Ethical Ideology of Contemporary British Universities from David Lodge’s Campus Novels

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Abstract. David Lodge is a world-famous British novelist and literary critic. He is best known for his "Campus Trilogy" which satirize academic life in universities, particularly his Changing Places and Small World. These campus novels show us some moral or ethical problems in universities, such as extramarital affair of the professors, the abnormal relationship between teachers and students, etc. This paper will explore the moral or ethical ideology reflected in these novels according to some mutual agreed standards of morality and ethic in China and in western countries. After analysis of the campus life in the stories, we can draw a conclusion that British universities are facing the deficiency of moral or ethical education. This deficiency of education has departed from the educational aim of universities to foster qualified talent with both of morality and ability. The research can also provide benefit and enlightenment to the construction of socialist core values in China.

Introduction

David Lodge is one of the most influential novelists and literature theoreticians now. He has produced famous works on literary study and criticism about 20 books, such as Language of Fiction (1966), The Novelist at the Crossroads (1971), Working with Structuralism (1981), The Art of Fiction (1992) and so on.

Until now, he has published 15 novels, including his campus novels. It is his popular campus trilogy Changing Place (1975), Small World (1984), and Nice Work (1988) that have been classed high in the world literature. As Randall Stevenson mentioned, “the trilogy reflected the more accessible role of universities in British life, and excitement of new forms of literary understanding at work within them, showing a corresponding readiness to move beyond conventional realist styles.”[1] All of these novels incorporate interpretation and practice of literary theories, well known for the writer’s use of both traditional and contemporary techniques. Lodge gave us realistic pictures of academia and different culture. In accordance with the content, Changing Places not only means two visiting professors exchanged their academic places, but also their wives. Small World is the continuation of Changing Places. It has been marked as a typical postmodernist work and reflects the society in England that time as well as the modern moral ethics of British universities. In Small World, David Lodge’s satire is not confined to two or several academics, but extended to the whole academic world. These two novels show us the dirty relationship between professors and students, as well as the desires of these so-called scholars. Therefore, it is worth of exploring the deficiency of moral or ethical education in UK universities according to the novels.

A university should cultivate her students in many fields or skills, such as critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills, ethical judgment skills, etc. That’s to say, a university does not only improve a student’s wide knowledge of liberal arts and sciences, but also includes fostering a student’s morality. So, we can say a university has the functions to cultivate students’ both knowledge and behavior. However, in the trilogy, the behaviors of some professors and students evidently depart from the educational functions of the universities. In the Trilogy, some absurd and immoral behaviors exist on campus. The campus becomes an unhealthy environment. Three typical cases of morbid sexual affairs show us the scholars’ immorality.
**Morbid Sexual Affairs of the Professors**

The most standards of morality are universal which refer to those intentions, decisions and actions that are proper or improper. “Morality may also be specifically synonymous with goodness or rightness and the word ‘ethics’ is commonly used interchangeably with ‘morality’.”[2] In the trilogy, the scholars’ extramarital relationship prove the corruption of the academic world. They are all obscene in different degrees to break the universal moral standard only for their original desires.

**Exchange of wives between Zapp and Swallow**

In the *Changing Places*, two professors, American Morris Zapp and English Philip Swallow, changed their respective wives after they changed their places as visiting scholars at each other’s university. In the *Small World*, they continue their morbid relationship.

Philip Swallow, professor in a fictional university located in Rummidge (modeled on Birmingham), took part in a half-year academic program that he would exchange as a visiting scholar with American professor, Morris Zapp in a university in the state of Euphoria (modeled on Berkeley in California). As the exchange progresses, each scholar has an affair with the other’s wife. After that it seemed that they were unwilling to come back to their original life because of their morbid relationship. “Well, you see, about ten years ago those two were nominated for our exchange scheme with Euphoria - in America, you know. Zapp came here for six months, and Swallow went to Euphoric State. Rumour has it that Zapp had an affair with Hilary Swallow, and Swallow with Mrs Zapp.” [3] From the depiction of these two couples in the *Changing Places*, the morbid ethical ideology in contemporary American and British academia has been exposed to readers.

Ethics, also called moral philosophy, is a branch of philosophy. “Ethics seeks to resolve questions of human morality by defining concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice and crime. As a field of intellectual enquiry, moral philosophy also is related to the fields of moral psychology, descriptive ethics, and value theory.” [4] Ethics are recognized today in three major areas of study, meta-ethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics. Meta-ethics determines truth values, normative ethics determines a person’s action in a specific situation or examines standards for the rightness and wrongness of actions, and applied ethics applies ethical theory to real-life situations. It is clear that these professors have violated the traditional standards of morality. Evidently, they are influenced strongly by the Sexual Revolution or Sexual Liberation, which “was a social movement that challenged traditional behavior related to sexuality and interpersonal relationships throughout the odes of behavior related to sexuality and interpersonal relationships throughout the United States and subsequently, the wide world, from the 1960s to the 1980s.” [5]

These two novels were published during this period. But the mainstream standards of morality lies still in traditional codes of behavior. Professors in a university should be the excellent models of morality for the students to follow. However, they have not impersonated as good examples of ethics and morality.

