and authority, representing both an advantage and a hindrance to cultural development in the country. The essence of British culture is often expressed throughout British literary criticism and is a profound reflection of the contradictions among different perspectives within British literary criticism. However, it often lacks sufficient innovation and uniqueness. For instance, one of Shakespeare's famous works, *Hamlet*, emphasizes the emotional and existential conflicts of the protagonist, shedding light on the character of British literary critics. Nevertheless, the evaluation process of literary works remains relatively conservative, and there are substantial difficulties in opening up new perspectives.

On the other hand, although the United States has a relatively shorter history of cultural development, it can be seen that the earliest form of American culture initially influenced by British cultural thoughts later achieved effective development and advancement in its own political and cultural realms, forming its

unique cultural essence [6]. American culture is characterized by significant innovative appeal and a new style, focusing on the pursuit of freedom and diversification. As a result, American literary criticism tends to exhibit more daring and sharp styles, with abundant innovation in its conceptual approach.

5.2 The Linguistic Differences

The differences between British and American culture are quite pronounced, and they directly influence the literary criticism systems in both countries. The most fundamental and obvious impact is the linguistic and cultural differences between these two nations, which ultimately result in significant distinctions in their respective literary criticisms.

For any nation, language is a crucial tool for effective communication. While the United Kingdom and the United States share English as their common language, their different historical backgrounds and foundational ethnic compositions lead to noticeable variations in cultural development, ultimately resulting in linguistic differences between British and American English [7]. British English is the specialized language used in the United Kingdom, while American English is the specialized language used in the United States. There are evident linguistic distinctions in terms of customs, allusions, idioms, and more between the two countries. British English tends to emphasize linguistic stability and precision, while American English emphasizes individuality, innovation, and assertiveness.

Due to these significant differences in language and culture between the two nations, it can be challenging to effectively grasp the linguistic disparities between British and American English when engaging in literary criticism. Additionally, understanding the idioms and allusions used in British and American literature can be difficult, making it challenging to ensure the accuracy of literary critiques, not to mention guarantee a profound comprehension of the content of literary works [8].

5.3 The Differences in Humanitarianism

The essence of humanitarianism in the UK and the US essentially refers to the proactive effort to uphold human rights, actively promote human interests, and strive for the fundamental assurance of individual rights. The emergence

of humanitarianism is primarily rooted in the majority of the bourgeoisie, who express approval for the capitalist system and seek to promote its effective consolidation based on their understanding of the actual development situation. This is a purpose put forward to satisfy the perfection of the capitalist system. However, as time progresses and evolves, there will be further enrichment and diversification of the overall framework of the capitalist system. There will also be a realization of deep-seated connotations, leading to significant influences and corresponding changes in both the UK and the US. Regarding British culture, there is fundamentally a lack of in-depth understanding and grasp of the practical meaning of humanitarianism. Consequently, there is a relatively conservative interpretation and analysis of "humanitarianism." With the development of society, there will be effective innovation in cognition, but the progress is not very apparent.

In practical work, most literary critics maintain a conservative attitude towards the understanding and development of humanitarianism. They do not consider the role of humanitarian development helpful for social progress and do not fundamentally value its promoting significance [9]. After comparison, it can be found that in the process of literary criticism in the United States, the most significant feature regarding the understanding of humanitarianism is the presence of a very distinct attitude. In the in-depth analysis of humanitarianism, it is necessary to fully utilize foundational theories such as self-cognition theory, convey direct expressions of self-cognitive insights, and express very evident radical attitudes. There is a significant difference in the cognitive aspect of humanitarianism between the United Kingdom and the United States, and this difference will directly affect the literary criticism in both countries.

5.4 The Historical Differences

Based on the historical realities, it is obvious that the significant cultural and historical differences between the United Kingdom and the United States could directly influence the later literary criticism in both countries. In comparison to the United, the United Kingdom has a more extensive cultural and historical

development process. For the United Kingdom, literary forms at different historical stages exhibit distinctive characteristics, serving as effective representations of the cultural and historical background of the time.

