

The Parodic Feature of Hawthornian Romance in “*The House of the Seven Gables*”

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Abstract

Nathaniel Hawthorne is one of the few writers who openly said that he would create “romance” and be clearly aware of the differences between history, fiction and legend. The features of Hawthornian Romance are different with Romance in the middle ages. Based on the background of history and reality, Hawthorne described the life of ordinary Americans during the social transformation era in the pattern of Romance, but without the romanticism of romance, and its legendary and aristocratic characteristics, which can be seen as a strong feature of parody.

Keywords

Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, Romance, Parody, Historiographic Novel

1. Introduction

There was a new trend in learning Hawthorne in the American literature research community in the 1980s¹. Many people not only agreed that Hawthorne played a fundamental role in the development of the American literature, but also put forward the notion of Hawthornian romance, and explored the features of romance and historical compilation in American literature, according to the romance novels of Hawthorne.

¹During this period, many scholars used Hawthorne’s romance works as a crucial part of their romance studies, while I especially paid attention to the following writers and their works: Edgar A. Dryden, *The Form of American Romance*; Elissa Greenwald, *Realism & the Romance. Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James, and American Fiction*; George Dekker, *The American Historical Romance*; Michael Davitt Bell, *The Development of American Romance. The Sacrifice of Relatio*; Emily Miller Budick, *Fiction and Historical Consciousness: The American Romance Tradition*; Evan Carton, *The Rhetoric of American Romance. Dialectic and Identity in Emerson, and Dickinson, Poe, and Hawthorne*, and the essay of Nina Baym, “*Concepts of the Romance in Hawthorne’s America*”.

However, these opinions were widely divided in Hawthornian romance. It is difficult to understand the concept of romance itself and the essential characteristics of Hawthornian romance. What they explored were just the minor aspects of the creative techniques and structure of the story. In this way, it could not penetrate into the heart of Hawthorne's creation of romance, and sorted out the differences between Hawthornian romance and romance novels. Therefore, it is partial that researchers should set up a real thought or system of American Romance.

One of the most important romance works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, has been published in 1851, just months before *Moby-Dick*. It should be treated seriously not only because of its tension between its romance form and its content², but also based on its famous preface about the idea of romance. In this preface, Hawthorne clearly expressed the features of romance wrote by him and the attitude towards the relationship between romance and fictional works, which highlights the form of romance of this book. According to the background, subject, plot and character of this book, it largely differs from the romance in the middle ages.

By analyzing *The House of the Seven Gables*, the present study revealed that Hawthorne's romance did not simply mix the American background into the romance in the middle ages. Actually, the essential characteristic of Hawthornian romance should be concerned as the parody of the romance in the middle ages. The works of Hawthorne have a sense of sarcasm, making American literature have an independent tradition and thought of European literature.

2. From Medieval Romance to Hawthornian Romance

Medieval Romance was a kind of literary theme about the travel and love stories of noble knights, the feat of lords, or the daily life of secular societies. Medieval Romance is closely correlated to various literary forms, including Lai, Ballad, Ode and Epic. The elements of love and gentle style greatly improve the richness of the literature, heroic legends and a love stories were mixed in Medieval Romance. Moreover, historical and legendary materials were also applied in these works, which expanded the pattern of the story, inducing a profound impact for the later romance story, drama and creation of the novel. Medieval Romance was divided into two categories: Chivalric Romance and Secular Romance. The experiences and love of knights, the deeds of monarchs, or the life of secular society were written in a way of rhyme or prose. In order to summarize, these three core factors of Cavalier Romance are the experience of knight, love story and happy ending.

At the same time, Medieval Romance inherited the characteristic of the historical compilation of epics. In the process of its creation, "formulaic" (Frye,

²Just before the coupling of *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne was deeply trapped by the "tone of the romance", so he wanted to "shed some light" at the end of the book. cf. Miller, Edwin Haviland. *Salem Is My Dwelling Place: A Life of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991: 321.

