

A Study on the Anti-Hero Phenomenon in Contemporary Chinese Literary Writing

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Abstract

As an important theoretical concept in the field of literature, "anti-hero" has had a significant impact on contemporary Chinese literary writing. To understand the definition of an anti-hero, it is first necessary to clarify the relationship between the anti-hero and the hero. At the same time, the anti-hero has the basic characteristics of the times and tragedy, which also reflects the relevant traces of China's social changes and the changes of the times to a certain extent. The evolution of the anti-hero image is also very complex, and with the dissolution of the hero image, the anti-hero gradually occupies a place in the history of literature. However, we also need to think about the value of anti-hero in the field of contemporary Chinese literature, and reflect on the practical significance of this literary concept.

Keywords

Anti-hero; Heroic Sigh; Features; Rheological; Practical significance.

1. Introduction

In the long history of literature, the traditional heroic image has always been the object of great efforts of ancient and modern Chinese and foreign writers, and their fearless heroism has composed a melodious human heroic epic. However, in the long journey of the development of literary history, "anti-hero" as a new literary concept has gradually appeared in contemporary Chinese literary writing. In contemporary Chinese literature, the moral character and ability of anti-heroes are different from those of traditional literary works in the minds of readers, and they are the opposite of great, mighty or noble heroes, and anti-heroes embody more of a slightly mean, indecent, depressed, incompetent or treacherous person. This kind of image attracts people's attention with its own duality, uncertainty and unique personality charm, alludes to various contradictions and realities in society, and triggers people's endless thinking and discussion.

2. Heroes and anti-heroes

Compared with the concept of "anti-hero", "hero" is familiar to everyone, and the concept of anti-hero can find its roots in the concept of hero. Hero refers to a great person who has high moral qualities, extraordinary intelligence and courage, and can build merits and achievements beyond ordinary people, and people's worship of heroes usually reflects people's belief in excellent qualities such as strength and morality, and represents the common ideal of mankind. With the changes and development of the times, hero worship gradually dissolved, and the awakening of ordinary people and the secularization of heroes shortened the distance between heroes and ordinary people, thus paving the way for the emergence of anti-heroes. "A number of anti-hero images have appeared in literary works, so that the noble heroic character is constantly degraded, that is, constantly disenchanting, de-divine and secularized."

2.1. The concept of heroes

When it comes to the concept of anti-hero, many people will find this literary concept very unfamiliar. And the counterpart of anti-hero, hero, is very familiar to people. Heroes have existed in Chinese history since ancient times, and they first appeared in mythology, such as Hou Yi, who shot down for nine days in a row in the traditional Chinese mythology collection. The Classic of Mountains and Seas, Kuafu, who never stopped chasing the sun, or Jingwei, who had the spirit of not giving up, these are all heroes who appear in ancient Chinese mythological works. They are extremely powerful in their own right, defying all difficulties and obstacles, and are unparalleled in the world. And the appearance of these mythical heroes epitomizes the common ideals of people in ancient times.

In contemporary Chinese society, there are also many heroes with the spirit of the new era, such as aerospace heroes, scientist heroes, etc. It is widely believed that these heroes are the patron saints of all mankind, the founders of a new society, and they have noble character, superior wisdom, and extraordinary ability. Although heroes are not perfect and have certain flaws to varying degrees, people still have high hopes for these heroes. At the same time, the continuous change of the image of these heroes since ancient times also shows that heroes will appear in different eras that fit the main discourse power of that era. Therefore, hero is a concept that is constantly evolving, and with the development of the times, its connotation and image are constantly enriched and expanded.

2.2. The concept of anti-hero

Compared to hero, people may think that the relatively unfamiliar concept of anti-hero is synonymous with villain at first glance, and it is extremely easy to confuse the two. But in reality, anti-hero and villain are two different concepts. The anti-hero followed the concept of hero, and its appearance marked the collapse of people's ideal life, and the importance of secularization in this process gradually became prominent.

