

The Analysis of the Hero Arm in *Calm with Horses* from the Perspective of Ethical Literary Criticism

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Abstract: *Young Skins* is a collection of short stories written by Irish writer Colin Barrett published in 2013 which has won the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award, the Rooney Prize for Irish Literature and the Guardian First Novel Award. *Calm with Horses* is the only novella in *Young Skins*. While ethical literary criticism offers a fresh literary perspective on literature works which are published after economic trauma, since its publication, there have been few researches both at home and abroad approaching to *Calm with Horses* from the perspective of ethical literary. For the purpose of exploring the ethical theme and the character Arm in *Calm with Horses*, this paper looks from the perspective of ethical literary criticism into the contradictions between the external macro-environment and micro-environment faced by the main character Arm in the aftermath of the economic crisis in Ireland, focusing on the analysis of the ethical environment behind the character Arm, his ethical choice under the ethical dilemma and the breakthrough of the ethical dilemma.

Keywords: *Calm with Horses*, Ethical literary criticism, Colin Barrett, Ethical choice.

1. Introduction

1.1. The Author and *Young Skins*

Colin Barrett is an Irish novelist who was born in 1982 and grew up in a poor town—County Mayo, Ireland. It was a period of relative prosperity and boom in Ireland before 2008 Global Economic Crisis, almost everyone can easily find a job on this land. Fortunately, Colin Barrett also got a decent job in a telecom to support his payment in the house rent. However, in 2008, everything came to nothing. The prosperity on this land worn off fairly quickly as the severe Economic Crisis broke out. At that time, Colin Barrett was 26 years old and he was decisive to resign from the company and turned to writing. Through writing, he tried to relate the sense of uncertainty on people and the state of depression in Irish society that the crisis brought about and attempted to record the changes in people's real life and their moods by the economic slack. In 2009, he was received the Master's degree in creative writing from University College Dublin and also awarded the Penguin Ireland Award. Colin Barrett said that the theme of his short stories would continuously focus on the social context and its changes. *Young Skins*, as his first book, is a collection of short stories published in 2013, which has gotten a wealth of popularity among the nation. Besides, *Young Skins* won the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award, the Guardian First Book Award, and the Rooney Prize for Irish Literature. His work has been published in *The New Yorker*, *A Public Space*, *Granta*, and *The Stinging Fly*. In 2015, Colin Barrett was named a National Book Foundation "5 Under 35." In 2018, Barrett was selected for the two-year Rolex Creative Arts Recommendation Grant, mentored by Irish author Colin Tobin, and now is currently working on his first novel.

Young Skins was written during the period of Irish's economic downturns and fragile recoveries with intention to portray the society and people's changes caused by crisis. It is a collection of six short stories and a novella, including *The Clancy Kid*, *Bait*, *The Moon*, *Stand Your Skin*, *Calm with Horses*, *Diamonds* and *Kindly Forget My Existence*. Colin

Barrett lays the scenes for all the stories in a fictional place—Glanbeign town.

Calm with Horses is the most pivotal one among the seven short stories. Certainly, the story takes place in a small town of Granby on the west coast of Ireland. It tells a tragic story of ex-boxer Arm, torn between love and crime and trapped in a violent world. Arm and his best friend Dympna are involved in the marijuana trade. One day, Dympna's sister was almost sexually assaulted by one of Dympna's business partner Fannigan. Then Fannigan was given a lesson by Arm and Dympna. However, Dympna's uncles, Hector and Paudi, were dissatisfied with the inaction and wanted to "bring more fair back" (Barrett, 2013: 87) to Dympna's sister, which would make Dympna, Arm and Hector, Paudi's drug dealings get into trouble. Eventually, to continue the drug trade and to get the life back on track, Arm stealthily kills Fannigan by the river. But Paudi interpreted this killing as a threat to him and killed Dympna. Seeing Dympna's death, Arm desperately found Hector and got money from him to compensate Dympna's family. Sorrowfully, on the way to home, Arm was founded dead in the car.

Although *Young Skins* had published for a few years, only few scholars have studied it, especially from the perspective of ethical literary criticism. This study will try to select classic fragments of the novella to explore the ethical problem and dilemma encountered by the protagonist Arm and to find the literary value through ethical environment, the shift of ethical identity and ethical choice. As a result, people can get fruitful ethical lessons and enlightenment from the study.

