

Father Love in Old Man Goriot and Social Class Conflict

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Abstract: This paper aims to analyze the by discussing the role of Goriot, his fatherly love for his daughters and the contradiction between these feelings and the class structure of the French society at that time, and reveals how Balzac used the literary form to criticize the class solidification and the decline of morality in the 19th century French society. The article will also further explain the embodiment and profound influence of this theme in the work by quoting the views of relevant literary critics.

Keywords: Balzac, Old man Goriot, fatherly love, social class, literary criticism

1. Introduction

Balzac's Old man Goriot is a bright pearl in the 19th century French literature. It not only attracts readers with its superb narrative skills, but also is widely discussed for its deeply revealed social problems. In this novel, Balzac, through the image of Don Goriot, shows a father's deep and unconditional love for his daughter, as well as the challenges and tragedies that this love has encountered in the cold social class system. From three perspectives, this paper will discuss how old man Goriot's father's love suffered setbacks in the social environment of class differentiation, thus reflecting Balzac's profound criticism of the social reality at that time.

2. Main body

2.1. The image of the old man Goriot and his fatherly love

2.1.1. The image of the old man Goriot

Pot Goriot was a retired noodle maker who devoted almost all of his life to his two daughters. His love for his daughter was selfless, even to the point of self-sacrifice. However, "his fatherly love was not properly respected and rewarded, but became one of the reasons why he was marginalized by the society." (*Old man Goriot*) It was all my own fault. I allowed them to step myself under my feet." He knew that his" selfless "love was the root of" all evil, " but he could not control over not giving his daughters money, and he enjoyed it. "He loved his daughters with ecstasy, but did not realize that in a society where money was very important to return," [1] he did not teach his two daughters to learn to return. The devotion and expression of love is material madness and spiritual madness, extremely fragile and pale. In this work, old man Goriot's father love is selfless, he gave everything to his daughters, but this love did not get due return, but became the fuse of his tragic fate. In order to pursue higher social status and material interests, his daughters did not hesitate to sacrifice the relationship with their father. This behavior not only reflected the moral decline at the personal level, but also

reflects the extreme worship of money and status in the society at that time, as well as the neglect of human nature and morality.

2.1.2. Goriot's fatherly performance

Pot Goriot's fatherly love was crazy and paranoid, almost abnormal and twisted. Although his two daughters took him only endless money, taking false care when he still had wealth and value, he enjoyed it as a spiritual enjoyment. He said, " They just smile at me. Oh! It was like a beautiful sunshine in the sky, which gilded the world." Ironically, his crazy martyred love for his daughter didn't even bring real affection and return. Goriot's love and devotion to his two daughters was in sharp contrast to their selfish indifference. He loved his daughters with ecstasy, but did not realize that in a society where money was very important to return, he did not teach his two daughters to learn to return. "The devotion and expression of love is material madness and spiritual madness, extremely fragile and pale." [2]

Old man Goriot's love for his daughter is a pure emotion that transcends material things and status. Old man Gao is willing to pay everything for his two daughters, willing to be their "horse" and "dog on the knee", which is unprincipled and irrational pay and love. However, it was this seemingly selfless love that became the root cause of his tragic fate. Old Man Goriot's fatherly love eventually turned into his tragedy. When his wealth was slowly exhausted and his body was weak, he found himself abandoned by his daughters. "His love was exploited by society and his daughters, becoming a tool for pursuing higher social status and material interests." [3] This tragic understanding made Goriot miserable and disappointed, and he began to question whether his life was worth it. Late in his life, Mr. Goriot began to reflect on his way of fatherly love. He finally realized that although a fatherly love is great, blind love can lead to tragedy. He began to reassess the value of fatherly love, realizing that fatherly love should be principled and bounded. He wants his daughters to learn to be independent and self-respecting, rather than dependent and demanding. Pot Goriot's reflection is not only a review of his life, but also an exploration of the true meaning of his father's love.

