

The Cycle of Crying and Laughing: Character Analysis of Naipaul's "B. Wordsworth"

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Abstract: B. Wordsworth "is the sixth novel in Naipaul's collection" Miguel Street "and the most unique one in the entire collection. The biggest difference between it and other articles is that this one has a more obvious emotional expression and atmosphere, and the characters' emotions undergo interactive changes as the plot develops. Next, the author will briefly analyze the two characters in the article who show the main emotional expressions.

Keywords: Naipaul; B. Wordsworth; Character Analysis; Emotional Changes; Narrative Techniques in Novels.

1. Background of Creation

In novel creation, the emotions of characters are usually influenced by the plot and overall environment in the novel design. Most creators with concise writing, like Naipaul, do not directly tell readers what environmental factors cause the emotions of characters. Instead, they directly give the results through the description of objective events and the actions of characters. As for the root causes of the results, it is necessary to explore the author's background and the environment in which the work is set.

Firstly, the author's identity is already very unique. He had experienced two migrations and held three identities, from India to Trinidad and then to the British Empire. Throughout his life, Naipaul wandered around in cultural belonging and self-identity.

Naipaul's ancestors immigrated as contract laborers from British India to Trinidad, West Indies. He was born into a very traditional Indian Brahmin family, but his parents' conflicting attitude towards religion also caused him confusion about his Indian identity in the future. And there are countless immigrants, tribes, and races on the island of Trinidad. Although he was born here, he is a marginalized person in both geography and faith. Afterwards, he went to study at Oxford University in 1950 and settled here five years later. Even so, he remained an outsider to Britain, "caught in the cracks of civilization, unable to clarify his cultural identity or truly enter the Western discourse system[1]."

Naipaul's emotions towards Britain are complex, and he oscillates back and forth between attachment and deviation towards British culture. And what he usually expresses is dissatisfaction with the Caribbean and ridicule of British colonizers, which form an extreme confrontation between these two forces. Eventually, influenced by multiple cultures, Naipaul is unable to truly communicate with any of them, and the pain of his wandering and helpless marginal writer is suspended, reaching an irreconcilable and unavoidable position[2].

As a former colonized, Naipaul's writing has the nature of "anti writing" about colonial history. This includes the first person creation of "Miguel Street" and the extremely strong autobiographical color, reflecting his strong desire to determine his own identity and belonging as a creative motivation[3]. The residents of Miguel Street in his works all demonstrate in different ways how they survive as colonized

people in dark, dirty, and chaotic environments, with "imitation" being the most common action.

This kind of imitation is reflected in various aspects, among which B. Wordsworth is a typical case. From name to creation, and even to professional attributes and identity definition, B. Wordsworth is like a ghost attached to Anglicization, yet unable to obtain his own soul, and ultimately even his body perished. This is a complete tragedy.

2. Character Analysis

There are a total of four characters in "B. Wordsworth," with "my" mother and the police both appearing as applications of novel techniques, but Mr. Wordsworth and "I" are the main characters in this novel.

2.1. He Said He Would Cry, But 'I' Laughed

What is your name, sir

B. Wordsworth

Is B Bill

Blake, Blake Wordsworth. White Wordsworth is my brother, and our hearts are connected. Even when I see a small flower like a morning glory, I cry

I asked, 'Why are you crying?'

Why, child? Why? You will understand when you grow up. You will also become a poet, understand? When you become a poet, you will cry for anything

I couldn't help but laugh[4].

There is a detail in this conversation where 'I' specifically asked what 'B' represents when asking for Wordsworth's name. Wordsworth's answer was Black, and he also had an older brother named White. Black and White are transliterations of Black and White respectively, and the name Black Wordsworth comes from the British poet William Wordsworth. Naipaul deliberately asked Wordsworth to interpret "William" as "White", which is to make the skin color and race of the two (Black Black, White White) opposite, and then through Wordsworth himself saying "our hearts are connected", expressing Blake Wordsworth's obvious imitation and pursuit of the classic romantic poets and culture of the former suzerain country[5].

