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Intercultural Communication through the Lens of Maugham's Work: The Mingling and Collision of Cultures in Multiple Countries

Sirui Huang[1]

[1] Sirui Huang, Jilin International Studies University, Changchun, China

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Abstracts

Although intercultural communication and national cultural identity have received much attention in literary studies, the relevant perspectives in Maugham's works and their impact have yet to be deepened. By analyzing the intercultural communication perspectives in Maugham's works, this paper explores his views on different countries and his contribution to British cultural identity. Employing a variety of research methods, the paper reveals the rich cross-cultural elements, images of Eastern and Western countries and cross-cultural conflict and integration in Maugham's works. It is found that Maugham strengthened his identification with British culture and deepened his understanding of that culture by critically reflecting on the culture of Western countries. Based on this, the paper suggests emphasizing the application of intercultural communication perspective in literary and cultural studies to promote the common development of cultural diversity and identity.

Keywords

Maugham, Cultural Recognition, Intercultural Communication

1. Introduction

In the context of globalization, intercultural communication has become the key to connecting different cultures and is crucial to international understanding and cooperation. The British writer W. Somerset Maugham is famous for his masterful narratives and profound characterizations, and his works contain a unique perspective on intercultural communication. Although there are abundant research results in the study of Maugham, there is still a lack of in-depth discussion on intercultural communication and national cultural identity in his works.

Most of the existing studies focus on Maugham's literary style, narrative techniques and thematic analysis, such as psychological depiction of characters and critique of colonialism etc., while there are fewer studies that systematically explore the cultural collision and fusion of Maugham's works from the perspective of cross-cultural communication. A few scholars have paid attention to the exoticism in Maugham's works, but they lacked the analysis of deep cultural identity and cross-cultural communication mechanism.

With the acceleration of globalization, cross-cultural communication has become an important topic in literary research. The value of new research on cross-cultural elements in Maugham's works is highlighted, but it still faces the challenges of how to define cross-cultural elements, link the process of cultural identity and assess the impact of cross-cultural experiences. Taking *The Moon and Sixpence* as an example, Strickland's choice to flee from the Parisian art hall to the primitive island of Tahiti not only involves the collision between European modern civilization and the indigenous culture of the South Pacific, but also reflects the artist's identity anxiety in the colonial context; while the Hong Kong colonial court scene depicted in "On the Chinese Screen" demonstrates the complexity of cultural interactions through the hybridization of the British legal process and the mediation of the Chinese "peacemakers". The complexity of cultural interaction is demonstrated through the hybridization of British legal procedures and Chinese "peacemaker" mediation. The researcher can select such typical text fragments and establish an analytical framework of "cultural symbols—interactive scenes—narrative function". At the level of identity construction, the East-West philosophical oscillation of Larry (*Blade*) provides a figurative sample for understanding the cultural identity of intellectuals in the colonial context. As for the impact assessment, both the controversy over Maugham's Oriental narratives among British readers in the 1920s can be traced and the cultural code shift in contemporary film and television adaptations can be analyzed to reveal the enduring vitality of the cross-cultural elements through the dual dimensions of historical echoes and contemporary resonance.

This paper aims to fill this research gap and provide new perspectives and ideas by deeply analyzing the intercultural communicative perspective and national cultural identity in Maugham's works. Maugham's cross-cultural experiences provide rich materials for his creative works, which show the collision and fusion of different cultures and provide unique perspectives for understanding different cultures.

The importance of studying intercultural communication and national cultural identity is to promote cultural understanding and respect. Maugham's works provide valuable examples for exploring the impact of intercultural communication on individual cultural identity. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the intercultural communication perspectives in Maugham's works, to show his views on different countries, and to explore how these views reflect and influence his British cultural identity, as well as to analyze the implications for contemporary literary and cultural studies.

This paper adopts literature review, textual analysis and comparative study to analyze Maugham's original works, commentaries and academic writings in depth, to explore the connection between intercultural communication and national cultural identity in his works, and to strive to make new breakthroughs in this field of research.

