

The Analysis of the Ancient Novels and Ancient Culture

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Abstract: Ancient novels are one of the important styles of ancient literature. They have gone through a long and far-reaching development process and produced a large number of classic and excellent literary works, which contain a large amount of cultural information. It is an epitome of ancient culture, a medium reflecting ancient culture, and a more concentrated reflection of the overall appearance and spiritual core of ancient culture. Based on ancient novels, this paper discusses the relationship between ancient novels and ancient culture, and explores the ancient cultural information embodied in ancient novels from the perspectives of Confucian culture and folk culture.

1. Introduction

As one of the important styles of ancient literature, ancient novels are an important part of ancient culture. They are closely related to the whole of ancient culture, a miniature of ancient culture and a medium reflecting ancient culture. Ancient novels contain rich cultural information, and various categories such as material culture, normative culture and spiritual culture have vivid, concrete and detailed descriptions and expressions in ancient novels. For example, palace gardens, furniture and utensils, clothing and food, customs and habits, imperial examination system, criminal law and taxation, family structure, religious activities, arts and entertainment, marriage and love, etc., all can find relevant information in ancient novels. In a sense, the quality and quantity of cultural information carried by ancient novels far exceed the official records. However, ancient novels, with their rich cultural content, show the unique cultural thinking and cultural consciousness of ancient writers. Exploring the relationship and influence between ancient novels and ancient culture is an effective perspective of literary research and has very important academic significance and application value.

2. The Relationship between Ancient Novels and Ancient Culture

Dana, a famous French literary theorist, pointed out in his book "Philosophy of Art" that literary history "is the earliest and best achievement of culture" and that the life span of literature "must be as long as culture".(French) Dana: "Philosophy of Art", 66 pages, Fu Lei's translation, Beijing, People's Literature Publishing House, 1996).Ancient novels are inextricably linked with culture because of their own uniqueness.

2.1 The Ancient Culture Influenced the Creative Theme of Ancient Novels

The authors of ancient novels are always in the collision between the vertical traditional culture and the horizontal cultural atmosphere, thus making the theme of their creation closely related to culture. For example, the creative themes of novels in the Tang Dynasty are complex and varied. For example, influenced by the development and prosperity of Buddhism and Taoism culture in the Tang Dynasty, some novels follow the way of the Six Dynasties. After the mid-Tang Dynasty, because the intellectuals rose rapidly, they turned their eyes to real life, or expressed their ideal state, or expressed their regrets in life, or showed their literary talent, or showed their aesthetic pursuit, based on a strong sense of historical mission and responsibility. Song and Yuan scripts arose because they met the cultural needs of the citizen class. Serving the citizen class became their most direct creative theme. For example, the most popular themes of marriage and love, prosperity,

smoke, powder and spirit, public case and stick, historical story, etc. of the civil class have become the main content of the story books of Song and Yuan Dynasties. Compared with the previous novels, the themes of Song and Yuan Dynasties are unprecedented and extensive, and they are similar to the life and tastes of the citizens. The theme of ethical enlightenment creation, which encourages good and punishes evil, is even more prominent. However, in the novels that appeared in the Ming and Qing dynasties, the theme of creation contained more factors. For example, influenced by Buddhist culture, "Romance of the Three Kingdoms" showed a concept of emptiness. Influenced by the concepts of loyalty, filial piety, integrity and chivalry, Outlaws of the Marsh shows a contradictory creative theme between the democratic consciousness of resisting autocracy and the loyalty and filial piety consciousness of maintaining the ruling order. The diversity of ancient culture has influenced the creative theme of ancient novels. The ancient novels of various periods show rich cultural contents with their unique story plots, multi-faceted character settings and diverse destiny trends.