The concept of the hero itself is intrinsically dissolving, and with the continuous self-deconstruction of the category of the hero and the continuous secularization of this image, the image of the anti-hero is born. "Because heroes are not perfect and have various shortcomings, this dissolving nature of the hero itself gives the soil for the emergence and development of the concept of anti-hero." With the drastic changes of the times, people gradually become disappointed in real life and no longer blindly worship heroes. Although they still expect heroes to save them from fire and water, as humans in ancient times did, the blows of reality often make them doubt the authenticity and rationality of this kind of heroism. As a result, anti-heroes came into being, and people used them to make up for their lack of spiritual value. However, it should be noted that although the characteristics of anti-hero and hero are different, both concepts are expressions of the same ideal.

Therefore, the "anti-hero" is an alternative hero who is opposed to the image of the typical hero, and is contrary to the traditional hero in terms of spirit, character, ability, etc. Anti-heroes often appear in literary works, on the surface such characters are humble and trivial, cynical, disgusted with the social politics of their time, and even brutal and cruel, but their motives are not evil, and the emergence of the concept of anti-hero reflects the author's decomposition and dismantling of the concept of hero.

3. The evolution of the image of anti-heroes in contemporary Chinese literary writing

In contemporary Chinese literary writing, the reasons for the emergence of the anti-hero are complex. Anti-hero first appeared in Western civilization, and Chinese society gradually fell into a desperate situation of thought after the catastrophe, and people's mentality towards heroes

is also undergoing a subtle change, so anti-heroes came into being. At the same time, China's local anti-heroes have also undergone a gradual transition from the initial worship of mythical heroes to the evolution of anti-heroes.

3.1. The reasons for the emergence of anti-heroes in contemporary China

Anti-hero has recently become more and more a focus of discussion and attention in China's literary and art circles. Throughout the history of world literature, the transformation of any mode of literary creation, the emergence of literary trends, and the transformation of literary images are all closely related to the transformation and transformation of society, and the same is true in the field of contemporary Chinese literature. The emergence and development of anti-heroes in contemporary Chinese society are also rooted in the continuous reform of Chinese society and the continuous changes in ideology and culture.

3.2. Gaining vitality: The gradual loosening of Chinese politics

There is a very important and controversial period in the literary history of contemporary China, that is, the seventeen-year literary period after the founding of the People's Republic of China. During this period, the creation of any writer needs to closely follow the pace of politics and serve politics. Due to the limitations of the political environment at the time, the writers of the seventeen-year literary period did not express themselves much in the field of personal and realistic criticism.

Because the environment at that time did not give the writers the opportunity to conduct in-depth exploration, it was difficult for their works to reveal the times to the bottom, and they could only slowly grope forward under the premise of political correctness, and they would be criticized if they were not careful. For example, the leaders at that time did not use literary standards but used class ideas to criticize the movies *The Legend of Wu Xun* and Xiao Yemu's *Between Our Husband and Wife*. Affected by the current situation at that time, it was difficult for writers to penetrate into the realm of human nature, and it was difficult for writers to make in-depth and transcendent reflections on society and individuals. Therefore, the writers of this period were dancing in shackles when creating literature, and the literary genres and literary themes expressed were strictly limited, and the writers' own creative subjectivity could not be fully realized in the process.

After China's reform and opening up, literature and art no longer served politics, the genre of literary creation increased, and the tightly bound hands of writers were finally liberated and allowed to carry out literary creation freely. Therefore, since the 80s of the last century, more and more characters with the consciousness of human subjectivity have entered the vast ocean of Chinese literary creation. Writers of literature in the new era have broken the spell imposed by the previous official literature textbooks, and in the image of the characters, they have broken through the limitations of the singular revolutionary hero model in the previous literary works with the group portrait of anti-heroes, forming a prosperous situation in which a hundred flowers bloom.

3.3. Gradual Deepening: The Radiating Influence of Western Literature

With the gradual development of the market economy and the nourishment of the political soil, the Chinese literary circles have gained the opportunity to exchange and learn from the West, so the anti-hero and black humor in Western literature have gradually influenced the shaping process of China's "anti-hero" literary image. Black humor is a unique literary art that replaces painful feelings with laughter and uses absurd forms to vent painful feelings. Influenced by these new art styles from Western literature, the creators consciously show the disharmony between the individual and the environment with a helpless and ironic attitude through the description of the social oppression and the absurd world suffered by the individual, and further distort and magnify the disharmony until it is deformed, thus making this incongruity

appear more ridiculous and absurd, and at the same time giving people a sense of bitterness and heaviness.