1978) imagination was brought into romance by intentionally or unintentionally using historical background or social reality, while jumping out of the structure of the history and reality at the same time. Therefore, a romance story can be taken as a “displacement” and “parody” (Frye, 1978) to Medieval Romance, because it not only places the imagination of its creation as a model into the novel, but also provides a pattern for literary creation in the future. In addition, the two lineages of a novel, which are realistic novel and romance novel, should be considered as a kind of different methodology that deals with the real world and imaginary world: the way of “realistic displacement” and “parody”, which is also called “two-way motion of parody” (Frye, 1978).

The importance of the Medieval Romance in the literature ancestry leads to the next phase of understanding its inter-wind relationship with the American literature, especially with the literary works of Hawthorne. The period of Hawthorne’s creation is vital for the study of American romance. First, it has a great impact to American literature when European novels spread to America. Second, American writers’ tours to Europe undoubtedly weakened the “Americanness” in their works. Therefore, American novelists needed both to clarify the influence of European literature on them, and try to get rid of the shadow brought by Medieval Romance. Hawthorne, however, even could be taken as the most suitable choice to mingle these two main issues. According to the study of Ben Robertson, English novelist Inchbald, which came out a little earlier than Hawthorne, was very familiar with “Shakespeare’s works and late Romance” (Robertson, 2010). Her works contained many elements of “Romance”, which had a great influence on Hawthorne’s creation. In addition, Hawthorne was not only familiar with Shakespeare’s works, which have been deeply influenced by romance, but also had a detailed reading of works such as *Julie, or the New Heloise*, *Joseph Andrews*, and *Northanger Abbey*. He also read a lot of satirized work of Medieval Romance, such as *Don Quixote* and *The Female Quixote*, and he even once read the “original version of *Don Quixote*” (Robertson, 2010). At the same time, he also directly pointed out the Pope’s famous parody work “*Rape of Lock*” in his work. Undoubtedly, this shows that Hawthorne has a clear understanding of the romantic tradition of Europe, and had further knowledge on the parody of romantic works, particularly the *Don Quixote*, and the parody of Gothic novels, such as *Northanger Abbey*.

In the same period, American literature had a trend of establishing a thought of uniqueness. Therefore, Hawthorne’s romance works were facing double difficulties, because of the fact that after “Having achieved political independence, Americans wanted a literature that they could claim as uniquely American”. (Robertson, 2010) American novels could not get rid of the original relying of “symbolism and romantic modes” to “search for mythic patterns and psychological meaning” (Bendixen, 2012), and wanted to have their own literary characteristics. Hence, in this situation, Hawthorne reconsidered the relationship between romance and novel, history and fiction, symbolism and realism. His work exhibited a strong sense of parody of Medieval Romance seemingly on the

basis of the pattern of the story and subject of Medieval Romance. He changed the way of social history and the pattern of the story, which stuck in a rut, and curing of creative skills in Medieval Romance. In this way, this not only considered the relationship between the sacred and the secular, or the old theme of the love story between the knight and beauty, but also made a unique attempt in using historical background, the depiction of characters, and relationship between imagination and reality. Hawthorne placed fictional story in the real historical background. He emphasized the fictional features of the story, and the function of written and spoken history, which he claimed as a kind of individual logos. Due to the huge gap between history and reality in form and content, the creation of Hawthorne's romance stories had the characteristics of "historiography" and "double coding", which can be usually seen in the postmodern parody works.

3. The Artistic Characteristics of "Parodic Romance" in *The House of the Seven Gables*

Some commentators agreed with the fact that the "happy ending" of *The House of the Seven Gables* should be seen as the uniqueness of the whole work, which had been misread by some critics. Happy ending, an universal form of the technique of Medieval Romance, was used in this work but essentially showing the tragic theme and difficulty during the time of feudal aristocracy and patriarchy, when they declined in the United States. At the same time, this romance reflected the relationship between history and fiction in preface and text, as which has been shown in the *Custom-House*, and also played an important role in understanding the characteristics of Hawthornian romance. In addition, due to different interpretations of this work, which were made by many critics and criticisms on the text, caused great tension and led to the "miscellaneous" meanings of *The House of the Seven Gables*.

