

Literary Creation of Zhang Ailing based on the Educational System of the Republic of China

Jieqiong Zhou

Xijing University, 1 Xijing Road, Chang'an District, Xi'an City, Shaanxi Province, China.

Jieqiong.zhou@163.com

Keywords: Zhang ailing; The republic of china; Educational system; Literary creation

Abstract: The education a person receives, especially in his early years, has a vital influence on the formation of his thoughts and emotions. To a certain extent, the life experience of a writer and the education accepted in school after his childhood play an important role in the direction of his life. It is the same for Zhang Ailing. The unique life experience made Zhang Ailing accept the edification of Chinese traditional culture and western modern civilization since her childhood, which played an important role in the literary creation for Zhang Ailing. Based on the author's learning and practical experience, this paper first analyzes Zhang Ailing's educational experience based on the educational system of the Republic of China, and then studies the influence of these experiences on the literary creation style of Zhang Ailing.

1. Introduction

Based on the educational system of the Republic of China, on the one hand, the knowledge of western literature, history, geography and religion provided by modern education offers Zhang Ailing modern vision for her writing[1]. On the other hand, the classical literature in the traditional learning of Zhang Ailing's family presents a new era based on the light of modern educational thought. In Zhang Ailing's literary works, the dimensions of human nature obscure and suppress the dimensions of nation and even politics[2]. This kind of shielding and squeezing naturally limit Zhang Ailing's literary works with rich social connotation, thus it obscures the social strength while highlighting the depth of human nature. Zhang Ailing's literary creation is closely related to the educational system of the Republic of China. Therefore, the educational system of the Republic of China has a profound influence on Zhang Ailing's literary creation.

2. The Educational Experience of Zhang Ailing Based on the Educational System of the Republic of China

Zhang Ailing springs from noble ancestors, her great-grandfather is the famous Li Hongzhang, and her grandfather was Zhang Peilun, a famous "Qing school" representative in the late Qing Dynasty. When Zhang Ailing was a little child, her family invited a private teacher to explain the traditional classics to her and her brother[3]. There were still private teachers teaching her younger brother even after Zhang Ailing going to Shanghai to attend primary school. She went home and studied ancient poetry from the private teacher after school. Zhang Ailing showed extraordinary talents in her childhood, "She can recite Tang poetry at the age of three, write family tragedy novel at seven years old, and try to create utopian novel at eight years old". Her ancient poems were encircled and pointed by her teachers, and her unconventional father praised her a lot. There is no doubt that the profound traditional culture in her literary creation comes from her early experience. Moreover, Zhang Ailing's mother and aunt accepted modern ideas, and Zhang Ailing studied piano, oil painting and English, read modern novels, and initially came into contact with modern western civilization under their influence, "She has the demeanor of a foreign lady". In 1929, Zhang Ailing entered Huang's Primary School which is a new-style school with the support of her mother, and began to receive formal modern school education. Shortly thereafter, Zhang Ailing was admitted to

the San Maria Girls' School in Shanghai. When Zhang Ailing was 19, she was admitted to the University of London in 1939, but failed to move to the University of Hong Kong because of the war. After reading for three and a half years, Zhang Ailing had to suspend her studies and return from Hong Kong to Shanghai in the second half of 1942 because of the Pacific War outbreak. All the documents in the university were destroyed by the war. Zhang Ailing, who came first in her studies, could not prove that she had worked hard for three and a half years[4].

The restless fear of war and the uncertainty of the world were later written into her works. After returning to Shanghai, Zhang Ailing lived with her aunt, Zhang Maoyuan. They lived on the sixth floor of an apartment at 192 Changde Road, Jing'an Temple, which was a tall building that could overlook all living beings in Shanghai at that time. Soon, Zhang Ailing became an overnight sensation with extremely unique insight and light and elegant writing style in the early 1940s. Legend and Rumour became the culmination of her writing career. The third issue of "Heaven and Earth" in December 1943 published an article named Interest in apartment life written by Zhang Ailing. The topic was very common, just as some lazy teachers today, who casually use this topic for students to do the proposition composition. However, under the unsurprising topic, Zhang Ailing made a marvellous article[5]. By 1944, in just two years, Zhang Ailing became the most famous female writer in Shanghai with novels collection Legend and prose collection Rumour. Since then, Zhang Ailing settled overseas because of various reasons and her literary influence was weakened. It was not until the 1980s and 1990s that she reappeared in the visual field of the public.