The thesis consists of four parts following the order. The first is the introduction. This part would briefly introduce the information of the author Colin Barrett and *Young Skins* and *Calm with Horses*. And it also includes the purpose and framework of the study. The second part is literature review. In order to better analyze the work, this part will focus on the origin and development of ethical literary criticism and its studies at home and abroad, especially the researches at home. Then, the literature reviews about *Calm with Horses* will also be presented in this part. The third part is mainly about the work analysis. This part will pay attention to analyze the

ethical environment, the shift of ethical identity and the ethical choice of the protagonist Arm to reveal his struggling between rationality and violence. The last part of the study is conclusion. By analyzing and criticizing the Arm's moral and immoral behaviors to educate people to stay true to the original aspiration.

1.2. Studies of Young Skins and Calm with Horses, and Ethical Literary Criticism

This section will first review the studies on Young Skins and Calm with Horses both at home and abroad and then introduce the origin, development and recent research of ethical literary criticism.

1.2.1. The Research on Young Skins and Calm with Horses

Young Skins has not received much attention by scholars at home and abroad. The current studies or researches on Young Skins or Calm with Horses mainly are interviews of the author Colin Barrett and some reports or reviews about the protagonist in the book.

In 2013, the writer and journalist Katy Hayes (2013: par3) commented the work Young Skins and highlighted the protagonist Arm in Calm with Horses. She said that Arm was a famous fighter in town. When he faced the people who do harmful things to his friend or family, he would show his violence and killed that person. Actually, he can be a tender person, especially when he stayed with his son. Therefore, Katy Hayes believed that there were glimmers of conscience, which appeared through the cracks the child provokes in the general darkness of Arm's mind.

The critic Christopher Allen (2019: par2) admitted that Young Skins was an outstanding, unforgettable and tragic work written by Colin Barrett. Allen (2019: par1) agreed with Katy Hayes that Arm in the Calm with Horses was a reckless, brutish killer yet a sympathetic and loving father. Jonathan Lee (2015: par3), a British writer who likes to explore double character in a work, commented that Arm and Dymrna in Calm with Horses were so intimate and close as brothers that this relationship can complement and balance each other. In 2016, Maeve Mulrennan (2016: par5) illustrated in his study "Post-Celtic Tiger rural Ireland" that the violence in Calm with Horses is an unexpected and wonderful element, and the combination of violence element and poetic language contributed to the success of work. He also praised that Young Skins was a book that shed light on the figure of the disillusioned, internally-exiled male in rural Ireland.

Obviously, the domestic research did not focus on Young Skins or Calm with Horses more. Only few academic research achievements can be found in our country. A researcher, Li Yang (2017: 44), has studied the Young Skins from the perspective of existentialism. He interprets the work through analyzing the characters' environment and dilemma and the choices characters made to prove that young people in town are forced to live in an absurd world and they are deprived of the freedom to make choice. Yan Xiao (2020: 44) also tries to explore the impact of the economic crisis on the characters in Young Skins from the perspective of trauma theory combined by trauma symptoms, trauma causes and trauma recovery. Then she points out that establishing safety, remembrance and retelling and reconstruction of new relationships are the three main ways to get through and recover from the trauma.

The significant value of Young Skins is also brought by Colin Barrett when he is invited to take part in activities or interviews. Colin Barrett explains that, in Young Skins, all

characters are at the margins of the society under the post-boom economic crisis and are also urgently trying to find an outlet. He also says that some adversities and difficulties caused by crisis would bring out the best in all of us, not just in Young Skins, in rural Ireland—it's a general Irish thing (2013: par3). In 2019, Colin Barrett received an interview. During the conversation, Colin Barrett expressed that it was true that characters in Young Skins were losers because their economically depressed hometown offered them no hope, and returning to their hometown meant preparing to accept their difficult and hopeless fate. But there was still tenderness, righteousness, kindness and courage among these young people, they can struggle to live on and the community was slowly picking itself up (Bai, 2019: 5).

All in all, even though some academic achievement or some great value can be seen in the studies or interviews, reviews on Young Skins or Calm with Horses are far from enough. Hence, almost no scholars studies Young Skins or Calm with Horses from the perspective of ethical literary criticism.

