

Lao She's Painting of Old Beijing: An Exploration of the Images of Teahouses, Hutongs, and Rickshaws

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Abstract

In the process of delicately and deeply depicting the characters, Lao She's novels show vivid, profound, metaphorical and charming image characteristics. These images not only cleverly outline the character's personality and inner world, but also deeply reflect the writer's profound insight into human nature and humanistic care. By analyzing the existence of these images, we can understand the psychological state of the characters more deeply, and then fully grasp the unique artistic characteristics of Lao She's novels. Lao She's words are like a window, through which we can clearly feel the unique social image and cultural atmosphere of old Beijing. In these words, there are people's deep attachment to the past years and endless feelings about real life. Together, they constitute a vivid portrayal of the ups and downs of the fate of old Beijing in the historical changes. At the same time, Lao She's works also reveal his firm adherence to traditional culture and his profound thinking on the changes of the times. The intentions of teahouses, alleys, rickshaws, etc. are deeply displayed, and these images are endowed with fresh vitality and profound symbolic meaning in Lao She's writing. This article will conduct an in-depth and meticulous study and discussion of these images, in order to more comprehensively reveal the artistic charm, cultural connotation and profound insight into the times and society of Lao She's novels.



Full Text Article



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Introduction

Lao She is an immortal beacon in the literary world. He was born in the late Qing Dynasty, lived through the Republic of China, and then the new China. This background that spans the ages provided him with rich materials and profound insights for his creation. Born into a poor bannerman family in Beijing, he lived in every corner of the hutong since he was a child, and had a personal experience and inseparable feelings for the customs and customs of old Beijing.

In his early years, he went abroad, and this experience gave him the opportunity to deeply compare Chinese and Western cultures, and had a deeper understanding and thinking about the differences and integration between the two.

After returning to China, Lao She launched a series of distinctive literary creations with the old Beijing that he missed so much as the background. His novels are like delicate and vivid social paintings, which vividly present the style of old Beijing, people's living conditions and social changes to readers. It is particularly worth mentioning that his novels have distinct image characteristics. These images are not only his artistic refinement of the life in old Beijing, but also an important means for him to express his thoughts and emotions and reflect social reality.

However, although Lao She's works are deeply loved by readers, the academic community still has problems with the lack of in-depth and systematic research on the images in his novels. The cultural significance, social value and the author's creative intentions behind these images all require us to conduct a more detailed and comprehensive analysis. At present, with the continuous deepening of cultural research and the continuous development of literary theory, the study of images in Lao She's novels has also put forward new requirements and challenges. Therefore, an in-depth study of the images in Lao She's novels will not only help us better understand the artistic characteristics and ideological connotations of his works, but also have important academic value and practical significance.

This review aims to reveal the unique artistic charm and profound social significance of Lao She's novels through the sorting and analysis of the images in them. At the same time, we also conduct in-depth thinking and discussion on the problems and deficiencies in the research, in order to provide useful reference and reference for subsequent research.

The Imagery Characteristics and Significance of Lao She's Novels

Image characteristics: the key to in-depth exploration of character psychology and artistic charm

When describing characters in Lao She's novels, he not only focuses on the external image, but also digs deeper into the characters' inner thoughts, emotions, psychology, personality, etc. He skillfully uses image features, such as vivid metaphors, allusions, and symbols with charm, to make the characters come alive on paper. These image features not only provide readers with a window to understand the characters' psychology, but also become the key to grasping the artistic characteristics of Lao She's novels. Through the guidance of imagery, readers can go deeper into the world of characters, feel their joys, sorrows, anger, and happiness, and thus appreciate the artistic charm of Lao She's novels more comprehensively.

A mirror image of old Beijing's social image and historical changes

Lao She's novels are set in old Beijing. Through his writings, readers can clearly feel the social image of old Beijing at that time. The teahouses, alleys, rickshaws, etc. described in his works not only constitute the unique landscape of old Beijing, but also carry the memories and emotions of old Beijingers. These images are endowed with profound social significance in Lao She's writings. They reflect the ups and downs of the fate of old Beijing in the

historical changes, and also reveal Lao She's adherence to traditional culture and his deep thinking on the changes of the times. Through these images, readers can have a deeper understanding of the social outlook and historical changes of old Beijing, and feel the living conditions and emotional world of people in that era.