Through the analysis of the work itself and the history of criticism, a sharp contrast can be found between the diversified significance of *The House of the Seven Gables*, which affected the author's confession in the preface and the relatively high recognition of romance. On the other hand, the "parody" features in the work also had an impact on the production of the meaning of the work. Due to the "dual structure" of the parody feature, the work was bound to face tension on structure and content, and the emotions were complex and changeable. Since parody is not a mechanical binary literary form, it was always "a whole range of things", "it can be a playful, genial mockery of codifiable forms" (Hutcheon, 2000), and a miscellaneous of meaning and content under a specific style and subject. Meanwhile, due to the intertextuality of the parody feature, the work itself can connect with other romance stories.

The modern parody theory, which was defined by Hutcheon as an activity performed by "decoders" to decode the "encoded intent" (Hutcheon, 2000), has a strong generative characteristic. At the meantime, Lachmann introduced the

“double-coding” (Rose, 1993) theory into the field of generating parody. She thought that, “it means that the production of the meaning is not programmed through the stock of signs of the given text, but point to that of another” (Rose, 1993). This shows that parody was not only the product of the tension between structure and content, but also pointed to a variety of texts, such as history, social, political, and even comment. Moreover, this could enter into a broader system of “text—meaning—acceptance”, and has comprehensively analyzed of the parody features of Hawthornian romance in *The House of the Seven Gables*, when jumping out of the traditional frame of the relationship between form and content in the analysis of parody features.

3.1. The Creation Logic of Parody to the “Pseudo-Historical” of Medieval Romance in *The House of Seven Gables*

In romance literature, the nature of “pseudo-historical” ran through the pedigree of Romance. The first Medieval Romance, *History of the Kings of Britain* listed in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, was recorded from the Trojan war to the stories of the heroic Kings in Norman and the history of Britain. Although this work appeared to be a historical biography, few scholars considered the authenticity of the content of the work, and instead considered it as a romance with strong fictional meaning due to the differences between the descriptions in the work and real historical records. The “pseudo-historical” feature of the *History of the Kings of Britain* not only directly affected the works inspired by it (such as Robert Wace’s work, *Le roman de Brut*), but also made many romance creations grasp its characteristic. That is to say, it appeared that the authors were writing historical biography or sorting out historical documents, and the content of the description depended on the writer’s subjective, or it could even be a collage of history, which had large discrepancies with historical facts, and different characters and events were placed in different times and spaces in one romantic work.

The writing of *The House of the Seven Gables* also focused on the problems of the bygone and present, fiction and reality. In the preface, the author elaborated on this issue. The writer claimed that: “(Romance), as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws”. This may be based on the “writer’s own choosing or creation” (Hawthorne, 1983). Furthermore, he also intentionally emphasized that “this tale comes under the romantic definition, lies in the attempt to connect a by-gone time with the very present that is flitting away from us” (Hawthorne, 1983). It is noteworthy that romance can be under risky when writers try to bring “his fancy pictures almost into positive contact with the realities of the moment” (Hawthorne, 1983). Therefore, it is clear that romance writers need to be careful about the relationship between the real world and fantastic world. As a result, Hawthorne himself declined that his romance “has a great deal more to do with the clouds overhead than with any portion of the actual soil of the County of Essex” (Hawthorne, 1983), creating a different category of creative logic that was inconsistent with those of romance. Instead of claiming that his

romance story was the writing of a real historical figure or historical event, Hawthorne deliberately distanced from that. However, the notion of parody does not simply mean to totally disobey the writing logic of those original works. In the present study, Hawthorne restricts his work to a clear period of time, while at the same time; he deliberately highlights the fictional features of the work. In the preface, Hawthorne deliberately used “bygone” rather than “history” to make a clear distinction between the story of his romance and history, which was the reverse of the creation logic of European romance.