Blake Wordsworth was a cultural outsider of the former suzerain state in the social era in which this article is located, as well as a lower class people in contrast to the upper class elites of the former colonies. The people of the postcolonial era, represented by Wordsworth, experienced this "double

meaning" of marginalization, and therefore imitation was only a way of survival in the suffocating postcolonial cultural atmosphere[6]. But while striving to imitate and integrate, at the same time imitating strangely in the entanglement of our own culture, this forms an unconscious resistance and dissolution - losing the cultural essence while being excluded from the culture of the suzerain country. Wordsworth cannot fail to feel such rejection, which is why he cries for anything, not only because he is a poet, but also because his artistic pursuits as an outsider are rejected by the mainstream[7]. The morning glory "was only a concrete object that touched Wordsworth's poetic emotions, while" I "couldn't help but laugh out of confusion because it was the first time I met someone who expressed the spiritual world, and Wordsworth's emotions towards morning glory were too real and abstract.

2.2. I Was Beaten to Tears, But We Became Friends

In the following narration, it is the first time that "I" has changed from laughing to crying, and it is also a qualitative change in the relationship between "I" and Mr. Wordsworth.

He took out a piece of paper with words printed on it from his pocket and said, "There is the greatest poem about a mother on this piece of paper. I plan to sell it to you for four cents cheaper

I entered the room and said, 'Mom, do you want to buy a poem for four cents?'

Mother said, "Listen, tell that damn guy to quickly leave my yard with his tail between his legs

I told B. Wordsworth, 'My mom said she doesn't have four cents.'

This is the poet's misfortune, "replied B. Wordsworth

So he put the paper back in his pocket, seemingly unconcerned.

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He said, "There is the best mango tree in Port of Spain in my yard. Now the mango is ripe, red, sweet, and juicy. I'm waiting here to tell you and invite you to eat the mango

He's right. Mango is sweet and juicy, I ate six in a row. The yellow mango juice flowed down the arm to the elbow, from the corner of the mouth to the chin, and even stained the shirt with juice.

After I got home, my mother asked, "Where have you been? Do you think you're grown up now and can run around? Go and give me a whip

She hit me hard, so I ran out of the house, swearing never to go back. I came to B. Wordsworth's house, and I was so angry that my nose was still bleeding[4].

Before 'I' was beaten to tears, there was a funny contrast. After failing to sell his world's greatest poem about a mother for four cents, Wordsworth invited 'me' to taste the best mangoes growing in his yard. In Bi Feiyu's novel class, he interpreted this passage in this way. Naipaul achieved the compatibility of Wordsworth's two identities, making the poet and beggar coexist in one person. Wordsworth's act of asking for four cents is the behavior of a beggar, but the prerequisite is to exchange his poems, which shows that he only identifies with his poet identity and does not identify himself as a beggar[8]. Although Bi Feiyu believes that this implies Naipaul's philosophy that the true poet is a beggar, in my opinion, it is not the case. In the definition of Baidu entries, beggars are defined as "people who rely on begging for food and money to make a living", which means they do not

exchange any labor results, but Wordsworth is not like that. The greatest poem about a mother is the result of her labor, and four cents is the expected reward for her labor. Yu Jian once said, "Only those who can live are alive in their poetry. Only those who have the ability to make a living can create poetry in a healthy state[9]." Wordsworth may be such a poet with the ability to make a living, but in the backward and chaotic former colonies, poetry and literature were luxury goods, and high sensitivity and delicacy in such a controlled and oppressed environment would only exacerbate people's physical and mental pain, and would not give marginalized people any opportunities to live in dignity. Therefore, in Miguel Street, to some extent, only beggars can exist, only colonized people begging from their suzerain country, and there cannot be living individuals like Wordsworth who have independent consciousness and engage in spiritual production activities such as poetry[10].