1.2.2. The Ethical Literary Criticism

Ethical literary criticism is a methodology that interprets, analyzes and explains literary works, study writers and problem related to literature from the ethical perspective. Ethical literary criticism can be traced back to ancient Greek was first used by philosophers. Philosophers began to consider the literature's value from an ethical point of view when philosophy came into being. Heraclitus (540BC-480BC) had pointed that "Homer should be kicked out from the fairs and whipped him." This is a judge to Homer from ethical aspect.

The representatives of the ethical literary criticism in ancient Greek are Plato and Aristotle. Krapp (2002: 20) stated that "I agree with the point that the idea of traditional ethical literary criticism in western culture began with Plato". In practice, the things Plato good at were not only drawing on literary examples when addressing ethical issues, but also interpreting literature from the perspective of ethic. Aristotle, as well as his teacher Plato, emphasized the ethical factors in literature. And in his work poetics, he divided poets into two classes according to ethical standard: "The more serious poets imitate noble deeds and noble men, while the more vulgar and vulgar imitate the deeds of those who are contemptible (Nie, 2004: 22)." In addition, he pointed that the definition of tragedy, in some sense, is also based on the ethical standards. Other writers in ancient Greek, such as Horace, have emphasized about the "mind of the readers" which means the moral power of poetry in fact (Nie, 2004: 22).

With the continuous development of literature and the rise of critical realism literature in the 19th century, moral evaluation continues to win an important position in literature, which further promotes the integration of literature and ethics, and sets off the upsurge of literary ethics research. However, from the 1930s to the 1970s, the focus of western literary theory research changed to pay attention to the inherent laws of literature itself. In this context, the ethical study of literature declines because its research emphases and methods cannot be included in the mainstream. Almost in the 1980s, ethical criticism has been revived and gained new development space, realizing the transformation from the original "ethical research" to "ethical criticism" practice. This also means that literary theory has shifted from the study of traditional ethical values to the level of ethical analysis of works (Yang, 2019: 51).

At the same time, the ethical literary criticism evolved into a critical model which tried to avoid making same mistakes as the traditional one. Ethical criticism based on “co-guidance” proposed by Wayne Booth (1990), ethical evaluation on the basis of pluralism put forward by Nussbaum Martha C (1992), Hills Miller’s (1987) ethics of reading based on text and language theory and Marshall Gregory (2004: 284), Peter Rabinowitz’s (2010: 164) “ethical calling” and “lateral ethics” as the core terms were the significant points of the critical model. So far, ethical literary criticism has getting a deeper meaning and it is applied to a wider extent (Yang, 2019: 50).

Besides, to analyze a character one needs to focus on the environment he had been at that time. The environment can be divided into two categories: macro-environment and micro-environment. Macro-environment is a general and broad concept in which multi-factors are functioning together on individuals in it, including national culture, national educational policy, and socio-economic environment and micro-environment means the concrete and specific factors in it (Wedell & Malderez, 2013: 4). Macro-environment and micro-environment are mutually connected and interactional. The analysis of macro-environment is helpful to grasp the historical background of the protagonist in *Calm with Horses* and also provides an access for readers to understand that macro-environment changes inevitably lead to changes in micro-environment including ethical relationships between the character and his own personality. Also, obviously the economic crisis has strained the originally harmonious interpersonal relationships among people. From the aspect of the contradiction between the changing macro-environment and micro-environment, this paper would be able to dig further into the ethical dilemma and the breakthrough of the dilemma that the protagonist chooses.

The influx of Western theory into China since the reform and opening up has, on the one hand, promoted the prosperous development of Chinese literary studies and, on the other hand, deprived Chinese academics of their right to speak in the wave of Westernism. During this period, the proposition of ethical literary criticism plays an essential and crucial role in building the distinctive discourse of Chinese literature, telling the Chinese story and presenting a new image of China (Zhang, 2019: 58). Based on the improved ethical literary criticism, in 2019, LI & HE (2019: 43) applied ethical literary criticism to reinterpret *The Great Gatsby* through analyzing the protagonist’s ethical choice, ethical identities and ethical behaviors in the work to give a lesson that if the American society isolates itself from the traditional ethics completely, a disaster would strike soon.

