

# Nature and Unnaturalness: A Two-sided Analysis of Western Drama Literature

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**Abstract:** In the long development of western literature, dramatic literature has been juxtaposed with lyric literature and narrative literature in the three major categories of western literature. Dramatic literature has always been critical, so at the end of the story, most of the protagonists end with tragedy. For example, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the representative of western dramatic literature. In addition, Western dramatic literature tends to be abstract in the form of representation, and behind it is often the nature of all human beings. For example, the hypocrite by Moliere, a famous French writer. Careful study of Western drama literature, from the nature and non-nature of characters, time and space, emotions, to explore the connotation and extension of the concept of Western drama literature, experience the strong anti-traditional color brought by the intersection of tragedy and drama.

## 1. Research background

### 1.1 Literature review

From the origin of Greek dramatic literature, up to now, dramatic literature has swept the whole West. The current positive western dramatic literature is based on natural and non-naturalistic trends of thought. Literary writers criticize and reflect on capitalism and the bourgeoisie through the duality of dramatic literature, showing a distinct aesthetic character from ordinary literature (Yan and Li, 2013). Yang Shaoliang, a scholar, has studied and explored the non-naturalness in Western dramatic literature, pointing out that the post-modern non-naturalness narrative techniques can achieve the function of ethical instruction (Yang, 2016). Similarly, Li Keen scholars studied Young Albert's new book "Non-natural Narration: Impossible World in Novels and Dramas" and believed that it enriched the research field of non-natural narration and found out the shortcomings of non-natural at this stage from the perspective of criticism (Li, 2017). Wan Jin's scholars made an in-depth analysis of the western drama literature work *Goat*, taking the hero's hiding place as the main story line, and through the inability to express the unnatural factors that highlight the narration, they explained the development status of the unnatural nature of drama literature in post-modern literature (Wan, 2019). Liu Likai's scholars analyzed nature in terms of art, believing that nature symbolizes freedom in art, and there is no boundary between natural beauty and artistic beauty (Li, 2012). She Zhengrong's scholars put forward anti-natural theory corresponding to nature and non-nature, believing that nature is bound by its own traditional culture and has a relatively close relationship with the generation of non-natural behaviors (She, 2013).

### 1.2 Purpose of research

In the history of western literature, drama literature has always occupied half of the country. Drama literature is full of various natures, such as naturalness, non-naturalness, multiplicity, etc. These natures have created wonderful drama literature works. In recent years, the overall dramatic literary style of western dramatic literature tends to post-modernism, focusing on the dual nature of modern literature-naturalness and non-naturalness. However, the unnatural nature of drama literature has been questioned by many people, and the audience is more inclined to natural creation. After summarizing and studying the relevant materials on the nature of western drama literature, the author finds that most scholars are not meticulous enough about the theories of nature and non-nature. Based on this, the article conducts a comprehensive and in-depth study on western

drama literature, summarizing the characteristics of nature and non-nature from the aspects of characters, time and space, and emotion, hoping to further enrich the relevant research theories.

## **2. Naturality and non-naturality of characters**

Grice holds that the superficial meaning of utterance is the meaning to be expressed. There is no second meaning, which can be understood naturally. The audience can understand the intuitive meaning without inference and thinking. That is natural meaning. And the natural characters in dramatic literature are the theatrical participants that logically allow existence, such as us in Ibsen's work "When we die and wake up", which is the existence in the physical state. Dramatic characters are naturally embodied in that they come from the real world. You can find similar shadows with dramatic characters in real life. They may only depict a part of them, but they do not replicate them completely. They imitate characters. However, characters are non-natural, and the connotation they express is to imagine and shape a non-existent subject, or a supernatural noumenon. Specifically, the character's non-naturalness can be expressed by the following intuitive characters. The first one is the subject that has passed away and once existed but now does not exist. For example, in *The Voice of the Family*, Harold Pinter expresses the non-theoretical existence of the characters, i.e. the non-nature of the characters, by making the voice of his deceased father pronounce. The second is something similar to human beings. Such characters refer to similar bodies with robots, most of which appear in post-modern dramatic literature. For example, in *Blue Pot*, Carol Churchill describes human conversation as a virus in a computer, and human conversation as a virus in a Chinese language. The last one is mutant human, which covers a wide range, referring to the mixture of human and animal, or mutant animals. For example, the classic Western drama *Beauty and the Beast*. Throughout the development of Western drama literature, from the origin of Roman drama to the post-modern drama of the Renaissance, there are natural and unnatural characters everywhere (Meng, 2015). But the existence of these characters, beyond Forster's "round, flat" outside, especially with Fister's "static, dynamic". In a word, the two sides of nature and non-nature make the audience feel many types of dramatic characters and experience rich character of dramatic characters. Nature makes people feel ordinary, like their own existence, unnatural display of hidden subtle human nature. As Raymond Federman said, they are not as simple as that, but they are.