As for the section on the mango tree, Bi Feiyu believes that it is a transformation of Wordsworth's identity and one of the signs of his transition from a beggar to a lonely person, because the mango tree represents his aesthetic relationship with the world as a poet. And this tree is also the foreshadowing for Wordsworth's personal narrative. The mango tree, in my opinion, is the opportunity for "me" to enter Wordsworth's world, the beginning of "me" gradually understanding him and ultimately becoming a "poet". This opportunity is that no matter how despairing the material life and the real world may be, poets can always discover even the slightest bit of beauty beyond these. But this kind of excavation was lonely, and it was not until the appearance of 'me' that Wordsworth's excavation was finally revealed.

The character of mother represents the majority of people on Miguel Street, and Naipaul has this line in his memories of his past life in Trinidad: 'I easily accepted the cruel act of whipping children.'. This indicates that violence and cruelty pervade the Port of Spain, represented by Miguel Street, on a daily basis. The madness and confusion of human nature have become the norm here, making Wordsworth's softness and poetry more alternative, less acceptable, and more lonely[11].

Don't cry, let's go for a walk, "said B. Wordsworth

I stopped crying, but I'm still sobbing. We strolled along St. Clair Avenue, passing through Prairie Park, all the way to the racetrack.

Now, let's lie on the grass and look up at the sky. I want you to think, how far are the stars from us

I followed his instructions and understood his intention: I couldn't feel anything, but at the same time, I felt a sense of pride and joy that I had never experienced before in my life. I forgot about anger, tears, and all the misfortunes.

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The police asked, "What are you doing here?"

B. Wordsworth said, "For forty years, I have been asking myself the same question[4]."

Eating mangoes was originally a happy thing, but 'I' was beaten to tears.

So 'I' entered Wordsworth's world with both anger and grievance. Here, 'I' see a completely different content from 'my' life. The question of 'how far are the stars?' is still ridiculous for people on Miguel Street. Compared to how much money is spent on the street food, it is not worth mentioning at all. Even 'I' cannot feel anything, but 'I' am proud and happy, even forgetting all the misfortunes. The reason for this is that under the leadership of Wordsworth, the "stars" became a medium for "me" to break free from

environmental pain, allowing "me" to see purity and tranquility beyond being beaten and begging. This was the beginning of "me" becoming a "poet" and seeing beauty, and later the feeling of "the world becoming an exciting place".

Next, these two anomalies on Miguel Street were discovered by the police. Faced with police questioning, he said he had been asking himself what he was doing for the past forty years. The polluted Trinidad has created a void of survival value for its residents, and 'how should I exist' has become an unsolvable dilemma in their lives. As a result, they have all become submissive compromises rather than rebellious rebels who go against the current[12].

It is worth mentioning that in this scene, the character's emotions also went through waves. After eating mango, "I" was initially happy, but after being beaten and cried, he was sad and angry. Then, under the healing of the stars, his emotions rebounded, and finally, when faced with questioning, he fell back to a calm and confused state. So it can be seen from here that Naipaul's writing style is dynamic, allowing readers to see through the essence of Miguel Street's devastation on people through ups and downs.

2.3. I Wanted to Cry Until Tears Welled up in My Eyes, and in the End, I Cried Loudly in his Arms, but he Smiled at me Instead

(1) I looked at B. Wordsworth, who seemed to have aged a lot as he told me this touching story. I understood his story.

(2) I think he is slowly aging.

(3) One day, I went to his cottage to visit him and found him lying on a small bed. He looks old and weak, and I can't help but want to cry.

(4) At this moment, right in front of me, I noticed that his face was becoming increasingly old and tired.

(5) I can see it clearly on his face, anyone can see it. Death has climbed onto his wrinkled face.

(6) He didn't look sad at all, which made me unable to hold back and cry loudly anymore.

(7) But his voice was interrupted. I left that house and ran home crying, like a poet, wanting to cry whenever I saw anything.