2.2 Ancient Culture Influenced the Characters, Plot, Environment and Other Elements of Ancient Novels

The influence of ancient culture on ancient novels is also manifested in the main factors such as characters, plot and environment. The cultural connotation of the characters, the development and transformation of plots, and the combination of reality and reality in the environment are all determined by various characteristics of ancient culture. For example, the characters in ancient novels are various, many of which are classified into loyalty, filial piety and sycophants, gentleman and villain, chastity and lewdness, faithfulness and cunning according to Confucian ethics. For example, the representative ones are Zhuge Liang, Guan Yu and Cao Cao in the Romance of the Three Kingdoms. The loyalty of Zhuge Liang, the righteousness of Guan Yu, and Cao Cao's craftiness constitute their main personality characteristics. The contradiction between Confucian ethics and freedom of personality is often the fundamental reason for the complexity and diversity of the characters' personalities. For example, Song Jiang in "Water Margin" not only wants to follow the moral norms of loyalty and filial piety, but also tries to resist social oppression, which eventually leads to the division of his personality and the tragedy of his fate. The plot structure of ancient novels is deeply influenced by the traditional mode of thinking. Many novels like the ending of reunion. Good people get good rewards, bad people get punished, the reason is clear, good and evil are clear, reflecting the thinking mode of "heaven and man correspond". For example, in the legend of Tang Dynasty, "Biography of Huo Xiaoyu", Huo Xiaoyu was cheated by heart breaker Li Yi and died of hatred. But in order to meet the psychological needs of readers, the author let the ghost of Huo Xiaoyu punish Li Yi. In terms of plot setting, ancient novels often rely on the intuitive thinking mode of mysticism, for example, many stories in Liaozaizhiyi are "out of the unreal realm, into the world". In Xi Fangping, Xi Fangping's revenge for his father can stir up trouble in the underworld, Xianggao's revenge for his brother can turn a tiger into a tiger, Sun Zi Chu can turn into a parrot in pursuit of love, and Ye Sheng keeps his soul immortal in order to prove his talent. These plots are both magical and grotesque, and can meet people's wishes and requirements. Influenced by this mystical mode of thinking, the environmental description in ancient novels is also a combination of reality and illusion and a combination of reality and reality. For example, the underworld of Yin Cao, fairyland of unreal realm and Tianting of Dragon Palace described in strange novels and supernatural novels are all portraits of real life.

3. Confucian Culture Embodying Humanism in Ancient Novels

Confucian values basically represent the values of ancient Chinese culture. Generally speaking, Confucian values are mainly manifested in the affirmation of life, the emphasis on human relations and the promotion of morality. Influenced by this value concept, ancient Chinese novels show distinct humanistic characteristics, attach importance to the characterization of characters' ethical and moral characters, and emphasize the function of ethical enlightenment in novels.

3.1 The Values of Highlighting Oneself and Affirming Oneself

Confucius once said: "People can't live with animals and birds. If they don't deal with people in the world, who else will they deal with?" Meng Zi thinks "I know all things by their nature.", Xunzi thinks that people can "participate in the heaven and earth", and Dong Zhongshu thinks that "the essence of heaven and earth, so living beings should not be more valuable than people". These opinions all show that human beings are rational and have incomparable advantages over all other things. As a result, they have values of valuing personnel, being happy and enterprising, and rejecting nihilism. They regard the pursuit of the meaning of life and the realization of values as very important matters. For example, although there are a large number of flowers, foxes, spirits and ghosts in *Strange Tales from a Lonely Studio*, it ultimately embodies such a value concept as loving life, cherishing life and affirming the value of life. In front of people, the flower fox charm, fairy spirit monster, all shame. Li Shi, the female ghost in the lotus fragrance, is "waving in the wind and admiring every stranger". In the *West Lake Lord*, Princess Longjun is listed as a fairy. The princess married her to Chen Sheng. Instead of feeling degraded, she asked Chen Sheng to "don't be suspicious by non class". They yearn for the warmth and happiness of the world and feel the desolation and loneliness of life. The goddess in "Goddess" has established a deep friendship by giving Misheng white gold and pearls to marry Misheng. After she married Misheng, "everything is no different from ordinary people". Finally, she was buried in the coffin with Misheng and left safely. She felt very gratified and happy about this life experience. All the ghosts who tried to compete with others were defeated. To sum up, ancient novels often highlight the strong consciousness of self and affirmation of self through the fate and creation of characters.