However, Hawthorne’s thinking of history and fiction did not stop here. While claiming that his work was fictional work, he also strongly implied to the reader that it was a work closely related to reality. He pinpointed the location of a building in Essex, and fixed the time of the story. The designer of the house, the “Old Matthew Maule, in a word, was executed for the crime of witchcraft. He was one of the martyrs to that terrible delusion” (Hawthorne, 1983). Furthermore, the high-sheriff who took part in the banquet of the great house “may be said to represent King William” (Hawthorne, 1983). This may undoubtedly recall the fear of witches in Massachusetts, which was culminated in 1692. In the case of the Salem witch, the formation of “delusion” was also roughly located in that time. King William was referred to King William III, who reigned from 1689 to 1702. Therefore, the reader could tell when the story took place. However, Hawthorne deliberately did not to mention the name of the governor and deputy governor (The governor was likely to be William Phillips or his successor). Furthermore, this deliberate ambiguity between history and fiction was the inversion of the creative logic of “pretending history” through the parody of the creation of Medieval Romance and its creating logic, “pretending history”, as well as the declaration of the fictional features of these works, and the distinctive features of the connection with history.

Moreover, Hawthorne also spontaneously realized the concept of Hutcheon’s word. He took “history and fiction as human constructs” (Hutcheon, 1987), which was the premise of all “Historiographic” novels. In addition, he used “history”, as well as “fireside tradition has preserved the very words” (Hawthorne, 1983) to describe the death of Old Maule, which was a deliberate juxtaposition of history and romance. Considering the way Hawthorne used in *Grandfather’s Chair*, those “fireside tradition” may also provide a kind of seemingly credible narration of historical events, which may gratify the vagueness of the credibility of those statements. While describing the funeral of old Colonel Pyncheon, Hawthorne wrote:

In old Colonel Pyncheon’s funeral discourse, the clergyman absolutely canonized his deceased parishioner, and opening, as it were, a vista through the roof of the church, and thence through the firmament above, showed him seated, harp in hand, among the crowned choristers of the spiritual world. On his tombstone, too, the record is highly eulogistic, nor does history, so far as he holds a place upon its page, assail the consistency and uprightness of his character” (Hawthorne, 1983).

This narration wrote history as the preachers' speech and the epitaph, which was contrary to the description of Colonel Pyncheon, who was desperate for profit. Thus, history was completely the logos created by only few individuals, which caused "the force/persuasion polarity" to disappear and made history a mandatory "being". "Annals" leaves no room for debate. Hence, it did not describe what happened in history, but rather "**makes things happen**".

By means of the creative logic of "Historiography" and the way of writing history itself, Hawthorne questioned the admiration of history in Medieval Romance and history itself. It appears that he indicated fictional features of his creation, but in fact expressed the doubts about the whole creation logic of romance. Medieval Romance tried hard to express the contents it had written once it happened, but it turned history itself into the synthesis of unreliable text constructed by discourse, which deconstructed the logical starting point of the "Historiography" that romance itself relied on. When Hawthorne realized the unreliable historical text, he claimed his work as fiction, and used romance stories to describe "bygone", rather than "history". Finally, he completed the compilation and trans-coding of historical events, making it a part of fiction.

3.2. The Parody of the Family, Class and Morality of Medieval Romance in *The House of the Seven Gables*

In American colonies, the idea of family and class in the New England period were all very different from the class stratification of the middle ages. Due to the influence of the hierarchical social stratification of the middle ages, hereditary aristocracy became more dependent, and the shadow of paternalism was less in New England than in Europe. As the first puritans fled to America, who directly belonged to James I, they had neither the noble blood of European patricians, nor the natural leader. As a result, New England's feudal aristocracy was naturally weaker than Europe's.

