

Analysis of the Development of Hong Kong Modernist Literature from *The Drunkard*

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Abstract. *The Drunkard* is the first stream-of-consciousness novel in China. Liu Yichang used inner monologue, time montage, metaphor, metaphor and implication to describe the stream-of-consciousness of the drinkard and the inner world of the literati, which is full of contradictions caused by reality in Hong Kong society where money is first. Through the method-of-stream of consciousness, it expresses the drunkard's inner adherence to serious literary creation and compromise to reality. The pursuit of living with dignity and the pressure of reality have shaped the image of the struggling, contradictory drunkard, thus reflecting the twists and turns of the development of modernist literature in Hong Kong, as well as the downtrodden life and inner anguish of the creators of modernist literature, and a critique of Hong Kong's social realities.

Keywords: Liu Yichang; Hong Kong Modernist Literature; *Drunkard*.

1. Introduction

Chinese modernist literature emerged in Shanghai at the end of 1920. [1] However, after the Chinese civil war, a large number of literati from the Mainland, such as Sung Ki, Liu Yichang and Eileen Chang, waited until Hong Kong to take temporary refuge, which enabled the left-wing cultural forces and liberal literature to be preserved and developed in Hong Kong, and formed the dichotomy between left-wing literature and right-wing literature. These literati spread modernist literature with their own experiences. For example, *Yangko* and *Naked Earth*, written by Eileen Chang, involve political judgment and have existential implications. Xu Xu's *River of Fury* has a strong sense of isolation, pessimism, fatalism and nihilism. In 1955, Kunnan founded *Shi Duo* [2]. In 1956, Malang founded the *New Trend of Literature*. In 1959, Kunnan, Ye Weilian, Wang Wuxie founded the *New Trend of Thought*, there are many modernist articles introduced from the West, such as Anglo-American modernist poetry in the *New Trend of Literature*, and French existentialist literature. The new French novel in *The New Trend of Thought*, the Anglo-American literary criticism in *The Cape of Good Hope*, the absurd drama in *The Sea Light Literature and Art*, the Italian art poem and the South American magical realism in *The Four Seasons* [3]. These articles contributed to the revival of modernist literature in Hong Kong. The emergence of Liu Yichang and others made Hong Kong modernist literature move from the translation of Western literary works to the creation stage.

Born in 1918 in Shanghai, Liu Yichang studied at St. John's University in Shanghai in 1930 and began to publish his works. [4] Huaizheng Publishing House, which he founded, published many works by Zhejiang writers. Liu Yichang's first novel, *Lost Love*, was published in 1948. At the end of 1948, Liu Yichang moved to Hong Kong, where he introduced stream-of-consciousness literature to the Hong Kong public while editing the *Hong Kong Times Repulse Bay*, and had an impact on Taiwan. Inspired by the spirit of introspection and stream of consciousness influenced, Liu Yichang's works are both critical and self-reflective, and express dissatisfaction with the current situation of consumerism in Hong Kong. Liu was deeply influenced by such modernist literary masters as Joyce, Proust, Thomas Mann, Faulkner, Kafka, Camus, Forster, Sartre, Hemingway, Woolf, Beckett, Nabokov. His novels focus on reflecting the distortion of human nature caused by materialized reality, and show the alienated survival, pathological personality and inner anxiety of the marginalized people in Hong Kong society. In 1951, he published the first collection of stories, *Heaven and Hell*, and in 1963, *Drunkard*, which has been called China's first novel of stream-of-consciousness and established its important position in Hong Kong literature [5]. Liu Yichang used experimental novels to get rid

of the existential crisis of fiction, using the techniques of modern novels, such as stream-of-consciousness, and Freudian psychoanalysis, combined with Hong Kong's local expression, forming unique oriental characteristics. During his lifetime, he published a collection of short stories *Heaven and Hell*, the novel *Drunkard*, *Ceramics*, *Island and Peninsula*, the collection of short stories *Temple Inside*, 1997, the collection of short stories *Spring Rain*, *Days of the Past*. This paper takes *The Drunkard* as an example to analyze its creative characteristics, analyze the predicament of the development of Hong Kong modernist literature reflected by drinkers, and analyze the reasons.

2. Character Analysis of the Drunkard

The *Drunkard* is an ordinary writer in Hong Kong, but he is always wandering between drunkenness and awakening, ideal and reality. Drunkard is addicted to alcohol, his inner pursuit of writing serious literature, but the reality makes him compromise with the literary works of consumerism. He can only paralyze himself to write entertaining novels for existence. Therefore, the heart of the *drunkard* is full of contradictions and perplexities, which are reflected in the fact that a *drunkard* is a creator who pursues serious literature, but because of the need of survival, he can only constantly compromise in literary creation. In the pressure of survival and inner purity, and the pursuit of the spiritual world, the world of love is constantly tangled. It can be seen that the image of a drinker is tragic, showing the complex and contradictory mentality of Hong Kong professional writers with highly developed commodity economy.