3.2 Ethical Enlightenment, Values Advocated by Morality

Ancient Chinese novels attached great importance to the moral integrity of the characters. They always praised those who were loyal, filial and virtuous. The good and evil of the characters were as clear and easy to distinguish as the water of separation. For example, "Romance of the Three Kingdoms" highly praises Zhuge Liang and Guan Yu because of their loyalty, sincerity and loyalty. Zhuge Liang's intelligence and courage are far better than Liu Chan's, but Zhuge Liang resolutely abides by the title of monarch and minister, "devote all his efforts, and die later.". Guan Yu was loyal to Liu Bei. He was in caoying and was devoted to finding his brother in the Han Dynasty. After five passes, he killed six generals. In order to reward Cao Cao for his understanding of the situation, he risked his life to open the door and free Cao Cao. "Gai was very kind at the beginning, so he opened the iron lock to release the Jiaolong" and "paid his friend for his death, so that he could admire the name of righteousness for thousands of years". Although this move is not conducive to Shu Han, under the influence of Confucian culture, people have given high praise and full affirmation. Although Cao Cao is an ambitious and resourceful politician and strategist, he is described as a treacherous court official because of his ambition to replace the Han Dynasty. Lyu3 bu4 was not brave enough, but he was depicted as worthless because he sold his family for glory and his personality was despicable. As the posterity commented: "today, Yanyi has no idea about the loyalty. It's Yanyi's credit." (Wang Kan, *Qing Dynasty: Jiangzhou graphology*, see Lu Xun's the old news of novels, 21 pages, Jinan, Qilu press, 1987)"Water Margin" runs through the book with the struggle of loyalty and rape. Although Song Jiang and other Liangshan heroes were forced to return by treacherous court officials, they remained loyal and did not forget the court. Therefore, they were highly praised by the author. They gathered in Yiliangshan because treacherous court officials were in power, "blinding the emperor's ears" and had no choice but to do so. Once the emperor woke up, they immediately showed their loyalty by accepting the offer. Accepting the admission is the act of a loyal minister and a righteous man who obeys heaven and responds to the people. The sad ending is due to the treacherous minister's mistake for the country. Song Jiang knew that he would be poisoned, but he did not change his loyalty. He won the reputation of loyalty and loyalty with his own life. The above are all through the development of the plot of the work and the shaping of the characters to promote Confucian concepts such as ethical enlightenment and moral evaluation.

3.3 Folk Culture Full of Life in Ancient Novels

Folk culture is a very broad concept, including religious taboos, worship and divination, life etiquette, festivals at the age of 18, food, clothing, housing and transportation, folk literature and art, and family system, etc., all can be classified as folk culture. It has the characteristics of mass, times, nationality, region and stability. Ancient novels show the influence of folk culture with their rich folk content.

3.4 Rich and Colorful Folk Beliefs

Folk belief is an important part of folk culture, its connotation and extension are extremely rich and broad. Its connotation refers to the belief in and respect for some spiritual body, some religion, etc. Its extension includes the inheritance of primitive religion in the folk, the infiltration of artificial religion in the folk, the common folk beliefs and common superstitions. For example, many contents in ancient myths became the objects of later folk beliefs. For example, Fuxi became the ancestor god of people's beliefs because of "drilling wood for fire" and "making gossip". Shennong became the god of agriculture and the root of medicine in folk beliefs because he invented agriculture and medicine. Historical novels, heroic legends and human feelings novels usually use folk beliefs to shape characters, organize plots and render the environment. For example, in the romance of the Three Kingdoms, the plot about Guan Yu showing his holiness, in the 42nd chapter of *Shuihu Zhuan*, the plot that "return to Daocun to receive three volumes of heavenly script, song Gongming to meet nine heavenly Xuannv" with the help of the plot of "nine heavenly Xuannv", all reflect that the author is influenced by the folk belief in the creation process. Another example is that many stories and environments in "Sanyan and Erpai" also borrow folk beliefs. For example, "Yu Shi Ming Yan · you Feng Duhu Mudi accepts poems", Feng Du is the local government in the folk belief. According to Fan Chengda's *Wu Chuanlu*, Wang Fangping of the Western Han Dynasty and Yin Changsheng of the Eastern Han Dynasty went to Pingdu mountain in Fengdu County, Sichuan Province to become immortals. Wang Fangping and Yin Changsheng were collectively called "Yin and Wang". They were falsely called the king of the underworld, and Feng Du became the location of the Yin division. (Fan Chengda, *Song Dynasty: Wu Chuanlu*, 19 pages, Beijing, Zhonghua Book Company, 1985) Another example is "diejuqiqichengke gets help, three saves the God of the sea" in "two moments of amazement". With the help of the God of the sea in the folk belief, it describes the merchant's experience and wishes. Poseidon has been recorded as early as in the *Book of Mountains and Seas*, but it was half man and half beast at that time. Since Han Dynasty, Poseidon has gradually been personified. During the reign of Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty, the God of the Four Seas was named the King of the Two Characters. In Song Renzong, the four-character king was added. During the Song and Yuan Dynasties, due to the rapid development of marine fishing, the worship of Poseidon became more and more grand. The most influential is Poseidon Tian Fei, also known as Tin Hau and Mazu, which originated in Quanzhou and later spread to coastal areas. The sea god in this novel is a beautiful woman with bright eyes and white teeth, obviously influenced by the latter legend.