2.2. The conflict between fatherly love and social class

In Old man Goriot, Balzac skillfully interweaves the conflict between father love and social hierarchy, showing the contradiction between personal emotion and social reality through the fate of the characters. The tragedy of Old Man Goriot's not only reflects the tragedy of personal emotion, but also reveals the ruthlessness of the social hierarchy. In 19th-century France, the boundary between the social classes was extremely clear, and the gap between the upper and the lower classes was almost impassable. The aristocracy and the bourgeoisie occupy the upper class of the society, while the civilian people and the working class are at the bottom. "This class division is not only reflected in the economic status, but also in the social communication, educational opportunities, and even legal rights." [4] The nobles consolidated their social status by holding social events such as dances and salons, and the bourgeoisie enhanced their influence through economic success. The interaction between different classes is full of contradictions and conflicts, while the upper classes maintain and strengthen their dominance through various means.

Through the endless sacrifice of the old man to his daughter, Balzac reveals the vulnerability of fatherly love in the social class conflict, as well as the powerlessness of personal emotion in front of the social structure. "Old man Goriot's two daughters, Annette and Delfin, had improved their social status, but they began to stay away from their father and focus more on maintaining their social status than cherishing their father's love." [5] Their lives were full of luxury and vanity, in stark contrast to their father's simple life. They gradually began to distance themselves from their father, not relying on and respecting him as before. Their social circle and lifestyle are also incompatible with their

father, and even in some occasions, they will feel embarrassed and ashamed because of their father's presence. "In the daughters' pursuit of higher social status, Goriot's fatherly love was gradually marginalized." [6] His presence and needs were gradually ignored, and even regarded as obstacles to the further promotion of their social status. Daughters are more concerned with how to maintain their promotion in the upper class than caring about their father's health and well-being. In their eyes, their father's love and care became worthless, "even a burden." [7] The division of social classes and values had a distorted effect on old man Goriot's fatherly love.

"The more heart you have, the faster you rise. You have any true feelings, you must hide it, not to others to know." (*Old man Goriot*) old man this idea has become the principle of the bourgeois skills," the bourgeois tender tore off the veil in family relationship, the relationship into a pure money relationship " (*Marx and Engels*) "Marx sharp pointed out the disadvantages of the rapid development of capitalism in the 19th century." [8] The class solidification of the time and the distorted values of money supremacy were the gaps that a flour merchant could not overcome. Everyone suffers from the interests of the evil of capitalist ideology, the underlying class hard to survive, the top-class mercenary, the world is imprisoned in the material exchange of equal symbol — money, to money to break the class barriers but benefits and pay is not proportional to the money flows to the top class, but the middle class will not become the top class, all just a dream.

In the upper class, money and status are seen as the most important things, while affection and morality are ignored. This distortion of values makes the father's love become insignificant in the eyes of his daughters, and even becomes an obstacle to their pursuit of higher social status. In order to adapt to the rules of the upper class, the daughters had to sacrifice the relationship with their father, which seemed to them as necessary, and even worthwhile. They pursue fame, money and profit. In the face of their father who spends everything and becomes ill, they show the ugly face of money first and distorted human nature and values. "This process reveals the distortion and destruction of social hierarchy on individual emotions." [9]

Fatherhood in *Old Man Goriot* also embodies his complex role in social class mobility. Goriot's daughters strategically improve their social status through marriage, and this upward mobility effort is in sharp contrast to the purity of fatherly love. Father love should be unconditional support and sacrifice, but in the social class game, it becomes a resource that can be used. This exploitation not only damages the dignity of fatherly love, but also reflects the harsh reality of social class mobility. Whether a father can be a bridge across social classes. Instead, it is more portrayed as part of a social class division, an emotion that can be shaped by social status. Mr. Goriot's fatherly love failed to help his daughters achieve true social integration and instead became a stepping stone to their social rise, a tragic shift that profoundly reveals the limitations of father's love in social class mobility.