2. An Overview of Intercultural Communication Perspectives in Maugham's Work

2.1 Maugham's Cross-cultural Experience and Creative Background

William Somerset Maugham (1874-1965), as a great master of English literature spanning two centuries and two world wars, has always been intertwined with the process of globalization in his creative career. The early death of both parents and the special experience of being raised by his uncle not only gave him a keen insight into human nature and society, but also cultivated the potential of cross-cultural observation. As an adult, Maugham became deeply involved in the world's cultural scene as a traveler: his trip to the South Pacific in 1916 and his four-month expedition to the Far East in 1919 (covering Shanghai, Tianjin, Beijing and other eastern ports of commerce, as well as the inland hinterland along the Yangtze River, such as Chongqing and Chengdu) transformed his cross-cultural experiences into a unique narrative strategy of the "Other" in his literary creations. His writing about China is particularly exemplary-in works such as "On the Chinese Screen". Maugham not only describes folk scenes such as tea houses and ancestral halls with anthropological precision, but also reveals the power game and identity anxiety between Eastern and Western civilizations in the process of modernization through scenes of cultural collision such as colonial courts and missionaries, providing a vivid literary sample for contemporary cross-cultural research. It provides a vivid literary sample for contemporary cross-cultural studies.

2.2 Portrayal and Comparison of Eastern and Western Country Images

The image of China in Maugham's writing presents complex contradictions. On the one hand, he faithfully recorded the poverty and turmoil of Chinese society in the early 20th century, such as the "dirty streets" and "ragged people" from Kitty's point of view in *The Veil*. This kind of depiction not only originated from Maugham's personal visit to China in 1919 - the objective reality of people's poverty under the background of warlordism, but also reflected the cognitive limitations of Western intellectuals in the colonial context. At that time, the "Eastern Stagnation Theory" prevailed in Europe, and although Maugham tried to get rid of the cultural prejudice, his narrative still unconsciously continued the dichotomous framework of "civilization/barbarism". This portrayal is not a deliberate distortion, but a product of the cultural filter of the colonial era: China is both the mirror image of his critique of the hypocrisy of Western civilization and the unconscious symbol that carries the colonial imagination. As postcolonial scholars have pointed out, Maugham's writing on the Orient is not only a projection of his personal experience, but also participates in the construction of the "other" in the discourse of Western modernity.

Maugham's romanticism of the natural landscape of the Orient in *The Veil* is akin to the construction of the "idealized other" revealed by Said's theory of Orientalism. Through Katie's point of view, the novel presents the Chinese countryside as a poetic utopia-emerald-colored rice paddies, shepherd boys riding water buffaloes leisurely, and clear blue skies, all of which constitute the typical "idyllic imagination of the East" in Western literature. This kind of praise of natural scenery is not so much an objective depiction of the real China, but rather a way to satisfy the West's curiosity to consume the space of the "other" in the colonial context. As Said puts it, the Orient is both a demeaned "backward other" and an idealized "mysterious sanctuary", and this contradiction is reflected in *The Veil*: when Katie gazes at the exotic idyllic paintings, her sight is actually filtered by the "veil" of colonial discourse. The beautiful depiction of natural scenery and the novel's portrayal of the "squalor and chaos" of Chinese cities form a subtle inter text, together constructing a binary imaginary of the East as the "antithesis of civilization".