A vivid picture of natural and social scenes and the inner thoughts of characters

Lao She's novels also show distinct imagery characteristics when describing natural scenes and social scenes. He is good at capturing subtle changes in nature and incorporating them into the plot of the novel, adding a vividness and charm to the work. At the same time, his description of social scenes is also extremely delicate. Whether it is the hustle and bustle of the teahouse, the depth of the alley, or the shuttle of rickshaws, they are all vividly presented by him, making the readers feel as if they are there. In addition, Lao She also deeply explores the inner life of social figures, and through the depiction of images, he vividly shows the characters' joys, sorrows, sorrows, and joys. The use of these images not only enriches the plot and connotation of the novel, but also makes the characters more vivid and three-dimensional, allowing readers to feel a strong emotional resonance while reading.

Analysis of the specific images of “teahouse, alley, and rickshaw”

Teahouse: a microcosm of society

The teahouse stands silently in the hustle and bustle of old Beijing, as if it is a huge stage, performing all kinds of life. Here, people of all social status gather together to drink tea and chat. The leisurely people with bird cages, the artists singing and telling stories, the shrewd businessmen, and the passionate patriots, their figures interweave in the teahouse, forming a vivid social picture. The bustle of the teahouse is not just the surface noise, but also hides the inner fluctuations of people and the changes of the times. Here, people's joy or sorrow, worry or sadness, all drift away with the fragrance of tea, becoming a witness to the changes of the times.

Wang Lifa's teahouse is a mark of the passage of time. It witnessed the decline of the late Qing Dynasty, the turmoil of the Republic of China, and the dawn of the founding of New China. Every dispute and every reconciliation in the teahouse is like a microcosm of the social contradictions of that era, which makes people deeply feel the vicissitudes of history and the suffering of the people.

Hutongs: Historical Memory

Hutong is a unique landscape in old Beijing. It is like a long and thin bond connecting the past and the present. In the depths of the hutong, there are countless courtyards hidden. They have witnessed the rise and fall of the family, and also carried the joys and sorrows of the people. The residents of Xiaoyangquan Hutong still stick to their lives in the flames of the Anti-Japanese War. Their stories are circulated in the hutong and have become the memory of history.

The tranquility of the hutongs is in stark contrast to the hustle and bustle of the outside world. Here, children play carefree, and the elderly bask in the sun and chat about family

matters. The hutongs are like a time capsule, preserving the traditional lifestyle and values of old Beijingers intact. Walking in the hutongs, people seem to be able to travel through time and space and feel the ancient and simple atmosphere.

Rickshaw: The rush of life

Rickshaws are a unique landscape on the streets of old Beijing. They are not only a means of transportation, but also a reflection of people's lives. Xiangzi, a young man who makes a living by pulling a rickshaw, dreams of owning a rickshaw of his own. However, the cruel reality shatters his dream again and again. Rickshaws have become a symbol of Xiangzi's fate. They record the hardships and difficulties of Xiangzi's life, and also reflect the suffering and struggles of the lower-class people of that era.

Despite this, Xiangzi never gave up his pursuit of a better life. Under the scorching sun, he ran with sweat all over his body; in the cold wind, he waited shiveringly. The rickshaw is not only his means of livelihood, but also his hope for a better life. It carries Xiangzi's dreams and hopes, and also represents the yearning and struggle for a better life of people in that era. In the rolling of the rickshaw's wheels, people see the hardships and difficulties of life, as well as hope and persistence. The means of livelihood is also his hope for a better life.

The interweaving of emotions and social reality: the interaction between characters and images

In Lao She's writings, teahouses, alleys, and rickshaws are not only symbols of social reality, but also reflections and externalizations of the characters' emotions. These images are interwoven with the characters' daily lives, thoughts, emotions, and historical changes, forming a unique multi-dimensional meaning.

First of all, as a microcosm of society, teahouses are not only places where people gather to chat and exchange information, but also carry the helplessness and confusion of different people in life during social changes. Wang Lifa's teahouse is not only a public place, but also the center of his life and career. Here, readers see the various aspects of the old Beijing city, but behind the bustle, people's inner loneliness and difficulties are actually hidden. With the changes of the times, the teahouse's business gradually declined, and Wang Lifa's anxiety and helplessness also deepened. The teahouse not only witnessed the ups and downs of his personal destiny, but also reflected the turmoil and changes of the entire society. Those who once relied on teahouses for their livelihoods, socializing and spiritual sustenance also gradually felt the uncertainty of life and the cruelty of reality.