3.5 Folk Etiquette from Life

Folk etiquette is another component of folk culture, which mainly includes procreation, marriage leave, funeral and other customs. In many ancient novels, these customs have become important means of depicting characters and organizing plots.

"Zhou Zhuan", also known as "Shi Er", "Shi Jie", "Nian Zhou" and "Shi Zhou", is a popular family custom among the people. In the second time of a dream of Red Mansions, "Lady Jia died in Yangzhou City, and Leng Zixing made a speech at Rongguo mansion", he replaced Baoyu's situation of "grasping Zhou" with Leng Zixing's oral communication:

When he was one year old, Jia Zheng wanted to try his ambition in the future. He placed countless things in the world and grabbed them with him. But he didn't take them at all. He just grabbed some powder hairpins. Jia Zheng was furious and said, "he will be a lecherous man in the future!" so he was very unhappy.

“A Dream of Red Mansions” writes that Baoyu only grasps the ring of powder and makeup. It is intended to depict Baoyu's inborn rebellious character and is a successful example of using family customs to depict characters.

“Biography of Ren Family” is a famous piece in Tang legend. Although Ren Shi is a fox spirit, he represents brave, witty and kind women in the world. She voluntarily married Zheng Liu, a poor and helpless young man, without any marriage ceremony. It can be said that she was in free love and free union, which shows Ren Shi's yearning and pursuit for love. Of course, Zheng Liu is a man with wives, so Ren Shi is actually in the position of a sidekick or concubine. However, she did not care about her birthright, and she loved Zheng Liu wholeheartedly, even exceeding the love of the couple that the Ming media was marrying. This also shows the author's relatively progressive concept of love and marriage.

There is another “biography of Li wa”. After many twists and turns in the love and marriage between Li Wa and Xingyang, Li Wa finally woke up, rescued Xingyang from danger and urged him to study and take the exam. So far, their love has been firmly established. Xingyang's father “ordered the matchmaker to have two good surnames and prepare six rites to meet them”, but it seemed redundant. This reflects the modern consciousness of love before marriage, which is quite different from the ancient marriage. However, the marriage ceremony has only become a measure to correct the name, which shows Xingyang's pedantic and hypocritical character. In addition, “Jin Ping Mei” also wrote about the custom of marriage and “Hong Lou Meng” wrote about the custom of funeral. These descriptions become a mirror for us to see through the ancient society. The folk culture content in the works enables us to better understand the ancient social background and the ancient folk life.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, a certain culture is the basis of ancient novels, the basis of realizing their value, and the source of driving force for the development of ancient novels. There are a lot of cultural information and cultural contents in ancient novels. Because of the existence of these cultural factors, we can better understand the Confucian culture of highlighting ourselves, affirming ourselves and promoting moral education in the process of reading ancient novels. Can better feel folk beliefs, folk etiquette these rich and colorful folk culture. Life is a book and life is a kind of culture. The genre of novels provides a good platform for the author to preach life. Whether in terms of creative thinking, plot setting, characterization, and environment rendering, the integration of cultural factors makes ancient novels have different styles, tastes, and styles. This is also the reason why ancient novels have been enduring and passed down through the ages.

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