In addition, Maugham's unique perception of Eastern culture is demonstrated through the portrayal of diverse Chinese characters. In this novel, there are both "other" characters such as the silent poor and mercenary hawkers, such as "all the townspeople longing to be gazed at by the West" in the Hong Kong market, and romanticized images such as the mysterious and elegant Manchu princess: when Katie meets the cheongsam-clad princess in the abbey, "she wore a set of long, embroidered cheongsams, and was very slender, with her black hair coiled up into a bun in accordance with Manchu customs, her face thickly powdered with rouge and red, and her lidded eyes like a lake of inky water". Her black hair was coiled into a bun according to Manchu custom, her face was thickly coated with rouge and red powder, and her slanting eyes looked as if they were a lake of inky water. These seemingly contradictory characterizations reflect both the complexity of Chinese society and Maugham's cultural filters. The innovation of this study lies in the fact that a close reading of the text reveals that Maugham uses literary techniques such as contrasting narratives and superimposed imagery to build a bridge of cultural intercommunication in cross-cultural dialogues. For example, when the conversation between Katie and the Manchu princess is cut by the shadows of the bamboo curtains, this light and shadow imagery precisely becomes a metaphor for cultural misinterpretation. By comparing and analyzing the strategies of different characters, we can see how Maugham's perception of Chinese culture gradually shifted from gazing at curiosity to searching for the commonality of human nature. This cognitive evolution not only affects the level of characterization, but also reveals the deeper dilemmas and possibilities of cultural understanding in cross-cultural communication.

Maugham's portrayal of Japan is more reflected in his observation and depiction of the Japanese national character. The Japanese in his writing often presents the image of a tame, neat and restrained group. For example, when describing the residents of Honolulu, he specially mentioned "Japanese in white canvas pants" (Maugham, 1933, p. 47) and "Japanese women in traditional dress carrying babies" (Maugham, 1922, p. 12). This emphasis on order contrasts sharply with the "lazy and casual"

(Maugham, 1925, p. 89) portrayal of some of the Chinese characters in the novel, such as the visual contrast between the "bare-shouldered, fan-waving vendors" (Maugham, 1922, p. 34) in Hong Kong market and the "straight trouser lines" (Maugham, 1926, p. 62) of the Japanese. In composing social scenes, Maugham is more interested in highlighting the Japanese people's courtesy—"the curve of their spine when they bow is like the humility of the cherry blossom branches" (Maugham, 1933, p. 95), and this imaginative description not only shows the unique subtle aesthetics of Japanese culture, but also forms a juxtaposition of cultural symbols with the "rough way of shaking hands" (Maugham, 1922, p. 56) of some Chinese characters.

It should be noted that there is a clear difference between Maugham's portrayal of Chinese and Japanese characters. Chinese characters are often depicted with exotic curiosity, such as the Manchurian princess, "with her eyes averted under her heavy makeup" (Maugham, 1925, p. 42) while Japanese characters are more focused on group order, such as the dockworkers, "working together like precision gears" (Maugham, 1933, p. 78). This difference stems from Maugham's cultural imagination: China, as a symbol of ancient civilization, is endowed with more individual mysticism, while Japan, as a sample of the Orient in the transformation of modernization, is portrayed as a collectivist figure. Through this distinction, Maugham both fulfills the double expectation of Western readers for the East and implies a cultural reflection on the expansion of modernity.

Maugham's portrayal of the British national character contrasts sharply with his image of the Orient. He portrays the British people qualities of integrity, kindness and compassion, such as the "short, fat, red, tweed-suited missionary" (Maugham, 1922, p. 15) in "On the Chinese Screen", and this kind of portrayal stemmed from Maugham's identification with the local culture—as the colonial motherland, Britain's people were portrayed as purveyors of civilization and models of morality. However, when the view turns to the East, the framework of cultural imagination is subtly shifted: the Japanese are given a "tame sense of group order" (Maugham, 1933, p. 95), and through details such as "the straight crease of white canvas pants" (Maugham, 1926, p. 62), the civilized qualities of its modernization transformation are shown; the Chinese become "the other who is gazed at" (Maugham, 1925, p. 89), and not only retaining the exotic imagery of the Manchu princess in *The Veil* with her "mysterious ink-lake eyes" (Maugham, 1925, p. 42), but also through the languid image of a Hong Kong hawker shaking a fan on his bare shoulders, perpetuating the colonial image of the "other who is gazing at the other" (Maugham, 1922, p. 34). And through the lazy image of "Hong Kong hawkers shaking fans with bare shoulders" (Maugham, 1922, p. 34), Maugham perpetuates the dichotomy of civilization/barbarism in the colonial discourse.