The narrative of hereditary aristocracy in *The House of the Seven Gables* is neither, as Jackson says, directed to the fact that "family identity was inextricable from the physical estate" (Jackson, 2014), nor as Shamir put it, "to re-secure the vestigial definition of person-hood based on property and create a middle-class foundation for the right of property" (Shamir, 1997). Hawthorne wrote more about pragmatism and egoism, and the capital accumulation of the emerging business class in New England. However, the analysis of these narrations could not reflect the artistic features of the parody in Hawthorne's works. The description of a Pyncheon family was actually the metaphor of the features of the real noble characteristics hidden in their appearance and miscellaneous trait of the declining aristocracy.

The romance started with the establishment of a building, which was the image of the establishment and inheritance of the Pyncheon family, and the development of the novel. Furthermore, it had its own multiple meanings. The purpose of the building was to "endure for many generations of his posterity" (Hawthorne, 1983), while it appears to be built "over an unquiet grave" (Haw-

thorne, 1983). Therefore, it affords those “buried wizard” to “haunt its new apartments” (Hawthorne, 1983). In order to celebrate their housewarming, the Pyncheon family held a grand banquet, which was an important way to show the splendor of the noble family. However, old Pyncheon suddenly died on the party. Normally, the descendants of the Pyncheon family “appeared destined as fortunate a permanence as can anywise consist with the inherent instability of human affairs” (Hawthorne, 1983). However, they fell into poverty due to the loss of their property documents. In this antagonistic narration, Hawthorne parodied the invariable family inheritance system in romance works, showing the weakness of the internal family nature of feudal aristocracy in form. Furthermore, he also described a very aristocratic decoration in *The House of Seven Gables*, which contains a “map of the Pyncheon territory at the eastward” (Hawthorne, 1983), with “pictures of Indians and wild beasts” (Hawthorne, 1983). Territory is an important part of ancient aristocratic families, which contains both wealth and power. As a part of the imagination of the Medieval Romance heraldry, the lion was widely used in the family crest. However, these symbols of past greatness are presently “lingered a base sixpence” (Hawthorne, 1983). Hence, Hepzibah needed to do business for a living. Throughout the novel, the aristocratic inheritance of the Pyncheon family in the form and the disintegrating dilemma in reality are always mixed together, which are completely different from the feudal aristocratic stories described by Medieval Romance. Medieval Romance saw the family as part of a noble identity, but it became a personal encumbrance in *The House of the Seven Gables*.

Hawthorne described a phrase for the declining family system in the work. At the beginning, Hepzibah did not to give up the formal aristocratic manners, and she insisted that “a Pyncheon must not, at all events, under her forefathers’ roof, receive money for a morsel of bread, from her only friend” (Hawthorne, 1983), during which she still emphasizes her belonging of the family, and instead treats herself as a unique individual, when Holgrave visited. To a poor woman, she “rejected” the payment and “gave the poor soul better measure than if she had taken it” (Hawthorne, 1983). However, her behavior was comical and fain against the entire commercialization in Massachusetts and the decline of the Pyncheon family itself. Moreover, her insistence on nobility was also accompanied by her admiration of her business: “little circlet of the schoolboy’s copper-coin dim and lustreless though it was ... had proved a talisman, fragrant with good, and deserving to be set in gold and worn next to her heart” (Hawthorne, 1983). It is a formulistic expression of parody in the description of treasure or sacred objects in Medieval Romance, which applied extreme sacred words for an extremely secular copper coin.

The parody features of the work were also reflected in satire of the noble spirit. In his works, Hawthorne constantly commented on the spirits of New England in the same way as glorifying chivalry in Medieval Romances.