3. The Literary Style of Zhang Ailing Based on the Educational System of the Republic of China

3.1 Two Kinds of Artistic Styles: Heavy and Leisurely.

The impact of Hong Kong's schooling on Zhang Ailing's spiritual world is enormous. As a public sphere, modern schools have influenced Zhang Ailing's creation with its unique campus atmosphere and colorful community activities. During this period, it allows writers to experience the cruel scene of war, the impermanence and illusion of human life and death, and the fragility of life's stability. In the great changes of society, in the face of disaster, everything has lost its certainty, everything has become insecure, and the stability of the individual world is difficult to guard. Just as Zhang Ailing recalls the experience of the besieged city: "Everything is vague, shrunk and unreliable. We can not go home, our home may no longer exist". In her view, the world has become chaotic and unreasonable. The sense of life stability and security seems like rare and precious items and becomes distant, and the uncertainty of life and the chance of fate become more conspicuous and unpredictable[6].

In troubled times, the individual strength is pale and insignificant. It seems like a boat floating in a rough sea and is unable to steer its course. The only thing that is waiting for them is destroy. She walks back step by step in front of reality, from wanting to study to wanting to marry, from wanting to find an ideal partner to seizing the possible opportunity of Qiao Qiqiao, from wanting to marry to being a lover, from being a lover to realizing Qiao Qiqiao's cheating but still marrying him. Among the female characters written by Zhang Ailing, there are not many happy endings, and Bai Liusu is one of them. If there is no war, the only way waiting for Bai Liusu is to be a "mistress". However, the fall of Hong Kong unintentionally helps her in time. She marries, and escalates to "Mrs Fan". The ending of these characters is unexpected to them. Under the impact of a great real disaster, their subjective consciousness is shattered. Since their struggle is futile, it is better to live in a shiftless way. Their outlook on life is grey and tragic, which fully reveals Zhang Ailing's tragic outlook on life. As American scholars have pointed out, Zhang Ailing's outlook on life is tragic and she is a "thorough pessimist".

Zhang Ailing feels that her life has a kind of "lost threat" from the times, so she constantly issues a sigh of "long suffering, short life". Zhang Ailing is acutely aware that she belongs to the era of Japanese occupation of Shanghai, not the future. She is soberly aware that Japan's defeat does not mean the end of a troubled era, but the end of her own time. Her time appears in rush because of

Japan's invasion and will vanish because of Japanese defeat. Since the times are hasty, short, and the future will not belong to herself, only the present belongs to her. So Zhang Ailing, like most ancient literati, often laments that "life is like a dream, such as the morning dew". But the difference is that, Zhang Ailing does not drink excessively and is not cynical, but savors the reality of life with a happy mood, and finds the fun of life in the secular world[7]. Food, clothing, film, music, painting, religion and so on, all of them become her favorite topic. The quiet narration and soft words make us feel the yearning and concern of the young woman writer for worldly life.

Although Zhang Ailing shows pessimistic attitude towards life, but she is not tired of the world. On the whole, Zhang Ailing's literary creation is obviously influenced by this view, and shows two distinct artistic styles: One is to tell the story of destruction or depravity one by one with the form of "legend", which shows the writer's tragic outlook on life; The other is that in the face of catastrophe and suffering, Zhang Ailing does not fall into the mire of despair, but immerses herself in the private world of "whispering", and she often seeks worldly pleasure from her personal life in order to forget or escape from the heavy reality. The former contains a heavy critical consciousness. In the novels of *Legend*, the writer always watches coldly from the sidelines, looks straight at the cruel life, ruthlessly reveal and whip the ugly soul of human nature to produce a kind of bloody soul shock and a heavy sense of repression[8]. The latter shows a transcendent worldly life. Most of the essays in *Rumour* relate to the feelings of daily life in the personal world, and the tone of writing becomes gentle, which gives off a strong sense of ease and detachment. The contrast between the two kinds of life shows Zhang Ailing's deep understanding of the trauma in turbulent times and elevates her literary creation.