British literature had gained significant prominence and development before the 19th century, with its traditional culture poised for further growth and enrichment. There was a concerted effort to innovate the cultural system, breaking free from inherent constraints of traditional culture, and seeking to introduce a series of new literary connotations. Given the prevalence of religious activities before the 19th century, the literary system developed under those conditions would have a strong religious influence, including in literary criticism. After the waves of development in the 20th century, British literature underwent substantial fundamental changes, achieving a more three-dimensional and independent understanding of culture. This transformation gradually elevated the level of reflection in British literary criticism and fundamentally improved the construction of the literary criticism system. The most notable feature of American literature is its principle of inclusivity. In reality, this principle gradually forms a very typical cultural and historical characteristic for American literature, leading to a distinctiveness in literary criticism. The innovation is particularly significant, with a focus on pursuing a life of freedom and the liberation of individuality.

In a word, the cultural and historical differences between the UK and the US play a direct role in shaping the landscape of literary criticism in both countries, influencing the development and characteristics of their respective literary traditions.

5.5 The Different Core Values in Both Cultures

The different core values between the United Kingdom and the United States also significantly impact the expression of literary criticism in both countries. First and foremost, the core cultural differences between the United Kingdom and the United States influence the literary criticism of both nations. There exist distinct core cultural spirits between the two, with the emphasis on humanistic ideals in our Chinese culture, while Western countries, especially the United States,

prioritize the scientific spirit. Therefore, the crucial difference lies in the emphasis on introspection of the inner self and behavior in Chinese culture, whereas Western cultures, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, focus more on objective and direct reflection [10]. These two cultural perspectives involve different angles and entry points in perceiving things.

In addition, the two mentioned cultures here have inconsistent perspectives on how things are viewed, and there are noticeable differences in their points of entry when it comes to interpretation. Besides, linguistic and cultural differences between the United Kingdom and the United States directly affect literary criticism. The English language in the United Kingdom and the United States differs significantly from the Chinese language. For most literary works from the United Kingdom and the United States, Chinese readers may find it challenging to appreciate certain paragraphs and sentences, as they might not be familiar with the vocabulary and sentence structures used in English literature. Meanwhile, language essentially serves as the external manifestation of an individual's outward thoughts in different countries. Therefore, the approach of thinking in the English language reflects distinct cultural perspectives. Differences in vocabulary usage and sentence comprehension arise from varying thought processes, and a lack of understanding of the English-speaking countries' thought patterns can hinder effective literary evaluation.

Furthermore, artistic and different core values between the United Kingdom and the United States directly impact literary criticism. British artistic culture places significant emphasis on realism, highlighting the reflection of specific issues in the creation and evaluation of works, such as societal and religious aspects. In contrast, American artistic culture leans towards impressionistic forms, emphasizing the thoughts expressed in works and the artistic forms used. In the evaluation of English and American literature, differences stemming from cultural and linguistic disparities suggest a focus on individual works, exploring their underlying thoughts, emphasizing artistic value, and delving into societal nuances. In other words, it entails a form of cultural and spiritual evaluation. For

countries like the United States, their pragmatic and rational spirit demands a more objective attitude in evaluating literary works.

6. Conclusions

The cultural differences between the UK and the US are essentially the result of a complex interplay of multiple factors, leading to distinct and charming characteristics in each. British culture inherently possesses profound connotations and exhibits noticeable depth and seriousness, contributing to a rigorous literary development process. On the other hand, American cultural development, with fewer constraints, is notably characterized by a strong sense of cultural freedom, literary creativity, cultural vitality, and energy. In literary criticism, the evident differences between the two cultures shape a distinct cultural characteristic in the literary criticism systems of these countries.

As globalization continues to progress, cultural communication between nations is becoming increasingly interconnected. Social progress intensifies the close connections between countries and gradually strengthens the exchange and communication of cultures worldwide. This dynamic contributes to significant cultural differences among nations, with the most prominent disparities found in literary works and literary criticism. It is hoped that after the actual concept of British and American cultures, the differences in literary criticism between them, and how cultural differences impact the expression of literary criticism are reviewed and evaluated, the primary objective of enabling a deeper and more accurate appreciation and understanding of literary works in the future can be reached.

In summary, the significant differences in literary criticism between the UK and the US in practical work arise from differences in cultural connotations, humanitarian perspectives, history, and language and cultural core values. Therefore, the cultural differences present in a country directly lead to substantial disparities in the development of literary works between the two nations, profoundly influencing the evolution of the literary criticism systems in the UK and the US. Hence, it is crucial to fundamentally recognize and value these differences when appreciating the literary works of both nations.

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