Firstly, in terms of the spirit of disregarding authority, at the beginning of the

novel, the deputy governor came to a banquet in the house of Pyncheon and asked to meet the old Pyncheon. However, the messenger refused. Although he was in a quandary, Colonel Pyncheon “permits no discretion in the obedience of those who owe him service” (Hawthorne, 1983). Hence, he requested: “let who list open yonder door! I dare not, though the Governor’s own voice should bid me do it” (Hawthorne, 1983). Therefore, there was a fierce rivalry between the deputy governor who represented the king and the servants who represented the squire: the deputy governor was, of course, the agent of the European chivalry, which was held by the knight from Europe, and the servant were the New England spirit’s spokesman, who was loyal only to master, was not obedient to the command of the king of New England. Though the servant’s had great respect for the deputy governor, he was only responsible for his host. Therefore, this essentially shows old Pyncheon’s contempt to the king.

Second, as for the pragmatism and egoism of New Englanders, when the family was declining, an old patriarch of the Pyncheon family “bethought himself of no better avenue to wealth, than by cutting a shop-door through the side of his ancestral residence” (Hawthorne, 1983). Business has replaced land as the best means of sustenance, and even an ordinary New England woman is “hard, vulgar, keen, busy, hackneyed”, the old servant Venner knew that “young people should never live idle in the world, nor old ones neither” (Hawthorne, 1983). Besides adults, Phoebe is also “betokened the cheeriness of an active temperament, finding joy in its activity” (Hawthorne, 1983). However, New England people also had an obvious flaw, such as talking about Hepzibah standing in front of her shop, even a child “preferred the better bargain to the worse” (Hawthorne, 1983), which marks him “like a true-born Yankee” (Hawthorne, 1983). In his work, Hawthorne eulogized the virtues of the characters similar to epic and Medieval Romance, but what stands out is the New England secular side. There was quite a contradiction to Frye’s statement that “romance avoids the ambiguities of ordinary life” (Hawthorne, 1983).

The parody of morality in Medieval Romance was also reflected in the depiction of revenge. Medieval Romance, regardless of whether it is the Arthurian, the Charlemagne, or the later Crusades, all relied on themes of disputes and revenge in the family. However, conquest and achievement had nothing to do with war in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Although family disputes contained a sense of revenge, there was no complicated story or lengthy narration of Matthew Moore’s revenge story. Moore used witchcraft to kill Alice, which made it appear that the family revenge has been completed. However, in the end, Phoebe and Holgrave built a close relationship, which made the whole revenge became funny. Therefore, the thought of revenge in Moore family ancestors was removed. The secret of the Moore family came clean by Holgrave. The disappearance of the enmity of these two families mean, in a larger sense, that the absence of a re-vening theme were thought highly of the world of romance.

The same parody element was also reflected in the description of the shift

from the mythological era to the secular era. In his writing, Hawthorne, who was well-knew the tradition of Greek and Roman epics, deliberately parodied some of the subjects of these epics. For example, in the description of the school boy received by Hepzibah, the little boy not only eats the head of the first Jim Crow, but also asks for another one, and then, “sending the second Jim Crow in quest of the former one” (Hawthorne, 1983). In addition, after Hepzibah and Clifford escaped from the building, he could not buy anything to eat. Hence, “he picked up a stone, with a naughty purpose to fling it through the window” (Hawthorne, 1983). These two scenes were a complete parody of the giant cyclops in the *Odyssey*. The former was a parody of the giant devouring the *Odyssey*’s companions, while the latter was a parody of the giant stoning away the *Odyssey*. Meanwhile, the story of the little boy breaking a cookie was the same with the giant that “stretches his hands to my comrades, two he snatched up together and dashed them down on the ground like puppies, the brains ran out all over the floor and bedrenched it” (Homer, 2002), and the strong giant of the epic became a child. These difficulties need to be solved by the hero, who was not in New England anymore. Although *Odyssey* “is a genuine hero”, “except in the cave of Cyclops, the turns to craft” (Frye, 1978). Because “giant” that time did not need to be coped with by human beings, this means that the heroic age has been completely eliminated. Therefore, heroes fighting down the enemies, which were sang in romance stories, were questioned.