Contradiction one: the dignified life pursued by the *drunkard* and the pressure given by reality

The contradictions in the life of drunkard come from the dignity of survival. drunkard earn a living by writing popular articles. But the revenue is meagre and erratic. Especially in the period when serious literature was not valued, he was often stopped to borrow money from others to live, for example, when he borrowed money from McHomen, he expressed that he would pay off the loan as soon as possible after borrowing money. It can be seen that *drunkard* is a dignified person, and hopes to be respected by others, rather than relying on others to live, especially when the *drunkard* realizes that the Landlady supports him, he says to McHomer, "Although I am poor, I still have self-esteem." [6] This statement is a direct expression of an ambivalent attitude towards real life and a strong sense of pride. When the *drunkard* found that the salary of his avant-garde literature had become a kind of charity for him, the *drunkard* declined the request to continue the publication. It can be seen that a *drunkard* is a man of strong self-esteem and lofty literati. This also shows that in the materialistic society of Hong Kong, literati cannot use words to gain respect for what they have.

Contradiction two: the drunkard 's inner adherence to serious literary creation and compromise to reality

The drunkard is a writer. Although he wrote popular, martial arts novels, but the heart of the drunkard for this literary genre is disgusted and helpless. For the sake of living, he gave up his pursuit to write works that conform to social trends. In the novel, the drunkard finds it surprising that the reader should drift with the author's imagination into a realm of nothingness and not be bothered. It can be seen that the drunkard despises the popular novels. The drunkard's enthusiasm for and respect for serious literature can be seen in what he confides to McHomer when he is drunk. The contradiction in the pursuit of literature adds several tragic colors to the character of the *drunkard*.

Contradiction three: The woman who loved the drunkard framed him and a woman loved by the drunkard loves money more

There are few descriptions of love among *drunkard*, but through the author's description of love, we can see the inner contradictions of drunkard. The main female characters in the article are Zhang Lili who the drinkers do not pursue. Yang Lu, who is obsessed with the *drunkard*, and Sima Li, who is precocious. Through the communication and association between the *drunkard* and these women, the paper reflects the inner struggle of the *drunkard*. Seventeen-year-old Sima Li is a precocious girl, she likes literature, and watching Lolita and she is open to sex. The *drunkard* always refuses Sima Li's

crazy pursuit, the novel is described as "seventeen-year-old girls should not be so bold" [6], and then Sima Li lies to her parents that the drunkard seduced her. It can be seen that Sima Li is a distorted personality by society, to end by all means, there is such a description of "Sima Li without clothes..... Dozens of Sima liturning, turning, appearing in my mind, never stop. Sima Li is a seventeen-year-old girl, and a world-weary old prostitute who has experienced many hardships. "[6] The novel uses Sima Li's behavior as a metaphor for the behavior of many women in society, which alludes to the mentality of people at that time. The refusal of the drunkard to Sima Li shows that the drunkard also rejects this distorted concept. In the novel, Zhang Lili is a snobby woman. When the drunkard was poor and asked her for love, she flattened her mouth and turned her head to one side. The drunkard appreciates Zhang Lili's beauty but hates the feeling of not being able to get her. This subtle emotion is like the drunkard's feeling of money, which is a contradictory state of hatred, and disgust but love. Drunkard need money to enjoy a decent life, but money cannot be obtained from serious literature, so money can only be obtained from popular literature, which is hated. Because of her family, Yang Lu is forced to do business, just as drunkard are forced to write popular novels, it can be said that Yang Lu is the portrayal of the drunkard. Liu Yichang described the social environment and ambivalence of the drinkers by using these female characters and their attitudes toward love.

3. Analysis of Narrative Strategies of Drunkard

Drunkard is a novel with strong modernist characteristics. Modernity is embodied in its unique stream-of-consciousness style. The stream-of-consciousness novel breaks the single, linear structure of the traditional novel, which is formed according to the sequence of the story or the logical connection between the plots. Stream-of-consciousness novels are stories organized by free association along with people's conscious activities. The *Drunkard* breaks the time continuity of the traditional novel narrative, uses wine as an intermediary, combines the characters' subconscious, sober, fuzzy, wild, calm, and other kinds of jumping associations, and depicts the *drunkard's* desire, pain and contradiction. The novel describes the drinkers' inner world through the stream-of-consciousness. The novel unfolds as the alcoholic switches between drunkenness, sobriety, and dreaming. Between *Drunkard* and literature is edited, combined, spliced, and blended in a montage by Liu, which forms the clues of the novel. Liu Yichang said that by cutting people's hearts and making specimens to observe their cross sections, this cross-sectional method to explore the drift of the individual's mind, the illusion of the heart and capture the image of thought can truly, completely and truly express the social environment and the spirit of *The Times*.