In this process, the traditional literary image has also undergone a distinct change, with the hero becoming more and more downward and vulgar, while the anti-hero has gradually appeared in the pen of writers such as Mo Yan and Yu Hua by taking advantage of the east wind of literary exchanges between China and the West. "Black humor is used to describe anti-heroes, and anti-heroes reveal black humor." In the depiction of anti-heroes, black humor and paradox are often the finishing touch. Such as Yu Zhanao in Mo Yan's novel *Red Sorghum*, Yang Fei in Yu Hua's novel *The Seventh Day*, Fugui in "Alive" and other characters. These anti-heroic images with their own distinctive characteristics have added a different color to the field of contemporary Chinese literature.

4. The evolution of the image of heroes in China

"Anti-hero" is the result of the gradual development and dissolution of the concept of hero of followers, and it also has an extremely complex development process. Therefore, before clarifying the flow of anti-heroes, it is necessary for us to clarify the flow process of hero images in China.

4.1. First appearance: The appearance of the hero as a god.

In the ancient times of our country, due to the low productivity and the harsh living environment, people relied on their rich imagination and fantasy to create many traditional heroes. The heroic images admired in ancient Chinese heroic myths are often highly meritorious and virtuous. These heroic images that appeared in mythology were of noble character, and in the hearts of the people of the primitive tribes at that time, they were representatives of the gods, and they were highly respected, representing the highest ideals of mankind at that time.

These heroes have their own divine powers and can do things that are difficult for ordinary people to do, so people also worship these mythical heroes very much, and place their good wishes on them, hoping that these heroes can take care of themselves. Therefore, in ancient China, heroes appeared in people's lives as "gods", which also laid the foundation for the heroic image of ancient China for thousands of years later.

4.2. Gradual dissolution: The hero is an ordinary person

With the improvement of the level of social production, people have gradually come out of ignorance. While the process of human civilization and civilization is accelerating, people's sense of worship of mythical heroes is gradually decreasing. People's self-consciousness began to emerge, and in ancient China, market novels slowly appeared, putting ordinary people in the main position and describing them at great length. People are also turning their gaze to worldly life.

The process of human civilization is gradually accelerating, and culture is closer to people's lives and pays more attention to people, which is also a manifestation of the improvement of people's status. For example, Li Zehou wrote in *The Course of Beauty*: "The literature and art of the Han Dynasty reflected deeds and actions; The Wei and Jin dynasties and the sculptures of the Northern Dynasties express the spirit and speculation; Tang poems and Song lyrics, Song and Yuan landscapes show their bosom and mood; Then the literature and art of the Ming and Qing dynasties, represented by novels and operas, depict secular human feelings. It can be seen that ancient Chinese people gradually turned their attention to themselves, and secular human feelings became more and more important in ancient Chinese literature, representing that our culture is no longer mainly based on singing and worshipping mythological heroes, but focusing

on the lives of citizens, showing the secular human feelings that directly pay attention to the requirements of citizens.

From the beginning of the dragon and phoenix, the sculpture culture that shows the tall body of the Buddha, which reflects the insignificance of people's actual status, to the later things that show the improvement of human subjectivity, such as the landscape paintings of the Song Dynasty, which depict the real things in the world and are in people's lives. "In Lu Xun's *New Story*, we see that mythological heroes and sages such as Nuwa, Houyi, Boyi, and Shuqi have fallen from the altar and become mediocre ordinary people". In the novel in which the heroic protagonist of the previous text is uncrowned or demoted, the original heroic image becomes a small, vulgar, and dull anti-hero image. The image of the protagonist in the novel of "new story". In the changes of the times, the heroes gradually faded from those lofty cloaks, and the divinity of the heroes and females was gradually weakened, becoming more and more like ordinary people. Eventually, the "anti-hero" appeared in people's field of vision and became the object of worship in the trivial and mundane world.

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