3.2 The Spiritual Fear of the Civil Class.

Personal power is insignificant. Faced with the strong destiny, people always have a sense of weightlessness, a sense of homeless, wandering and rootless, so the women written by Zhang Ailing always have a desire for home. Since the home can provide shelter and a sense of security, in this sense, the desire for marriage is the dependence and search for the home. As far as Zhang Ailing is concerned, after escaping from his father's home, she has been living in the apartment. Although the apartment is regarded by the writers as "the ideal place to hide from the world", it is not a real home, but a temporary habitat for writers. Zhang Ailing always longs to have a home, a place to settle her soul. In the article, We can see Zhang Ailing's superb artistic technique, she can merge the image with her own emotion and thinking, "making external internalization, internal externalization and making nature become thought, thought become nature", which is the secret of genius[9-10]. It is because that the real work itself is the secret of the author's soul. "The author's own experience, all things in the world, his whole body and all his changes, are himself, his soul or spirit, and it flows out of his own springs into the images and appearances of all things." Indeed, wind, rain-smelling and flickering candlelight are the author's poetic discovery in the chaos of war; the sound of the market and the noise contain a sense of yearning for stable and peaceful world; the gazing into the tram in the tall building at night was full of longing for warmth and love.

4. Summary

Under the influence of the educational system of the Republic of China, Zhang Ailing's literature formed a style of both Chinese and Western. On the one hand, her unique life experience connected the despair in her works with the May 4th literature that accused the evil of her family. On the other hand, modern schools, as the public domain, affected Zhang Ailing's creation with its unique campus atmosphere and colorful community activities.

References

- [1] Wang Wenxin, Li Shuchun. Delicate but Desolate—Research on Zhang Ailing's Portrait Illustration. *Literature and Art Studies*, 2018(08): 138-147.
- [2] Cheng Xiaoqiang, Zhu Yuhong. Doubts and Analysis on the Individualism in Zhang Ailing's

Novels. Journal of Hunan University of Technology(Social and Science Edition), 2018, 23(03): 75-82.

[3] Li Zonggang, Ding Yanyan. Zhang Ailing's Literary Creation Based on the Educational System of the Republic of China. Journal of Fuzhou University(Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), 2017, 31(06): 28-33.

[4] Cheng Xiaoqiang. Art Perspective on the Late Play of Zhang Ailing. Forum for Chinese Literature of the World, 2016(04): 42-48.

[5] Kuang Xinnian. Talking About the" Style of the Republic of China". Theory and Criticism of Literature and Art, 2016(05): 125-133+124.

[6] Zhang Mengyao, Ping Zhangning. Ideas and Arts of the Writers in the Republic of China—Researched by Fei Ming, Zhang Ailing and Shi Zhecun. Modern Chinese Literature Studies, 2016(08): 208-212.

[7] Wang Yi. Heterotopia of Love—Analysis on the Love written by Zhang Ailing. Journal of Huazhong Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition), 2016(08): 208-212.

[8] Gan Wei. The Satire Art and Its Causes in Zhang Ailing's Novels. Journal of Hubei Correspondence University, 2016, 29(07): 182-183.

[9] Chen Li. Analyzing Deeply into the Female Consciousness in Zhang Ailing's Novels. Masterpieces Review, 2014(14): 115-116.

[10] Ye Jun. The Talented Woman of the Republic of China Writes About Wuhan. Literature Education, 2014(04): 12.