The second chapter of *The Drunkard* depicts the desires of the drunkard and the inner activities of the drunkard when he is drunk through dreams. The novel depicts, "I dreamt that I had won the horse ticket then I went through Queen's Road in a motor car because I liked the envious glances of others" [6]. In the drunken dream, the drunkard is given money that he does not have in real life and a series of associations are created. In the novel, Liu Yichang connects the scene of the drunken when he has no money with the scene of the drunkard's drunken dream through the sentence "Now I have money", and releases the drunkard's desire through the sentence "I threw the banknote at her face", but this desire is deformed and has a strong color of hatred. But this desire is monstrous and strongly colored by hatred. Through this excessive catharsis, the repression of drunkard in the real society is reflected. It also shows the gold worship of the society at that time, only rich people can get respect from people.

In addition, Liu Yichang said that the monologue of the drunkard describes the inner world. For example, in chapter 32, a drunkard's dream has a mirror. "I went into a huge mirror and in it, I found another world, a world very similar to the one we are in now, but not the one we are in now. There is me in this world, but not me. There is you in this world, but not you. There is him in this world, but not him..... In a world where love is not a two-way street, where each person loves himself,..... In a world where only the eyes are the most real, and beyond that they are shadows, in a world where each person is soulless [6]. At this time, the drunkard has obtained considerable income by writing

popular novels, but it can be seen from this monologue that the drunkard is not happy in heart, and the drunkard does not recognize what he has done. This monologue reflects that the drunkard does not recognize the values of society at that time. The soulless man is the true portrayal of the drunkard himself. He feels that because of the pressure of life, he is full of resistance to the serious literary creation, and even loses himself. It also implies Liu Yichang's irony and criticism of the supremacy of individualism, frivolity, and excessive materialization.

American psychologist William James put forward that human consciousness is not carried out in a discrete way in which each part is unrelated, but in the way of thought flow, subjective life flow and consciousness flow. At the same time, he believes that human consciousness is composed of rational conscious consciousness and illogical and irrational subconscious [7]. Among, *The Drunkard*, the way to describe drunkenness is to use countless unrelated things to create a strange sense of absurdity and madness. The text has this description of "sick night. Popular music has too many you love me and I love you. There are similarities between Cao Xueqin and James Joyce, who needed to accept charity from others to live. James Joyce's *Ulysses* was contradicted and criticized. Cao Xueqin's *A Dream in Red Mansions* was also called a work of vengeful relief by Emperor Qianlong's cousin. "[6]. This passage describes any period when literati are always suffering from hunger and cold and their works are not valued. Although this description is ostensibly a patchwork of unrelated things, it expresses criticism of literary works such as love through criticism of music. In addition, it also rationally expresses the drinkers' helplessness and calmness for their predicament.

In addition, the drunkard's reaction to sex after being drunk in the novel is composed of rational and irrational consciousness. The novel begins with the drunkard and a middle-aged woman having drunken sex. The drunkard in the novel is a disorderly person, but in the novel, two passages describe the refusal of the drunkard to drink "sex", one is the drunkard's refusal to Sima Li, and the other is the drunkard's refusal to the second homeowner. As written in the novel, although the drunkard was in a state of drunkenness at that time, he refused their request for moral reasons. Liu Yichang used stream-of-consciousness to show the struggle between rationality and irrationality, morality and desire in the heart of the drunkard, making the character of drunkard real and close to life.

Instead of blindly copying the techniques of Western stream-of-consciousness novels, Liu Yichang used the method of time montage, which is a montage in which the theme is fixed in space and the consciousness of the characters in the work changes in time [8]. In Chapter 4, page 33, from "Wet memories" to page 39, "All memories are wet" [6], a total of 27 passages show the irregular memories of a drunkard from Shanghai to Hong Kong. This is a montage of time made up of each scene that constitutes a kind of flashback effect as a whole. In Chapter 9 the narrator's memories of past war experiences. End with "War. War. War." [6] the statement is divided into five parts. Although each part uses a realistic traditional approach to external events, taken as a whole, each part is a memory scene of independent fragments of unrelated wars, and these scenes together constitute a montage. The use of this method makes the activities of the characters have specific scenes, so that the characters' stream of consciousness is related to the external environment, and is not completely separated from the story plot. Secondly, the trace of the characters' activities and the relationship between the characters are depicted in the novel, which is also different from Western stream-of-consciousness novels.