This difference stems from Maugham's schema of cultural cognition: Britain as a mirror image of self-projection, carrying an idealized civilized imagination; Japan as an understandable "other", becoming a sample of the modernization of the Orient; and China as a frozen "other", not only to satisfy the consumption of curiosity, but also to serve as a reverse mirror image to critique the

hypocrisy of the West. This cognitive split is especially obvious in the portrayal of missionaries—the British missionary's "dotted tie and social warmth" symbolizes civilized indoctrination, while the Japanese's "cherry blossom-like bowing curve" suggests cultural taming, and the Chinese people always remain as the object to be gazed at, in the oscillation between the "dirty streets" and the "poetic idylls", becoming the victim of colonialism. The Chinese people have always been the object of gaze, in the swing between "dirty streets" and "poetic idylls", becoming the victims of colonial discourse.

In portraying the image of France, Maugham shows the complex cultural contradictions in the colonial context. On the one hand, he portrays the passion of France as a spreader of Catholic civilization through the image of the missionary in "On the Chinese Screen"-the missionary, who experienced life and death three times, still insisted on spreading the faith, which embodies the idealistic spirit of the French. But on the other hand, Maugham depicts his downtrodden appearance wrapped in a tattered overcoat and wearing a Chinese sable hat, suggesting the predicament of French colonial practice. Comparing the image of England, it can be seen that Maugham did not simply praise England and disparage France. The "tweed suits and polka-dot ties" of the British missionaries show the cultural pride of the colonial mother country, while the "frenzied sermons" of the French missionaries expose the violent nature of colonial expansion. This contrast is not a black-and-white judgment, but a revelation of the common problem of colonialism: whether it is British moral superiority or French religious fanaticism, they are all different manifestations of colonial rule.

Maugham further reflects on the contradictions of colonial culture through the image of France. The French missionaries tried to tame China with religion, but the survival wisdom of the Chinese people under colonial oppression, such as the vitality of Hong Kong hawkers, is a silent rebellion against the colonial culture. They built a flexible survival strategy through guerrilla-style business practices, such as mobile stalls and illegal street vending, and institutional games, such as bribing officials and exploiting policy loopholes, in the gaps of the colonial government's supervision. This way of writing allows Maugham to go beyond a simple anti-colonial stance and to show the complexity of cultural interactions: criticizing the hypocrisy of colonialism and recognizing the inevitability of the collision of different cultures.

3. Analysis of Intercultural Communication Perspectives in Maugham's Works

3.1 Cultural Superiority and Prejudice

Intercultural Communication is marked in literary discourse numerous ways. Maugham, as an important writer in the 20th century British literary world, his works are inevitably permeated with the sense of cultural superiority of the western society, especially the sense of white superiority. This sense of superiority stems to a large extent from the economic prosperity brought about by Europe's colonial expansion and the Industrial Revolution in modern times, which has led to the remarkable achievements of Western society in both material civilization and spiritual culture. This sense of

achievement has gradually transformed into a sense of cultural superiority, believing that Western civilization is superior while the cultures of other countries are backward and barbaric.

In Maugham's works, the sense of white superiority often manifests itself in the disparagement and rejection of foreign cultures. In *The Moon and Sixpence*, the main character, Charles Strickland, although a talented painter, behaves in a way that is completely contrary to the moral norms of Western society. However, when he comes to a small island in the Pacific Ocean, he is "tolerated" (Maugham, 1919, p. 245) by the local culture, and finally accomplishes his artistic pursuit. The "tolerance" here actually implies the local culture's tolerance and acceptance of Western culture, but it also reflects the superiority of Western culture in the local culture. The formation of this idea was closely related to the social and cultural climate of the British nation and Europe as a whole. This superiority is not only embodied in material civilization, but also reinforced through the construction of dichotomies at the spiritual and cultural levels. In *Orientalism*, Said (1978) writes "The East is irrational, decadent, immature, and "different"; therefore, the West is rational, moral, mature, and "normal". Said points out that the West establishes its superiority by defining the rational West and the irrational East, and shapes the East as the other that needs to be taught. The "tolerance" of Strickland in Maugham's Pacific islands is essentially an implicit identification with this Orientalist narrative—the more the local culture is portrayed as "tolerant and backward", the more it reflects the "normal superiority" of Western civilization. The violence of such cultural representations, just as Said criticized the "politics of knowledge production", all academic research on the Orient implies power relations, and Maugham's creations have unconsciously become complicit in colonial discourse.