As a symbol of old Beijing, the Hutong is a place where emotions coexist with social pressure. The depth and tranquility of the Hutong make it a symbol of the traditional family, and the layout of the quadrangle and the neighborhood relationship maintain the stability of the family. However, Lao She reveals the contradictions and conflicts in historical changes through his depiction of the Hutong. The people in Xiaoyangquan Hutong seem to live a peaceful life on the surface, but the smoke of war and the political turmoil in the outside world have quietly affected their daily lives. The closedness of the Hutong represents the

resistance of the traditional lifestyle to the outside world, and also implies the fate that individuals cannot escape. Under the oppression of war, the tranquility in the Hutong is gradually torn apart by the cruel reality, and people's emotions gradually change from peace to anxiety and uneasiness.

The image of the rickshaw is more directly connected with the fate of the characters and social reality. Xiangzi's dream always revolves around owning a rickshaw of his own. His obsession with the rickshaw actually reflects his desire for an independent and stable life. However, social reality has broken his dream again and again. Through the image of the rickshaw, Lao She expresses the plight of the bottom-level workers. Behind the rolling wheels is Xiangzi's endless running and struggle, symbolizing the oppression and exploitation of the bottom-level people by society. Xiangzi's tragedy is not only the sadness of his personal fate, but also a symbol of the turbulent times and the differentiation of social classes. Lao She conveys a profound criticism of social injustice through Xiangzi's story.

These images, through interaction with the characters' lives and psychology, constitute the interweaving of the characters' emotions and social realities in the work, allowing readers to feel deeper emotional impacts and social reflections through these daily scenes.

The Conflict between Tradition and Modernity: The Change of Times in Images

The era in which Lao She lived was a critical stage in China's transition from tradition to modernity. In his novels, the conflict between many traditional images and the process of modernization has become a profound literary expression. This conflict is not only reflected in specific material images, but also in the opposition and integration of the characters' ideas, lifestyles, and social systems.

As a symbol of the traditional culture of old Beijing, teahouses represent both the stable social structure of the past and the turbulence and contradictions of modern society. In traditional society, teahouses were the center of socializing, entertainment, and chatting for old Beijingers, symbolizing a leisurely and calm attitude towards life. However, with the changes of the times, teahouses are no longer just a place to relax, but have become a gathering place for various social contradictions. In the play *Teahouse*, teahouses are not only a place for people to relax, but also a stage for discussing politics, venting emotions, and exchanging interests. The teahouses of the old era are gradually declining. The commercialization and politicization of teahouses reflect the disintegration of the traditional social structure, and at the same time reveal Lao She's anxiety and worry about social changes under the impact of modernization.

Similarly, as a symbol of traditional Beijing, Hutongs are also facing the challenges of modernization. The pace of life in Hutongs is slow, the relationships between people are close, and the layout of the courtyards reflects the stability of the family structure and the hierarchical order. However, with the modernization of the city, the closedness of Hutongs and the traditional nature gradually become incompatible. The rise of new buildings, the transformation of transportation, and the flow of population have broken the tranquility and

sense of security that Hutongs once had. Lao She expressed his worries about the gradual erosion of traditional culture through his description of the gradual disappearance of Hutongs. The disintegration of Hutongs is not only a material disappearance, but also the collapse of traditional family values and social structure. It symbolizes the process of the entire society moving from closed to open, from traditional to modern.

The image of the rickshaw particularly highlights this conflict. In the process of modernization, the rickshaw, as a backward means of transportation, has gradually been eliminated, but in Lao She's writing, it has become a symbol of the fate of the lower class. Xiangzi's desire to own a car is not only a pursuit of personal freedom and economic independence, but also a yearning for modern material life. However, in reality, Xiangzi fell into many difficulties in modern society, and his ideals were constantly shattered by reality. The image of the rickshaw symbolizes that the traditional lifestyle cannot adapt to the changes in modern society. Through this image, Lao She shows the difficulties and struggles of the lower class in the process of modernization.

Through these images, Lao She profoundly expressed the conflict and integration of tradition and modernity, old and new, and conveyed his thoughts and reflections on the changes of the times.