In addition, Liu Yichang's stream-of-consciousness novels have the characteristics of national culture. In the novel, a large number of imageries, metaphor, suggestion, personification, and metaphor techniques are used, which makes the novel have a kind of imagist poetic language and poetic beauty. For example, "In the corner space, there is a bottle of melancholy and a square of air ", "Rusty feelings", "Lies are white", and "When Li Taibai is drunk, the sun is blue. When Stravinsky is drunk, the moon loses its circle. [6] " These languages have metaphorized the emotions and psychological states of drunkard, and also made stream-of-consciousness novels have poetic beauty.

4. The Development of Serious Literature in Hong Kong Reflected by Drunkard

As Liu Yichang said in the preface of *The Drunkard's* Apprentice, the stream-of-consciousness ultimately serves the social environment and zeitgeist of the time. From this, through *The Drunkard*, we can see the development difficulties faced by serious literature in Hong Kong at that time and some pathological phenomena in Hong Kong society. First of all, through the fact that drunkard was forced to write popular novels, it can be seen that serious literature had a smaller audience and was gradually on the decline. In addition, the creative experiences of Hong Kong's realist literary writers, Kun Nan, Wang Wuxie and Li Yinghao, can illustrate the developmental dilemma of serious literature. Before 1967, Kun Nan insisted on creating works of modernist literature, such as *The Door of the Earth*, but after 1967, he founded the *Hong Kong Youth Weekly* and *New Weekly*, which focused on horoscopes, pop music, and youth culture trends, and served as the editor of the culture and entertainment pages of several newspapers, as well as publishing martial arts novels and lustful novels in a column in the *KuaiBao* [9]. Between 1964 and 1966, Li Yinghao published modernist literature on a wide range of subjects, which made him an important critic of the modernist literary movement in Hong Kong. However, after 1967, Li Yinghao gave up serious literature and published several books on flowers, birds, fish, and jades, and cultural relics. He once said, "Gradually, I realized that there are always difficulties in the literary movement. Existentialism doesn't change anything sometimes "[10] Wang Wuxie also mentioned his judgment on the cultural ecology of Hong Kong at that time and the prospects for the development of modernism. There was only limited room for the development of literature. Hong Kong is a small island, and even if you publish your works in Hong Kong, the target audience is only a few million people, among the few million people, there are also a lot of people who are not interested in literature. The environment at that time also didn't have the opportunity to publish the works in the mainland and Taiwan, Hong Kong had freedom, but we couldn't go outside Hong Kong[11]. It can be seen that the development of Hong Kong's literary scene at that time encountered greater resistance, and the space for the development of modernist literature in Hong Kong was restricted, which also made the life of the creators of serious literature miserable and unable to gain the respect of the public. In addition, funding has also become an important factor restricting the development of serious literature in Hong Kong.

What hindered the development of serious literature in Hong Kong was the development of consumerism, the monstrous capitalism prevalent at that time. In the novel, money seems to be the main theme of everything, and people do whatever they can for money, such as Sima Li becoming a prostitute for money. This shows the sickness of modern industrial and commercial society. Literature has become a commodity. Love has become a commodity. A girl's virginity has also become a commodity. Serious thinking has become a luxury, so vulgar literature prevails, no one reads serious literature, and people are more willing to engage in entertainment and vulgar literature to earn money and get cheap pleasure from it to fill the wounds left by money, while serious literature writers, to make a living, abandon their ideals and become slaves of life, just like drunkard. It also shows that the development of Hong Kong society at that time was overly commercialized and vulgarized, making literature develop towards vulgarity. The concept of money being the most important, businessmen were unwilling to pay expensive royalties, and the government did not introduce corresponding laws to protect authors' copyrights, thus making pirated books rampant, and the works of literary creators were pirated and printed, so that authors did not have corresponding incomes, thus exacerbating the plight of the creators of serious literature in their struggle for survival. In addition, in 1966, more than half of Hong Kong's population was aged 19 or below, and young people became the main social group at that time. The development of popular culture changed the way Hong Kong young people spent their leisure and entertainment, and gave popular literature a chance to flourish, so it can be seen that the composition of the consumer group, the economy, and the development of culture had a greater impact on the development of serious literature in Hong Kong. The decline of popular literature eventually occurred in the late 1960s.

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