Ethical literary criticism in China was initiated by Nie Zhenzhao, a Chinese professor on a national conference “Study on British and American Literature in China: Reflection and Looking Forward”, as an approach to interpret literary works. Ethical literary criticism recognizes the ethical nature and didactic function of literature from an ethical perspective, and reads, understands, analyzes, and interprets literature on this basis (Nie, 2020: 72). Based on natural selection, ethical literary criticism constructs a critical discourse system centered on terms such as ethical choice, ethical identity, ethical environment, free will, and rationality will (Nie, 2020: 73).

Nie (2004: 19) emphasized that ethical literary criticism should include the relationship between writers and their creations, between readers and works, the work and the various moral phenomena existing in the real society, and

evaluation of the moral tendencies of writers and works from the perspective of ethics. Furthermore, ethical literary criticism as a methodology has a specific meaning, which refers to the literary sense of critical method rather than the sociological sense of critical method. Therefore, Professor Nie (2006: 12) pointed out that the difference between ethics and ethical literary criticism lies in their study object, research method and their research field. There also exists the contrast between ethical literary criticism and moral criticism: the former insists on evaluating literature from the standpoint of artistic fiction, while the latter criticizes literature from the standpoint of reality and subjectivity; the former focuses on the reasons for the ethical and moral aspects of action, on analyzing, interpreting, and understanding, while the latter pays attention to the evaluation of the action itself and the results of the action.

To sum up, ethical literary criticism provides a new way and perspective for researchers to interpret and understand the classic and modern literary works. Compared with other theories, ethical literary criticism could analyze more comprehensively on the literary work, including such factors: ethical environment, ethical identity and ethical choice. In this paper, I will exploit ethical literary criticism to delve into the themes, the fate of protagonist Arm in *Calm with Horses* in a new way.

2. An Ethical Theory-informed Analysis of *Calm with Horses*

Ethical literary criticism is a methodology that interprets, analyzes and explains literary works, study writers and problem related to literature from the ethical perspective (Nie, 2020: 71). The following analysis on *Calm with Horses* is based on this theory including ethical environment, ethical choice, ethical identity and the breakthrough of the ethical dilemma.

2.1. Ethical Environment

According to Professor Nie (2014: 13), the ethical literary criticism puts emphasis on returning to history, explaining literary works standing at the time of the ethical stance, looking for ethical reason objectively, and finding why it is established. In short, it gives explanations on social events, characters, literature and makes a moral evaluation from the perspective of history. It is essential and necessary for all researchers to analyze the background as well as the ethical environment at the time when using ethical literary criticism to study a literary work. In *Calm with Horses*, the different ethical environment can affect Arm’s ethical identity and the ethical choice. The ethical environment is composed of many factors, and this paper will try to analyze the ethical environment from macro-environment and micro-environment including Arm’s family and his social experience personally.

2.1.1. The Macro-environment in *Calm with Horses*

Young Skins written by Colin Barrett depicts the appalling reality of youth without guidance, a community ruined by drugs, alcohols and violence under the economic crisis. This full-blown economic crisis, triggered by the housing bubble, didn’t just erupted in Ireland, but it has undoubtedly devastated the whole country. Before the crisis, Ireland’s economy, once soaring and even known as the “Celtic Tiger,” became a “sick cat” after 2010, and the debt crisis has brought about fundamental changes for all the people. Ireland’s entire

society is in a state of depression, confused young people in Young Skins are not that type of person who leaves college to search for work and willingly plan or structure their lives. Instead, they are the people who are left behind their peers and always waste their precious time to roam around their towns without any realistic planning or purposes. They are the people who are invariably indulging in violence, drinks, and drugs and almost lose themselves in the dull life. They are also the people who isolate themselves from the outside world and pay little attention to the society and others that appear to have nothing to do with them. Arm, the protagonist in *Calm with Horses*, is a killer for a drug dealer. He knows how to be a good enforcer: "You have to keep wanting to hurt people." Because of the economic crisis, the drug dealing made by Arm and his friend Dympna could not go as usual. To solve the trade problem, he chose to drown Fannigan to death in the river without discussion with Dympna and even tried to avoid admitting the crime. Arm's behavior implies that socio-economic changes inevitably lead to changes in ethical relationships, and the economic crisis has strained the originally harmonious interpersonal relationships among people. The foundation of engagement, trust and kindness among people disappeared, leaving only selfishness and self-preservation. The originally normal ethical relationship was distorted, and the ethical judgments and ethical choices that should have been consistent appeared to be at odds. Social conflicts become more acute, and the relationship between human beings, human beings and society, human beings and nature, and human beings and self is strongly distorted and alienated. Under such condition, violence becomes Arm's only weapon to solve problems, and it seems that violence is carved in his gene and marrow, which later would lead him to struggle between violence and peace.