However, the sense of white superiority has also brought about many negative effects. It has led to misunderstanding and prejudice of western society towards foreign cultures, making westerners often lack understanding and respect when facing foreign cultures. This kind of prejudice not only hinders the development of cross-cultural communication, but also intensifies the conflicts and contradictions between different cultures. Such prejudice not only hinders cross-cultural exchanges, but also creates deep-rooted conflicts in the interaction between Eastern and Western cultures. In the field of education, for example, when Western teachers teach colonial history with a "civilization mission" mentality, they often adopt a single perspective to glorify colonial aggression, which directly triggers the cultural trauma of students from colonial backgrounds. 2019, an international school in London led to a collective protest of Latin American students due to the expression of "discovering a new continent means saving the primitive tribes" in the lesson plan. Similar conflicts are common in the management of multinational enterprises: Western managers often regard direct expression as "honesty", while Asian employees are used to implicit communication, a difference that is often misinterpreted as "inefficiency", but in fact reflects the hegemony of cultural discourse in power relations.

At the family level, cultural superiority leads to inter generational cognitive dissonance. Maugham's British missionaries are obsessed with "reforming" Chinese believers by requiring them to give up the

practice of ancestor worship, and this imposition of cultural norms leads to intense conflicts. As in the Hong Kong conflict documented in “On the Chinese Screen”, British businessmen imposed Western commercial rules, completely ignoring the local culture of “network of relationships”, which ultimately led to the breakdown of trade negotiations. These conflicts are essentially a tug-of-war between cultural hegemony and counter-hegemony, revealing the real danger of cultural superiority. Sun Jing (2004) also pointed out that Western cultural hegemony imposes its own values to achieve cultural domination, and this hegemonic behavior provokes resistance from oppressed cultures, which is in fact a form of implicit anti-hegemonic practice.

In Maugham’s works, prejudice and stereotyping of different cultures are also reflected from time to time. Literary works spread China’s image and culture to the world readers in written form, but due to specific stereotypes rooted in colonial discourse, nationalist ideologies emphasizing Western superiority, and cognitive frameworks shaped by Sino-Western power dynamics, they are also affecting the formation of China’s image. When depicting China, he tends to portray Chinese people as hardworking and thrifty but lacking creativity. Although this kind of portrayal reflects to a certain extent some characteristics of the Chinese society at that time, it also carries obvious prejudices and stereotypes. This kind of prejudice and stereotype not only affected Maugham’s understanding of Chinese culture, but also created interpretive barriers for Western readers through reinforcing binary narratives of "civilized West vs. backward East" and suppressing multifaceted cultural representations.

The formation of prejudice and stereotypes often stems from the fear and misunderstanding of unknown cultures. Maugham’s portrayal of non-Western cultures, while showing a certain amount of curiosity and respect, is not without traces of stereotyping. For example, the Chinese people in his writing are often portrayed as hardworking but lacking in creativity. Although this portrayal partly reflects the actual situation of Chinese society at that time, there is also a tendency to be oversimplified and one-sided.

The formation of such prejudices and stereotypes partly stemmed from the context and cultural environment in which Maugham lived. At that time, Western societies had limited knowledge of non-Western cultures, and tended to obtain information through travelers’ journals, missionary reports, and other channels, which were often subjective and one-sided, thus exacerbating the formation of prejudices and stereotypes. According to Colonialist Tendencies in Maugham’s Novels (Wu, 2013, pp. 34-37), he referred to the indigenous people as “inferior, soulless beings” who “crawled at the feet of the British, existing only as physical objects under British colonial rule.” This description reflects his view of the indigenous people as a “barbaric, deceitful” group, and he even recorded their extreme behavior of “cutting off the heads of their enemies as trophies”.