When judge Pyncheon came to see Clifford, Hepzibah went to look for Clifford. Hawthorne wrote that Hepzibah walked through the garden and down the street without finding Clifford, but suddenly, he became “preternaturally pale, so deadly white” face has been shown “through all the glimmering indistinctness of the passage-way” (Hawthorne, 1983). This was nothing at all to the sign of the living person. This description was also the parody. It was the parody that *Odyssey* looked for Triclus in the hell of the *Odyssey*, and the plot of the sought father saw the souls of many heroes in *Aeneid*. It was the same in the old town, “the town was almost completely water-girdled” (Hawthorne, 1983), which was similar to the underworld in the Greek god surrounded by five Styx and the Oceanus. However, the similarity of the plot and form was only a symbol of “setting aside from the epic”, and the real thoughts of Hawthorne were poles apart to the epic. After Hepzibah’ met with Clifford, they escaped from the building, which was the home they survived in. This was different with that after meeting his mother, where *Odyssey* and the heroes went back home in the epic, and Aeneas went on his own journey after drifting from hell. The place where the Pyncheon family lived was “an unquiet grave” (Hawthorne, 1983). However, they live in the underworld, and not in the world. Hence, ghosts in the houses are normal. People in New England did not live as they did in the heroic age. They could have the feats of greatness and the opportunities to create families that would endure for generations. The purpose of leaving was to escape, get away from his hometown, and escape from the underworld, where they cannot live.

People living in New England saw escape, rather than living, in a garden, as the heart of spirit. Clifford and Hepzibah left their home to judge Pyncheon, because it was a way to find a life free from the ghosts of past conflicts with the family.

The parody of class stratification, morality and the spirit of the times from romance to epic in *The House of the Seven Gables* make readers experience the strong references of parody art to the present, on the basis of “as if” reading the inspiration of the heroic age.

3.3. The Parody of the “Male-Centered” Structure of Medieval Romance in *The House of Seven Gables*

The male-centered structure of Medieval Romance was directly inherited from epic and mythological tales. The story mode of “hero-heroine” also left many beautiful stories, such as Tristan and Iseult, Lancelot and Guinevere. The love story in the romance was the prototype of such a story in Medieval Romance. The same story pattern was also normal in Chinese love stories. This was not only consistent with the creative logic of romance, but also with the expectations of readers.

In his study of the female characters in romance, Frye pointed out that “the heroine of romance was supposed to carry out her tactics in low profile, that is, behave with modesty” (Frye, 1978). In other words, female characters in romance stories always stuck into male characters until the end of the 14th century. Although it cannot be said that female characters were necessarily subservient to male characters, Medieval Romance was always committed to the adventure experience of male characters due to the constraints of male paternalism.

Nina Baym prudentially noticed the heroine in *The House of Seven Gambles*. She considered it as Hawthorne’s breakthrough use of female characters. Bem pointed to the importance of Hepzibah in the novel, which was in the first four chapters a “character in the novel’s present time” (Baym, 2004). It was undoubtedly the culmination of the work when Hepzibah gained courage in the fifteen chapters.

The opposite of female characters was the absence of male characters, which always played in the novel. Old Colonel Pyncheon and Judge Pyncheon appeared in the novel many times. However, they were either dead or inferior in the image. In the work, they were mentioned all the time, but the meaning of the portrait always stayed in the past. That is to say, they were always absent. Even the photos taken by the silver cameraman did not actually show judge Pyncheon, that is, he was left behind just as a posthumous photograph.