The combination of Lao She's language style and imagery: dual expression of urban atmosphere and humor

Lao She is famous for his vivid language style, especially his extensive use of Beijing dialect in his novels, which gives his works a strong local flavor and urban flavor. Lao She's language is approachable and has a strong sense of life. He uses humor and satire to express the suffering and injustice in real society more vividly and concretely. This language style is closely combined with his image expression, making images such as teahouses, alleys and rickshaws more vivid and vivid in the readers' minds.

In the description of the teahouse, Lao She's language is humorous, and the various characters in the teahouse show their personality traits and attitudes towards life through dialogues in Beijing dialect. The lively conversations between tea guests are full of life wisdom and worldly humor, and behind these conversations, Lao She hides his keen observation of social reality. The hustle and bustle of the teahouse, expressed through this humorous language, reflects people's joy in suffering and helpless self-consolation in turbulent times. Through these dialogues, Lao She successfully created a living social microcosm.

In describing the hutongs, Lao She's language is more delicate. Through plain narration and detailed description, he vividly shows the daily life of the residents in the hutongs. The old people sit at the entrance of the hutongs and chat, and the children play in the hutongs. These daily scenes are vividly reproduced through Lao She's words, full of life. However, this plain description often contains deep emotions. The depth and tranquility of the hutongs symbolize the sedimentation and accumulation of the traditional culture of old Beijing, and also imply its

gradual demise. Lao She integrates the emotional value and social significance of the hutongs through delicate language.

In the description of the rickshaw, Lao She reveals Xiangzi's inner world through concise language. His language is plain, but full of deep sympathy and concern for the fate of the lower class. Xiangzi's hard work and struggle are shown through Lao She's concise and powerful brushstrokes, and his hope and disappointment in life are also particularly vivid in Lao She's language. Through the description of Xiangzi, Lao She shows the coldness and ruthlessness of society, and also expresses his deep reflection on the plight of the lower class.

Criticism of the Times and the Symbolism of Characters' Fate

Lao She's works not only depict the life of the old Beijing, but also contain a profound critical consciousness of the times. Behind the three key images of teahouses, alleys and rickshaws, Lao She's reflection and criticism of social reality are hidden, especially his worries and concerns about the fate of the grassroots people in the turbulent situation in China at that time. These images symbolize not only the ups and downs of personal destiny, but also the social group portrait in the storm of the times. They reveal the powerlessness and tragedy of individuals in the social structure and the changes of the times.

As a microcosm of society, teahouses reflect the turbulent political situation and social contradictions in Chinese society. In the play *Teahouse*, the teahouse not only witnessed the fate changes of three generations of teahouse owners from the late Qing Dynasty to the Republic of China, and then to the eve of the founding of New China, but also revealed the disorder and turmoil of society. Although the guests in the teahouse are varied, their fate is all swept away by the torrent of the times and they cannot control their own lives. Wang Lifa's teahouse has changed several times, but it has never been able to escape the fate of decline. The teahouse, which once carried people's social interaction and information exchange, has gradually become a victim of the times. Through the decline of the teahouse, Lao She expressed his criticism of the old times and the helplessness and frustration of the people in social turmoil.

As a symbol of old Beijing, Hutong is also full of symbolic meaning in Lao She's writing. The closedness of Hutong represents the resistance of traditional society to external changes, but it also exposes the repression within the family and the isolation of individuals in traditional society. Through the stories of the characters in Hutong, Lao She reveals the interpersonal relationships and mental state in a closed society. Although the Hutong in his writing is quiet, this quietness hides deep anxiety and repression. Under external pressures such as war and economic crisis, the traditional life in Hutong is gradually eroded by the changes in modern society, and the silence of Hutong is gradually broken by the turmoil of the outside world, symbolizing the powerlessness of traditional society to fight and decline in the process of modernization.

The image of the rickshaw is particularly critical of the times. Xiangzi's fate is a symbol of the fate of the working people at the bottom of society. The three major blows he suffered were all ruthless exploitation and destruction of him by the times and society. As a laborer, Xiangzi has always struggled on the edge of society, trying to improve his life through his

own efforts, but was eventually completely defeated by reality. Xiangzi's original simplicity and kindness were gradually eroded by the cruel reality of society until he completely lost hope in life. This process reflects the helplessness and despair of the lower-class people in a turbulent society, and reveals the oppression and destruction of personal dreams by modern society. Through Xiangzi's tragic fate, Lao She expressed a profound criticism of social injustice and conveyed his deep sympathy for the fate of the lower-class people.