3.2 Cultural Identity and Sense of Belonging

Maugham’s views on different countries do in essence reflect his deep identification with British culture.

As a British writer, Maugham grew up under the cultivation of British culture, and this upbringing made him naturally form a respect for British culture. In his works, British culture is often depicted as a model of rationality, justice and freedom, and this way of depiction undoubtedly reflects his deep affection for British culture. The depiction of British society, culture and values can often be seen in Maugham's works. He demonstrates the unique charm and influence of British culture through the protagonist's speech, behavior, living environment and storyline. This way of portrayal not only allows readers to feel the charm of British culture, but also further strengthens Maugham's respect for British culture. In his works, Maugham reviewed the history of Britain many times, especially those historical events and characters closely related to British culture. This kind of review not only expresses his respect for British history, but also reflects his cherishing of British cultural traditions.

Although Maugham spent his early years in France, he always maintained a deep cultural umbilical cord with England. However, this spiritual bloodline connection did not translate into a sense of belonging at the real level, but instead projected a complex sense of spiritual alienation in his heart. The generation of this sense of alienation stems from his sober insight into the ills of British society—when the spiritual heritage of the Victorian era encounters the demoralization of modern civilization, and when the strict barriers of the hierarchical system and the moral fissures of the imperial narrative become more and more prominent, Maugham's double identity as a marginalized person of culture not only gives him the sharpness of criticism, but also exacerbates the drift of his spirit. drifting. It is worth noting that this estrangement was by no means a prelude to a cultural rupture. Despite the fact that Maugham (1948) always kept a distance from the mainstream society in the dimension of reality, he regarded the British cultural tradition as an unshakable value anchor point in his spiritual spectrum. The recurring images of British culture in his literary creation are not simply nostalgic symptoms, but "ideal cultural archetypes" established through artistic reconstruction. This writing strategy reflects a profound dialectical thinking: while deconstructing the cultural symptoms of the real society, literary imagination is used to reconstruct the foundation of cultural identity. Cross-cultural experience further enhances the complexity of this identity. In his creative practice of traveling around the world, Maugham consciously used British culture as a cultural prism for recognizing the other. When the exotic imagination of Orientalism and the experience fragments of Mediterranean civilization are recoded through the interpretative framework of British culture, this cultural contrast produces a double effect: not only confirming the stability of British cultural characteristics in the dialogue of differences, but also revealing the mobility of self-identity in the cultural hybridization. This paradoxical identity of "the farther away from home, the more eager to return" is particularly evident in the travel writing - the geographical and spatial detachment, on the contrary, gives rise to a stronger spiritual nostalgia (Maugham, 1930, p. 112). The deep operation of this identification mechanism is essentially a never-ending cultural search for roots. Maugham always takes British culture as an implicit reference point and explores national identity under the perspective of comparative culture. When the

hierarchical order of the colonies, the folk traditions of Southern Europe, and the primitive worship of the Pacific Islands are placed in the interpretive framework of the British cultural experience, the refraction of different cultural spectra eventually converge into a deeper understanding and confirmation of the local culture. This writing strategy of reconstructing one's own cultural identity through the mirror image of the other is just like the process of splitting light through a prism: the diversity of exotic experiences, on the contrary, strengthens the stability of the cultural archetype.

Maugham's identification with British culture was not blindly conducted. He saw both the advantages and charms of British culture and its drawbacks and shortcomings. In his works, there are both praise and nostalgia for British culture and criticism and reflection on British social problems. This coexistence of criticism and inheritance reflects the complexity of Maugham's identification with British culture. In the process of cross-cultural communication, Maugham always maintains his identification with British cultural identity. Through his works, he shows the differences and similarities between British culture and other cultures, and at the same time expresses his pride and perseverance in British cultural identity. This perseverance not only reflects Maugham's love and respect for British culture, but also makes him more confident and determined in cross-cultural communication.