It was a complete reversal of the spirit of heroes and heroines in romantic works for the description of the disappearance of heroism in male characters and the courage of female characters to challenge life. The ingenuity of *The House of Seven Gambles* was that it substituted the heroic strokes in romance to celebrate women facing the challenges in daily life. You can find this description on Hepzibah and Phoebe. Hawthorne not only wrote that she could run a business, but

also mentioned that seven gables “have shown a kind of cheerfulness glimmering through its dusky windows, as Phoebe passed to-and-fro in the interior” (Hawthorne, 1983). The family’s glory in the past was undoubtedly created by males, but family hatred also came from antagonist of males.

At the same time, the glory created by males and the family spirit they held were always in the past, and not in the present and future: all of this was left out of the New England spirit. Therefore, the significance of male roles can only be conveyed in the way of logos in the works. Female characters not only replaced the function that the male role represented in this moment, but also indicated the changes of the spirit of time. That is, the male succeeds the wealth of his father in traditional romance work. However, it was totally replaced by the spirit of females, which varied from before and after.

A similar inheritance relationship was also shown in phoebe’s inheritance of the garden behind the building, which was planted by Alice Pyncheon, and Hawthorne wrote in chapter 5 that the flowers are like “as if it had been brought from Eden that very summer” (Hawthorne, 1983), which was consistent with the title of chapter 20, “The Flower of Eden”, and also showed the different spirit of Phoebe and Alice. Clifford said, “I thought of you both, as we came down the street, and beheld Alice’s Posies in full bloom. And so, the flower of Eden has bloomed, likewise, in this old, darksome house, to-day!” (Hawthorne, 1983), which pointed out the context from paradise lost to paradise regained in the form. It was phoebe who appeared to change the fate of the family as the successor of the tragic female role. However, the tragic conflicts behind the seemingly harmonious ending had failed to be solved: the decline of feudal aristocracy could not be avoided; they was forced to leave their homes and needed to seek asylum from another class. All of these were adoptions of the parody of male’s establishing greatness and inheriting fortune in romance.

The role arrangement mode in romance also parodied in *The House of Seven Gambles*. As mentioned before, the establishment of this tradition was mainly based on the pursuit of female heroine. However, the position of the female character was not totally different from the treasure or land in folk stories. In *The House of Seven Gambles*, although Holgrave and Phoebe were contrasting roles, phoebe was not the support in the relationship, but was the central character that attracted men and revived the family. The older male and female character aristocrats were down and out. For instance: old Clifford was lifeless and blew bubbles in his rooms every day; Hepzibah was not only ugly, but also struggled between the illustrious family and forced labor. The real dynamic characters were phoebe from the countryside and the offspring of the “humble” Moore family. The story mode of “noble men and women”, “chivalrous women” or “heroic princess” in romance were negated and inverted here. The strong contrast between the status of characters and the inner world of characters meant that the collapse of the characterization system of “what you see is what you are” emphasized in Medieval Romance.

4. Conclusion

There are multiple interpretations to *The House of Seven Gables*. Although many commentators have realized that it is Hawthorne's own feature that shows the sense of disharmony brought about by the formal happy ending and the artistic power by mixing realistic novel and Gothic novel; what they did not see was that on the basis of the "Historiography", the essence of Hawthornian romance was a parody of Medieval Romance, which reflected the unique artistic value of the Hawthorne romance.

The way of progression of *The House of Seven Gables* was similar to romance in form, but not in content, which expresses further than the story of romance. This book reflects the living conditions and individual spirit of the New England colonial people at that time, and is in the thought of the anti-hero era. This indicates the disappearance of the heroic era and heroic spirit. The invasion of new commercial spirit to the feudal family and ethics made the male-dominated family hereditary system in the middle ages completely disintegrated in the United States. Formal feudal aristocracy must be committed to the spirit of Americans before it can continue.

In the preface to the novel, Hawthorne deliberately emphasized the creation of a romance style. However, he also dismantled the elements of romance, such as the story structure, historical background, and the spirit of the characters, making it a contemporary art at the end of the 17th century. Furthermore, this grew up to a feature of American, which sets up the foundation for the American literary pedigree in the future.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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