2.1.2. The Micro-environment in *Calm with Horses*

Actually, Arm is the character most portrayed in *Calm with Horses*. Through the whole novella, we can see that Arm had always been pulled back and forth by two conflicting forces named "rationality or conscience" and "violence" after Arm's friend Dympna asked for a revenge on Fannigan. The analysis of the two opposing forces should trace back to the Arm's personal ethical environment: his family and his social experience.

The harmonious relationship between Arm and his parents had always reminded Arm to become a kind and tolerant person, so much so that later, after killing Fannigan, he expressed his worries and sympathy toward Fannigan's mother when he saw his parents' routine works in home. Arm and his former girlfriend Ursula Dory had an autistic son who only can be calm with horses in the stud-farm. Although Arm and Ursula Dory did not be reconciled to each other, in their daily life, especially for Jack, Arm tried to play the role of a loving father. He accompanied Jack to swing in the park, to ride a horse in the stud-farm and to go up the roof of the jungle gym structure in the amusement park, which all can show Arm's rationality and kindness. Therefore, during the process of getting along with Jack, Arm revealed his affectionate side of his nature that in turn helped him to maintain composure and calm. Meanwhile, his former girlfriend Ursula Dory also had impact on his current personality. Jack was brought up by Ursula Dory alone and she never asked Arm to pay for any child support, nor did she ever complain to him about the hardship and pain involved, instead, she chose to suffer in silence. Ursula Dory's behaviors more or less affect Arm. In brief, Arm's parents, his son Jack, and his former girlfriend,

Ursula Dory, had become an effective recipe for preventing Arm from being violent, brutal and going astray.

Arm's violence mostly can be found in his social experience. It was the start of his outrage. In Arm's childhood, Arm began to practice boxing and participated in the boxing match. His current personality was formed at time.

Arm had the clear head and cold-bloodedness required by the ring, the knack of detachment. Arm could be buried in the moment of a fight, spun and dizzy and snorting sputum, his body bright and ringing, and yet at the same time occupy a little bubble of lucidity above. And Arm was relentless. If the ref did not intercede, he could pound equably away on a lad until his head fell off (Barrett, 2013: 83).

So it could be concluded that the violence was carved into his marrow from his childhood. Then, Arm and Dympna started smoking marijuana, lots and lots of marijuana, and Dympna who depended on the connection through the uncles began to sell marijuana with Arm. Through a long time, his violent personality did not show directly and he also did not commit an outrage often until he was asked a revenge for Fannigan. Before the revenge, Arm retired at an ultimate age and his rationality and conscience took the upper hand in his mind because his violence has been suppressed by Jack and Ursula Dory. At that day, Fannigan, a business partner of Dympna, attempted to rape Dympna's sister. After giving a lesson to Fannigan, Arm and Dympna were threatened that, by Dympna's uncle Hector and Paudi, if Arm and Dympna settled that matter peacefully, their drug dealing would be in a spot. At the same time, the violence gene in Arm's nature had been generated by a charming horse trainer Rebecca, which can be considered as a stimulus for Arm to provoke his violence. Arm's son Jack was the link between Arm and Rebecca. Jack was calm only with horses, so he often went to the stud-farm with Arm and learnt to ride horse from Rebecca. So gradually, Arm was familiar with her. One day, in the bar, Arm told Rebecca that:

There was a lot of conditioning, a routine you couldn't skimp on. I lost my spring. I keep in trim. I can take down a civilian no worries, but once it goes that spring never really comes back. You have to want to hurt people. That's what the spring is. You have to keep wanting to hurt people (Barrett, 2013: 109).

In order to maintain the social relationship with Dympna's uncle, Hector and Paudi, Arm chose to throw Fannigan into the water and used the wilted totem of clothing piled by the water's edge to pretend that Fannigan had committed suicide in a suicidal funk. It symbolized that Arm's inner tendency to violence had completely erupted and he uncontrollably carried an action out.

