

On the Embodiment of Chinese Classical Thought in Whitman's Urban Ecological Poetics—Taking the Riverbank of the Ferry Crossing Last Winter as an Example

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Abstract: Whitman believes that people in cities should establish a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. In his urban imagination, humans are a common link in the entire ecosystem. As a part of heaven and earth, everything is one. Through dialogue with nature, Whitman explored that man and nature should be equal and harmonious. Whitman embodies the unique urban ecological poetics in his essay *the Riverbank of the Ferry Crossing Last Winter*, which contains Chinese classical thought of harmony between man and nature.

Keywords: Whitman; *The Riverbank of the Ferry Crossing Last Winter*; Chinese classical thought; The relationship between humans and nature

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1 Introduction

As a gem of world culture, Chinese classical thought plays a decisive role in the development of the entire human race. Pursuing the harmony between man and nature is the mainstream thought of Chinese traditional culture for thousands of years. Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism respectively put forward their own unique views on the relationship between man and nature. Confucianism puts forward that "the unity of heaven and man" must be in accordance with God's will, and the law of heaven should be transformed into the norm of human beings. Chinese Buddhists put forward

"Buddha" as the origin of all things. The vastness of everything in the universe is a different manifestation of "Buddha", and its essence is still the unity of Buddhism. The unity of Buddhism means the life of all people, and all things have the right to survive. Taoism puts forward "the law is natural." The concept of "nature" has been elevated to the height of metaphysics. The so-called "natural law of Taoism" means that the "Tao" operates independently according to the laws of nature, and all things in the universe have laws of operation that transcend the subjective will of human beings. In essence, the three ideas are mutually integrated and complementary, emphasizing that people should abide by the laws of natural operation, and cannot override the above, and that human beings and nature should be equal and harmonious.

As the "first city poet in the United States"^[1], Whitman believes that he is "a poet who praises the city and a poet who praises nature"^[2]. Taking the city as the text, human beings, between human and nature, man and self nature of the relationship between ecological are discussed in this paper, and discusses these relations, reveals all kinds of relations in the process of urbanization the threat, illustrates how to construct in the process of urbanization of human beings, between human and nature, man and self harmonious ecological relationship. From this point of view, Whitman's urban ecological thoughts coincide with Chinese classical thoughts in understanding the relationship between human and nature.

However, there is still little research on the elements of classical thought in Whitman's urban ecological

poetics. This paper intends to explore the ecological consciousness contained in Whitman's urban writing and the relationship between human and nature in Chinese classical thought.

2 The embodiment of Chinese classical thought in Whitman's urban ecological poetics

Whitman believes that the relationship between human beings and the natural environment in the city should not be the relationship between the subject and the object. Naturally, it is not the “other” and the object of conquest, but should be regarded as “closely integrated with human beings and can coexist harmoniously.” In the city imagination of Whitman, not only human beings are the main body that can be said, but all other things in nature are also an important part of the urban ecological polyphony. In the essay *the Riverbank of the Ferry Crossing Last Winter*, in the Canton Whitman at the ferry stared at the harbor and sent out such a sigh: “How close is it to talking with the rivers, the air, and the light and darkness of the stars! They don't seem to say a word, but they are so eloquent, so connected with the mind. [3]” Here, nature is no longer an oppressed, forced to remain silent object, but the ability to communicate directly with humans.

Whitman's act of listening to green voices from the silence of nature coincides with the view of the “Scorpio” (天籟) in the “three-pronged” (三籟) theory put forward by the Chinese classical Taoist thought *Zhuangzi Qiwu Theory* (《庄子齐物论》). Zhuangzi borrow south shines regard and son trip exclamation: The long wind blew the sound of the mountain forest to create the sound of “the screaming of the sky”, and Whitman sighed with the voice of green and dynamic, only to eliminate the natural environment and the human world. The gap between the disintegration and the human being can be discussed at the spiritual level with the voice of the Scorpio, and then merged with the natural world in a return to nature. In addition, in the Buddhist *Vatican Sutra* (《梵网经》) recorded such a sentence: one flower and one world,

one leaf and one bodhi. The Buddha talks to the Buddha with a golden bora flower, and realizes that a flower is a world, and the truth can be realized from a leaf, and the laws of nature cannot be violated, let nature take its course, and man is one with nature, and man is a part of nature^[4]. And this spiritual exchange with nature has also spurred the emergence of Buddhism. Confucianism also pays attention to the communication between man and nature. Confucius once stood on the river and sighed at the rivers of the hustle and bustle: The dead are never willing to give up their days and nights. It seems that the saints in ancient and modern China and abroad used the intimate relationship between man and nature and obtained enlightenment from nature. The relationship between people and nature in such a way is also reflected in other parts of the work. It is consistent with the classical Chinese thought of “Heaven and Man” and will not be repeated again.

3 Conclusion

Whitman was at the height of urbanization and industrialization in the United States. In the face of the tremendous achievements brought by science and technology and industry, Whitman has not become a blind advocate of human initiative, but has clearly understood and subverted the anthropocentrism in his works, showing his classical Chinese thought. The ecological consciousness of the same line. Through dialogue with all things in nature, Whitman explores that people and nature should be equal and harmonious.

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