4. The Link between Intercultural Communication Perspectives and National Cultural Identity

4.1 Cultural Identity in Criticism and Reflection

Intercultural communication is unique from cultural communication in that it is transnational, intercultural and interlingual. In Maugham's works, he often reinforces the British cultural identity by criticizing the cultures of Western countries. In A Friend in Need, Maugham reveals the hypocrisy and moral corruption in Western culture by depicting the behavior of missionaries in Japan. The missionary insists that the prostitute return to the United States in order to maintain the so-called "moral decency" even though he knows that she will be imprisoned if she returns. This kind of ruthless exposure and criticism is actually a reflection and questioning of Western culture. Through this critique, Maugham reinforced the concepts of morality and justice in British culture, thus further consolidating British cultural identity.

When Maugham depicted the Eastern culture in his works, he often compared it with the British culture, thus reflecting the reflection on the British culture. In *The Moon and Sixpence*, the protagonist Strickland gives up the comfortable life of English society and goes to Tahiti to pursue art. In this foreign land, he finds inner peace and the persistent pursuit of art. This way of portrayal not only demonstrates the unique charm of Eastern culture, but also reflects the constraints on art, freedom and personal pursuits in British culture. Through comparison, Maugham allows readers to see the limitations and inadequacies of British culture, thus triggering reflection and scrutiny of British culture.

4.2 Deepening and Expanding Cultural Identity

Maugham's work deepens the understanding of British culture through the lens of cross-cultural exchange. The novel carries a special mission and plays an important role in the construction of a nation's nationality and the cohesion and development of national consciousness. By depicting the exchanges and collisions between different cultures, he allows readers to see the plurality and inclusiveness of British culture. In *The Blade*, the protagonist, Larry, begins to explore the wisdom and philosophies between different cultures after experiencing the trauma of war. He gradually realizes the true meaning and significance of life through exchanges and studies with his Indian guru. This experience of cross-cultural exchange not only gives Larry a deeper understanding of British culture, but also allows the reader to see the commonalities and differences between British culture and other cultures.

The evolution and deepening of cultural identity are equally important themes. In the process of intercultural communication, the communication subject's choice of his own cultural identity will have an important impact on the effectiveness of intercultural communication. By depicting the growth and metamorphosis of the main character in different cultural contexts, Maugham shows the dynamic evolution of cultural identity. In *The Blade*, Larry gradually transforms from a confused youth to a profound and wise philosopher, a journey that not only presents his absorption and integration of different cultural nutrients, but also maps out the complexity and plurality of cultural identity construction. This gradual deepening of identity is not only the trajectory of individual spiritual growth, but also a vivid interpretation of the reshaping of cultural identity in the midst of collision.

5. Similarities in the Images of Countries and the Reasons for Similarities

5.1 Positive Images

The similarities in Maugham's assessment of the positive images of various countries (e.g., China, France, Japan, and England) are mainly reflected in the praise of their respective cultural characteristics, the depiction of natural landscapes, and the affirmation of certain social qualities.

For example, Maugham's British culture is characterized by integrity, kindness and compassion, and French culture by romance, passion and the pursuit of freedom. This praise reflects the writer's deep emotion and high recognition of his own culture. This kind of depiction transcends national boundaries and becomes a common positive element in the image of each country. The affirmation of social qualities, such as the helpfulness and good communication of the British, is also reflected in the images of certain countries. These qualities are also common values pursued by human beings, thus becoming one of the positive similarities in the images of various countries.

The reason for the similarity is mainly due to the commonality of human cultures and the writers' deep feelings for their native cultures. Despite the differences in the cultures of different countries, the

common emotions, values and pursuits of human beings make the images of different countries show certain similarities in the positive aspects.

5.2 Negative Images

The negative aspects of Maugham's image of countries, on the other hand, are mainly embodied in his criticism of social reality, his revelation of certain social phenomena and his reflection of certain cultural ills.

As mentioned in 3.1, Maugham's portrayal of the poverty, backwardness and chaos of Chinese society reflects the reality of Chinese society at that time to a certain extent. This kind of criticism, though subjective, reveals certain problems of the Chinese society at that time. Another example is Maugham's revelation of the fanaticism and hypocrisy shown by French missionaries in spreading Christianity in China, and his criticism of excessive moral restraints and hypocritical morality in British society. All these revelations and criticisms reflect the writer's deep insight into the social reality of the time and his critical spirit.