In summary, there was a perplexity in Arm's ethical environment. The force "rationality" and "conscience" caused by his parents, his son and his former girlfriend and the other force "violence" and "brutality" in his nature affected by his social experience are always opposing and made him become more of a swinger than the sign of violence.

2.2. Ethical Choice and Ethical Identity Transformation

During all his life, killing Fannigan was the turning point. Nie Zhenzhao pointed that the action of ethical choice is the action of self-selection; every person is making self-selection every moment and self-identifying through his or her choices. Ethical identity determines ethical choice, and ethical choice constructs ethical identity (2020: 6). And with his ethical

choice, Arm's ethical identity had been constructed accordingly. Each specific ethical choice he made and the corresponding shift in ethical identity was a key factor in driving the plot forward. According to literary ethics criticism, ethical identity is a prerequisite for moral behavior and moral norms, and produces constraints on the subject of moral behavior, sometimes even compulsory constraints which embodied through ethical taboos (Nie, 2014: 14). So this part will analyze Arm's ethical choice, killing Fannigan, and his ethical identity shift from a loving father and loyal friend to a brutal murder.

Before killing Fannigan, Arm played two roles in different ethical environment. With Dympna, Arm was his loyal friend and sometimes his employee in the drug business. When Arm went to the Drummond Rise estate, he was a loving father to his son Jack. He had the ability to easily balance the two roles. To deal with the sexual assault matter, Arm and Dympna just beat the fuck out of that daft man Fannigan, which was seen as Dympna's inaction to the criminal by his uncle, Hector and Paudi. Actually, the rape incident was an excuse to achieve the two uncles' purpose that they wanted to Dympna and Arm stop selling marijuana to promote the increase of cannabis price. But Dympna was a positive person who hoped for order, stability and harmony. So he just let Arm suppress his violent impulse and do not kill him. Also, considering Fannigan's poor and unhealthy mother, Arm's kind friend Dympna gave Fannigan a chance to explain the action instead of imposing a ferocious battery on him. Dympna's kindness, soft heart and violent, threatening words of Hector and Paudi were like chains dragging in opposite directions, wrapping around Arm, even tearing him. The extreme situation became the trigger for Arm's ethical identity shift.

It's worth mentioning that the violent impulse in Arm's blood was driven by the conversation between Arm and an attractive horse training lady Rebecca at the pub. Through their talk, Rebecca was astonished at the previous job Arm worked for and also was regretted that he had retired. Arm told that he was old enough and if someone wanted to become a boxer, he must be hungry and senseless for hurting or even killing others. But to his surprise, Rebecca thought that it was a complete tragedy for him. Actually, at the bar, it was the hardest time for Arm because he was struggling between rationality and impulse, between calmness and violence. Characters caught in ethical dilemmas generally have tragic endings; once the choice is made, the result is tragic; if the choice is not made, the result is equally tragic (Nie, 2014: 14). Driven by alcohol, Arm figured a walk to help wick away the worst of the hangover that was bearing down on his tomorrow. However, he encountered Fannigan who was taking the scenic route home. At the same time, Dympna's uncle's words were echoing in his mind. If he did not kill the man, his business would be stopped and he would be continuously threatened by Paudi and Hector. What's worse, if he did not kill the man, Paudi and Hector would lift him from the street and take him out there and feed him to their dogs, which was a more cruel and brutal mean to torture him. Therefore, violence and barbarity dominated all his mind and heart without any rationality and conscience. His violent gene was provoking and became the original cause that tempted him to kill, to crime. Then, Fannigan was killed and drown into the water. This was Arm's ethical choice, a selfish, ruthless choice. He killed Fannigan without any discussion with his best friend Dympna. This killing action symbolized that Arm's ethical identity had completely changed from the loyal friend and a

loving father to a reckless and brutal killer and fraud. After the killing, Arm peacefully pretended that there was nothing to happen. In the next few days, he still spent time with his parents, Ursula Dory and his son Jack as usual. Although he had struggled for a long time after killing Fannigan, he did not feel any guilty for Fannigan and his mother. He just saw killing Fannigan as the only way to vent his pressure and solve the drug dealing problem he was facing. The victim and his family's condition had nothing to do with him. He did not care about the victim and his family. He just cared about his own business and his dilemma. He was the victim of the hopeless and lifeless life. And he was still in the ethical dilemma.