Through the creation of these images, Lao She closely combines the fate of individuals with the background of the times, showing how individuals are powerless to resist the torrent of the times in the midst of social changes. Teahouses, alleys and rickshaws are not only the reproduction of life scenes, but also symbols of Lao She's thinking and criticism of social classes, historical processes, and national destiny. Behind the tragedy of individual fate is Lao She's profound criticism of social reality and his keen capture of the predicament of the times.

Lao She's Insight into Human Nature: Exploring Common Human Emotions in Images

Although the images in Lao She's works deeply reflect the unique reality of Chinese society, the themes of human nature they convey are of universal significance. Whether it is the various forms of life in the teahouse, the family disputes in the alleys, or the fate of the rickshaw driver Xiangzi, Lao She reveals the universal emotions of human beings when facing fate, society, and inner struggles through these specific images. This in-depth exploration of human nature has enabled his works to transcend the limitations of time and region, becoming literary classics with universal human emotional resonance.

The teahouse is a microcosm of social life, and the characters in it show how people cope with changes and their emotional reactions. The regulars in the teahouse express their attitudes towards real life through chatting, arguing, and teasing. Some people are optimistic, some are numb, and some are angry. Behind these emotional states is the sense of powerlessness that people feel when facing uncontrollable changes in the times. Through these daily conversations and the fate of the characters, Lao She shows the fragility and tenacity of ordinary people in the face of huge social turmoil, and reveals the common emotions of human beings when facing the unknown and uncertainty.

The characters in the hutongs more often reflect the family and social relationships in human emotions. The hutong life depicted by Lao She is full of human touch. Whether it is daily interactions between neighbors or disputes within the family, the hutongs symbolize the most basic emotional bond between people. Although the people in the hutongs live a simple life and even lack material resources, the intimacy and emotional connection between them make up for this lack. Through these descriptions, Lao She shows how humans find a sense of belonging and security in collective life. This depiction of family and community relationships is not only applicable to the hutongs of old Beijing, but also a universal social phenomenon.

The fate of the rickshaw driver Xiangzi is a reflection of Lao She's profound insight into human nature. Xiangzi's tragedy is not only a reflection of social reality, but also reveals the mental state of human beings when facing shattered dreams and life difficulties. From

Xiangzi's initial hope to his gradual blow to complete despair, Lao She, through the delicate description of Xiangzi's inner world, shows the psychological transformation process of individuals when facing life pressures. This detailed description of individual fate not only reflects the life difficulties of the people at the bottom of society at that time, but also has a broader symbolic meaning - how human beings fight deep in their hearts when facing the oppression of the outside world and the injustice of fate, and whether they can finally maintain hope.

Through these images, Lao She not only reflects the specific problems in Chinese society, but also explores the common emotions of mankind. His works have lasting value across time and space because of their in-depth analysis of human nature and delicate capture of social reality.

Conclusion

Through images such as teahouses, alleys and rickshaws, Lao She not only shows readers the urban life and social outlook of old Beijing, but also reveals the fate of mankind in social turmoil, the individual struggle in historical changes, and the conflict between tradition and modernity. These images not only play the role of plot development in the works, but also have rich symbolic meanings. They are important entry points for understanding the ideological connotation and artistic characteristics of Lao She's works.

As a microcosm of society, the teahouse not only shows the daily life of the characters, but also reflects the changes and turmoil of society. As a symbol of old Beijing, the hutong is not only the carrier of traditional culture, but also a victim of the impact of modernization. Rickshaws reveal the ruthless oppression of the society on the lower classes through individual struggles and failures. Behind these images, Lao She's concern for humanity, criticism of the times and attachment to traditional culture are all reflected.

Looking forward to future research, the image analysis in Lao She's works still has a broad research space. The cultural value and historical significance behind the images of teahouses, alleys, and rickshaws are worth further exploration. With the development of society and the changes of the times, the themes represented by these images in Lao She's works still have practical significance - they remind us to pay attention to human nature and culture in social changes, and reflect on the role and fate of individuals in the historical process.

In general, Lao She's literary world is like a three-dimensional picture of old Beijing. The hustle and bustle of teahouses, the tranquility of alleys and the rush of rickshaws are interwoven into the crystallization of his profound thinking on human nature, society and the times. Through the in-depth interpretation of these images, we can more comprehensively understand Lao She's literary achievements and humanistic care, and also feel the eternal charm of literature and art and social care.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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