## **3. Naturality and non-naturality of time and space**

Western dramatic literature is mostly created according to the concept of natural space-time. The so-called space-time naturalness means that time moves forward according to the real world, and has linear characteristics. Everything has a fixed time point. In general dramatic literature, imitative narration refers to the orderly occurrence of events in the natural environment, such as the real environment of houses, vehicles, pedestrians and so on. However, there are not a few works in western dramatic literature that conflict with realistic logic and violate the order of natural space-time. Richardson used to describe the impossible time and space in physical logic by "anti imitating space-time". For example, the typical representative work of time non-nature, betrayal, Pinter uses the narrative way of time reversal to express the story in the nature of recall and the process of time that has logically passed. In addition to the phenomenon of time retrospect, there is also an unnatural infinite cycle of time points, has been staying, never ending. For example, Samuel Beckett tells a love triangle in the classic Western drama *Game*. But in the drama, the protagonist circles indefinitely over a fixed period of time, repeatedly experiencing this emotional entanglement. It's like walking for a while, going to the end but back to the origin, going back, never ending. There is also a unique dramatic time, the time that the characters experience is not consistent with the time that the society experiences. Different individual time coexists in the same social time. In Chinese mythology, similar unnatural time-space writing method is also used, "one day in the sky, one year on the earth" is such a weird time process. Among the western dramatic literature, Churchill's *Nine Heavens* is the most representative one. There is a great gap between the dramatic characters and the social time, such as "100 years outside, 25 years of characters". The naturalness

and non-naturalness of space are more obvious. Naturality refers to the space or environment in which the society exists, and not to the environment that violates the laws of nature. For example, Yonescu's absurd classic drama "The Future in the Egg" is an impossible phenomenon of theatrical space. The complexity and diversity of space's non-naturalness is an attractive focus, such as Borges' paper space, which can only be fabricated in the text.

#### **4. Naturality and non-naturality of emotion**

Emotion has always been the main object of expression in Western dramatic literature. Patrick Hogan as the representative of the "emotional narrative school" has always expressed real human feelings in his works. When it comes to emotional naturalness, we call the emotions we often see as natural emotions. For example, Shakespeare's Hamlet is a tragedy caused by complex emotions such as family, love and friendship. There are also the feelings of greed and jealousy caused by love in Othello. These feelings exist in the real society. The author portrays real life into literary works by writing. People can feel this feeling through his works, that is, natural emotion. Non-natural emotions are not opposed to natural emotions, on the contrary, they complement each other. Albert once explained the connotation of "unnatural emotion". The unnatural emotion in drama is the emotion that does not exist in physical logic. For example, there are unnatural emotions between human beings and animals, objects and souls. This kind of emotion is often embodied in post-modern dramatic literature. In fact, it is because the material civilization of post-modern times is developed and human emotions are materialized. Such works are calling on human beings to attach importance to natural emotions. There are relatively many representative works in this kind of works, such as Yonescu's "Chair", in which the protagonist pours all his feelings on a chair, which is beyond imagination but in reason. In Roger Ellis's Beauty and the Beast, there is love and even sexual desire between the protagonist and the animals. These are all non-natural emotions that do not exist in real life. Mark Richardson once said that non-naturality is not to overthrow the existing naturalness in narrative theory, but to expand it and build a more comprehensive and multi-dimensional narrative system.

#### **5. Conclusion**

One of the main reasons for the durability of dramatic literature is that the works are full of duality, nature and non-nature. Audiences constantly deepen their understanding of the works and experience the deep fictional nature of dramatic literature through the natural and unnatural situations of emotion, characters and time and space. Naturality makes people close to works, while non-naturality enhances novelty in dramatic literary works and realizes some ideological functions. But without exception, western dramatic literary works criticize the current situation and criticize human nature through writing, so as to achieve the purpose of ethical education. In the development scenario of post-modern drama literature, naturalness and non-naturalness intersect and complement each other, embodying the essential attributes of drama literature and teaching human beings.

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