**Fulvia’s Private Life is not Moral**

Morgana Fulvia is an elegant married female professor from Italy. She indulges in seducing men so that her private life is debauched and full of absurdity. As a literate woman, she should know the consequence of seducing men, but her husband, Ernesto, is not mad for that and even involved in her absurdity.

The different social classes have the different view on moralities. However, the standards of morality are universal which should be obeyed by anybody. In the novels, Fulvia has her own peculiar opinion and she is not aware of her immoral behavior. She never feels guilty of her own self-indulgence experience. If she did have a right attitude towards the society, she would not go against the morality. Even though she is a professor teaching on the campus, she cannot get rid of the ideological restraints of morality.
Disgraceful Sexual Relation of the Scholars in the Small World

Professor’s status should enjoy the noble reputation, but in the trilogy, they show us only unhealthy relationships between the professors and other people from different social status. Everyone wants to obtain what he wants, but it is wrong to focus only on their enjoyment of desire.

Throughout the entire novel, the classical example of moral ethics is represented by Arthur and Song-mi Lee. They are altering their characters for each other with the moral order going down immorally.

“And Song-mi Lee, who came ten years ago from Korea on a Ford Foundation fellowship to sit at Arthur Kingfisher’s feet as a researcher student, and stayed to become his secretary, companion, amanuensis, masseuse and bedfellow, her life wholly dedicated to protecting the great man against the importunities of the academic world and soothing his despair at no longer being able to achieve an erection or an original thought……”[6]

In the process from being his student to his partner, the purpose hidden in Song-mi Lee’s heart becomes more and more manifested. Rather than her own embarrass image, it is her life that what she cares most about. It is not the love but benefits that exist between them. What they gain is much more than what they give to each other. In that period, Arthur made great contributions to the academic field. He cannot totally stand constraints of the moral requirements and pedagogical standards or rules.

Based on the beneficial purpose, Song-mi Lee always behaved as Arthur’s moral guide, which deeply guides her towards a deviated way. Meanwhile, Arthur cultivated Song-mi Lee’s education as well as her morality imperceptibly. That’s the reason why she becomes a well-educated girl, but she goes against morality. Arthur gives his support to her with all kinds of respects, so she thinks her fortune belonged to him so that her mind was distorted to be stick to his absurdity.

Unethical Relationship between Philip and his Postgraduate

In the novel, Philip is a supporter of the sexual revolution which challenged traditional codes of behavior related to sexuality and interpersonal relationship throughout the Western countries from the 1960s to the 1980s. The sexual revolution is also called sexual liberation included acceptance of sex outside of traditional monogamous relationships and pre-marital sex which are against traditional morality.

In fact, Philip Swallow has unethical attitudes towards the sexual affairs with students. He believes that “Sex with Hilary wasn’t the greatest erotic sensation in the world, but at least it was something. A temporary release from tension.” [7] Philip unconsciously implies that individual’s desire should be integrated with thoughts and self-fulfillment. In short, his pursuit of happiness is bound up with individual thoughts. Philip also said “sex is a sublimation of the work instinct.” [8] The pursuit of lust relates to a different life of freedom. In professors’ opinion, they don’t think physical pleasures are evil, while hard work and achievements are regarded as indications of inner desire. Material achievements are reward for virtues. Therefore, inner desire and virtues are the goals, while material achievements and the comfort of life are their accompanying results. It is clear that the ethical ideology is perfectly lost.

Philip is also a practitioner of sexual liberation and he has extramarital sex with his students. Philip Swallow has a rumor about his sexual affairs with students and Morris Zapp proved it soon. This is a typical example of incest. The female postgraduate made dispassionate act of sexual intercourse with Philip is intended only to pass her examination. She asked Philip to give her a favor with some threat words in her answer sheet. Philip Swallow, as a professor, has no any ethical ideology to begin his unethical relationship with his student. They do not consider that their action is immoral so that they never feel a little guilty or ashamed. They violated the basic standards or principles of morality or ethics. In Chinese traditional standards of ethics, teachers should act to the students as parents to their children. Therefore, this kind of incest should not happen on campus. The postgraduate is snobbish for her examination, while Philip regarded her as physical pleasures. His desire to resume his lust can only be attained by the acquisition of lust in the academic world. His moral judgment makes the relationship with others against the standard of the social ethics.
Conclusion
As one of the important contemporary writers, David Lodge has displayed social reality in the universities of UK and in the academia, especially the status quo of ethics and morals. He views that the misunderstanding of the contemporary Western academic world as the sole pursuit of fame and lust partly leads to the immorality. The scholars all included, embodiment of the contemporary campus, are the illustration of writer’s view that immorality corrupts the academic world, and people will never succeed in their inexhaustible pursuit for desires when they sacrifice inner moral virtues for the attainment of fame. In the novel, the writer urges the scholars of a reconsidering of the Western academic world and its influence on the society.

The uninhibited pursuit of physical pleasures results in moral and social decay. The campus has been corrupted by the vulgar pursuit of lust and fame so that the moral degeneration comes by. David Lodge’s ironical target is to all the scholars, which is about to expose the corruption of the academic world full of absurdity. David Lodge’s Campus Novels have provided warnings to academia that scholars or professors should set up correct view of ethical morality and noble view of live to become a good model of positive energy.

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References