2.3. The criticism of social injustice and moral decay

The characters in *Pot Goriot*, the most mentioned is "property", all kinds of property. For example: "A society where wealth is virtue" and "If I am rich, they will come and lick my face with their kisses...". (*Old man Goriot*) the heart of the brush strokes and penetrating allegory is the most realistic, is the social "money worship" mainstream value strong attack, Balzac from the perspective of realism criticized the gold outside the social "loser", [10] the aim at money utilitarianism. The distortion of human nature and the loss of morality have become normal in the society where money is supreme, so Rustigne, a simple young man in the small town, has become a selfish and cool "businessman" in this materialistic and profitable society. "Balzac uses the elegy of this small town youth to alert the world blinded by money, the value of money is ultimately harmful to others." [11]

Old Man Goriot's not only reveals the conflict between social classes, but also deeply criticizes the social injustice and moral decay at that time. His experience shows that even with a certain amount

of wealth, members of the lower class are still discriminated against in society. In order to maintain their social status, "his daughters even sacrifice the feelings of their father and their inhuman behavior, which just reflects the moral decline of the society at that time ."[12]

This lack of morality was not uncommon in the society at that time, and many people ignored their respect for others for their personal gain. The tragic death of old man Goriot effectively accused of the serious poison of money to human nature, and also revealed the ugly face under the interests of money. Through his tragedy, we can see the dark social reality of that era, but also has a certain warning effect to the family education in modern society. His tragedy is also the direct result of the conflict between individuals and society. As an individual, he yearns to get the warmth of his family and the respect of the society, but the social injustice and the decline of morality make his basic needs unmet. His personal values clashed with the mainstream values of the society, "and this conflict eventually led to his isolation and despair." [13] His experience also shows people the profound impact of social injustice and moral decline on the fate of individuals.

Balzac used realism to symbolize, metaphor, contrast and other techniques to sharply point out the distorted social values and accuse the social injustice and moral decline in Paris in the 19th century. Balzac's criticism is not only a criticism of individual behavior, but also a reflection on the social system and values. He alludes to the thought-provoking educational problem: when money makes family affection alienated, how can parents and children maintain a healthy parent-child relationship? Parents' love for their children should be positive and moderate, and it is more meaningful to help their children establish a correct and upward world view than blindly doting and connivance. "Only in this way can we avoid tragedies and realize the health and harmony of the family." [14]

Balzac through the story of the man Goriot, a profound criticism of the social phenomenon at that time. He not only revealed the reality of social injustice and moral decline, but also let people see the deep reasons behind these problems through the experience of Old Man Goriot. He called on people to re-examine the value orientation of the society and advocate the establishment of a more just and moral society. Balzac's criticism still has important enlightenment in modern society: although the era have changed, the problems of social injustice and moral decay still exist. "This reminds us that the development of society should not be at the expense of individual rights and the bottom line of morality." [14] We should continue to work hard to promote social progress and establish a more just, equal and moral social environment. At the same time, each of us should reflect on our own actions and strive to become a responsible and moral citizen.

3. Conclusion

As an important work in Balzac's Human Comedy series, "Old Man Goriot" has become a model of 19th-century French literature with its profound social insight and superb literary skills. Through the in-depth portrayal of the role of Lao man, Balzac not only shows the depth and greatness of father's love, but also reflects the serious problems of social class solidification at that time through its tragic fate.

Balzac's literary achievement lies in his ability to reflect the reality of the whole society through the story of an ordinary character. Old Man Goriot is not only a literary work, but also a work of social criticism. It let us see the glory of a father's love, "but also let us see the dark side of society.[15] Through this work, Balzac not only shows the power of literature, but also gives us a deeper understanding of the problem of class solidification in the 19th-century French society.

In general, Old Man Goriot is a literary work that profoundly reveals social problems. Through the description of the father's father' s love and social class conflict, it not only shows the greatness of the father's love, but also criticizes the social injustice and moral decline. Balzac's work has not only made great achievements in literature, "but also played an important role in social criticism." [16] We reinforce this point by quoting from literary critics, and affirm Balzac's literary achievements.

This work is not only a profound reflection of the 19th century French society, but also a discussion of the universal problems of human society. Its value and significance go beyond the limitations of The Times and region, and still has important enlightenment and influence on today's readers.

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