2.3. The Breakthrough of Ethical Dilemma

Nie illustrated that the human factor is different from human nature, which is the seed of human ethical consciousness, and human nature is the essential characteristic that distinguishes man from beast. The human factor serves to restrain and control the bestial factor, and is the decisive factor in the evolution of human beings from what Morgan calls the barbaric stage to the civilized stage. It is because of the emergence of the human factor that human beings develop ethical consciousness and acquire human nature in order to change from beast to man. The most important feature of the human factor, which is expressed in the form of rational will, is the ability to make value judgments and distinguish between good and evil. It is because of the emergence of the human factor that the moral person can grow up with the light of reason (2020: 74). The way Arm managed to redeem himself was by finding the human factor eventually in Calm with Horses.

The next day after Fannigan's death, Arm and Dympna drove to Hector and Paudi's farm where was stocked guns and drugs. This time, Fannigan's death caused by Arm and the staying in the home instead waiting outside were a threat in Paudi's eye. So Paudi went crazy and insane abruptly and he habitually picked up his gun to kill Dympna. Arm had been forced to assess the situation he faced now.

Things had got fucked, precipitously and multiple ways, and for little reason. Arm had informed Paudi he had done away with someone Paudi and his brother had asserted they wanted done away with, and Paudi had interpreted this as what? A dry-run for what he thought Arm and Dympna were about to do to him (Barrett, 2013: 113)?

Fortunately, Arm survived from that insane person but in fact he had lost everything. On the way to the lover of Hector's home, he finally found his rationality and conscience. He thought of Fannigan, pale as any apparition, a body riding the current to sea. He thought of Dympna genuflecting, the sudden teetering ruin of his body. He thought of Dympna's seven sisters, the mother June. He wanted to tell them all sorry. He thought of his son Jack and his former girlfriend. He missed them. He felt a pang of remorse that he had never seen his son Jack on horseback as he'd originally intended. He called Ursula Dory and said goodbye to her and expressed his hope that she could take better care of their son Jack. Then, in order to get money, Arm had a fight with Hector and defeated him in a violent way. Then, Hector's lover drove Arm to return to his home, but on the way, Arm, the poor creature inside in that van, was founded dead in the car. What was the support in Arm's mind after seeing Dympna's death? At that time when he saw Dympna fell on the grass in Paudi's farm, he regretted. The inner human factor had returned to his

heart. Therefore, Arm survived only for getting money and compensating Dymmpna's family. When the only "mission" for him was fulfilled, he chose to death to rescue himself.

3. Conclusion

The study analyzes *Calm with horses* from the perspective of ethical literary criticism and illustrates the protagonist Arm's ethical environment, ethical choice, ethical identity and the human factor. Through analyzing Arm's two opposing forces "rationality" and "violence", this paper hope that people can get fruitful ethical lessons and enlightenment.

This paper stands on the point of ethical literary criticism to analyze protagonist Arm's behaviors. Primarily, the study presents the theoretical framework for readers to understand the ethical literary criticism. Then, it discusses the origin and development of the ethical literary criticism at abroad and then illustrated the foreign theory's influence on the domestic theory's construction, which can provide an overview of ethical literary criticism at home and abroad. Secondly, it analyzes the protagonist Arm's macro-environment and micro-environment including his family and his social relationship to show the ethical environments' importance. Then, through Arm's ethical identity's shift experience, it proves that an immoral ethical choice would cause a tragic result to the character. All in all, it's a beneficial practice to study *Calm with Horses* from the perspective of ethical literary criticism and it educates people to do the right things and care others' benefits.

Ethical literary criticism is a methodology that interprets, analyzes and explains literary works, study writers and problem related to literature from the ethical perspective. But actually, nowadays, it is not been developed so complete that researchers could not precisely grasp the core value of the theory and flexibly put it into practice because of its inclusiveness. At the same time, the researches on the *Calm with Horses* are far more enough. Since its publication, there have been few researches approaching to *Calm with Horses* at home and abroad form the perspective of ethical literary. This study based on the ethical literary criticism relates the reality and the protagonist in *Calm with Horses* to achieve the practical significance of the ethical literary criticism.

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