5.3 Maugham's Multidimensional Cognition of the World

The multiple dimensions of Maugham's cognitive schema can be seen through the cross-checking analysis of the cultural mirrors of different countries. His cultural cognitive framework presents a significant dialectical feature: on the one hand, he retains a strong identification with his mother culture, regards the British cultural tradition as the root of his spiritual genealogy, and continues to construct the narrative coordinates of his cultural identity in his literary creations; on the other hand, he always maintains the conscious awareness of the cultural subject, and carries out field research observation and records of different civilizations with anthropological in-depth description strategy. This cognitive schema provides us with an analytical framework for understanding cultural diversity—in revealing the generative logic and value kernel of different cultural systems, Maugham not only highlights the incommensurable quality of cultural traits, but also emphasizes the symbiotic possibilities of civilization dialogue.

Specifically, Maugham's view of culture presents three progressive levels: firstly, the critical inheritance of local culture, which guards the civilization tradition while deconstructing the cultural ills; secondly, the empathetic understanding of other cultures, which rejects the Orientalist style of cultural curiosity and seeks for the deep dialogue of civilization; and ultimately, it points to a philosophy of culture that transcends the dichotomy, which constructs the common value under the premise of recognizing the differences. This cognitive paradigm not only promotes the comparative philosophy, but also the comparative philosophy of civilization. This cognitive paradigm not only promotes the methodological innovation of the discipline of comparative literature, but also provides a practical paradigm for cross-cultural communication in the context of globalization - it inspires us to create a new cultural increment in the mutual appreciation of civilizations, and to build the spiritual cornerstone of the community of human destiny in the coexistence of differences.

6. Conclusion

In the process of reading Maugham's literary works, I deeply feel the rich cultural meaning injected into the texts by his unique cross-cultural narrative perspective. This writer, who traveled between the East and the West, built a bridge to foreign cultures for readers through his literary imagination full of tension. Reading these classic texts is not only a process of literary appreciation, but also a cultural dialogue across time and space—Maugham, with his keen observation, weaves the spiritual pictures of different civilizations into colorful narrative scrolls. It is worth noting that Maugham's exotic writing is by no means a simple cultural curiosity. His juxtaposition of Eastern monasteries and Western salons not only reveals his astonished gaze at unfamiliar civilizations, but also reflects his deep questioning of local culture. The construction of this "other" mirror is essentially the writer's conscious scrutiny of his own cultural identity. When Maugham depicts the philosophical thoughts of Indian ascetics, we can clearly see the spiritual folds of the elite class of the British Empire illuminated in the mirror image of foreign lands; when he portrays the primitive worship of the Pacific Islanders, the implicit criticism of Victorian values leaps between the lines. This strategy of cultural comparison makes his work a unique prism for decoding the dilemma of Western modernity. Maugham's cross-cultural narrative practice reveals new interpretive space in the context of globalization. The way he handles cultural collision-maintaining aesthetic distance without losing humanistic empathy—provides an important reference for contemporary cultural studies. Nowadays, when identity politics is becoming more and more prominent, revisiting the scenes of cultural encounters in Maugham's writings can help us understand the constructed relationship between the "self" and the "other" in a more dialectical way. Those tension-filled narrative fissures are like miniature laboratories of cultural exchange, revealing the eternal tension between power and imagination, misunderstanding and understanding in the dialogue of different civilizations.

The contemporary value of this kind of cross-cultural writing lies not only in its literary aesthetic revelation, but also in the practical wisdom it provides for intercultural dialogue. Maugham's literary practice proves that true cross-cultural understanding requires both the courage to "go out" and the consciousness to "return"—in the light of exotic experiences, we may be able to identify the palm prints of civilization more clearly, and safeguard the diversity of cultures amidst the wave of globalization. This may be the precious inspiration that Maugham's legacy gives to contemporary scholars.

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