(8) It's like Mr. B. Wordsworth never appeared[4].

Before the end of the story, "I" witnessed Wordsworth's aging time and time again, and each of his aging was accompanied by a sorrowful past that was revealed. Therefore, "I" deeply perceived from layer (1) to layer (5) how a life gradually disappeared in emptiness. This process is accompanied by a gradual increase in the sadness of "me", and the momentum of grief becomes stronger and stronger, until (6) - (7) Wordsworth's life really comes to an end, at which point "my" sadness gushes out, the accumulated momentum is released, and the whole article reaches a high tide of emotions.

The story that happened before (1) would be a very tragic love story if it were not for the third tribute to William Wordsworth's work "The Lucy Poems" throughout the text. Some research texts interpret this as B. Wordsworth imitating mainstream imagination and fabrication, but in the context of the text, it conforms to the character's behavioral logic, so whether it is true or not is irrelevant. If it is proven that even Wordsworth's deepest pain was fabricated, then his tragic ending will only be further exacerbated.

(3) This is the second time in the entire text that Calypso minor has appeared. It originated from a widely sung folk song among African slaves, with simple and straightforward

language and a rebellious and mocking tone. It is often used to mock and ridicule employers, and is an important means for locals to resist language domination[13]. Naipaul's design of Wordsworth singing this music tune with special meaning to support daily life seems somewhat abrupt at first glance. Because Wordsworth is a tragic character who was crushed to death by the social environment, and his means of survival are overflowing with criticism of reality, the seemingly contradictory portrayal actually enriches the character's image.

(1) Wordsworth's loss was gradual. From love to love, from youth to health, from life to ideals, until he dies, he has nothing left except for the "me" who sees him as a friend in front of him. His aging is not only a physical aging, but more importantly, the spiritual world gradually becomes desolate on the ruins of the former colony, ultimately leading to the dual destruction of body and spirit.

(6) This is the only exchange of emotional expressions between 'I' and Wordsworth throughout the entire text. The young 'me' cried uncontrollably in the arms of the old 'me', but he smiled and told me the cruelest story: he personally overthrew the love between the male and female poets, and destroyed his lifelong ideals and aspirations before his death. Before his physical death, he committed suicide mentally. So, Wordsworth, who tenaciously pursued poetry in Calypso's tune, ultimately gave in to reality and left forever in everything twisted.

(7) It is the end of Wordsworth's farewell to 'me'. At this moment, the poet's identity began to relinquish with Wordsworth's departure, and the "I" who ran out of the house felt like crying at every sight, taking on the role of the next poet in great grief.

(8) It is the gray and white cement bricks that can be seen everywhere on Miguel Street that have replaced Mr. Wordsworth's cottage and fruit trees, which means that with his death and the departure of "me", there are no more anomalies like them, and Miguel Street has regained its former stagnant water and vitality.

3. Conclusion

B. Wordsworth is generally a novel with an extremely bleak background, but Naipaul uses black humor to describe the story as playful and lively, especially with the addition of a child's perspective. The story does not seem heavy in the early stages.

The uniqueness of B. Wordsworth lies not only in his daily behavior and pursuits as an anomaly on Miguel Street, but also in his kindness that other residents do not possess. His warmth illuminated the dark and damp world of 'me', allowing 'me' to see the emotions after numbness. Even though blindly imitating mainstream aesthetics would inevitably lead to failure and despair for those living in colonies, Naipaul did not seal the painful concrete, but instead created characters like Wordsworth, using bees and stars to give the suffocating Miguel Street a glimmer of hope.

Just like the little girl in red who flashed by in Schindler's List, even though she eventually turned into a corpse, everyone will remember that there was once a bright red in black and white. The value of Wordsworth lies in this. Poets cannot survive in this dry and toxic soil, but he awakens the soul of another poet. The departure of 'me' gives Wordsworth the possibility to live again on a spiritual level.

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