

Badness and Struggle in Underclass: Character Analysis on Detective Sun in the Novel Camel Xiangzi

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Abstract: *Camel Xiangzi is an immortal literature that wins universal praise. In this article, the author maintains his focus on the minor character --Detective Sun, tries to analyze his characteristics and figure out the reason and significance that he is shaped in the novel. Although this article analyzes the reasons that lead to the wickedness and hard life of people at the bottom of society from a different perspective, it also works in reflecting the living condition of the lower classes in the Old China. The author analyzes Detective Sun's characteristics from mainly 3 aspects in this article. The first is to study the humanistic part as well as bestial part of this character in depth. The second is to dissect and speculate the reasons that cause his specific words and behaviors. The third is to make analysis on other related persons of his son generation, trying to figure out the common reasons that result in his character. We can draw a conclusion: Detective Sun is a spy who comes from the lowest class. He is extremely poor and makes a living via following and working for exploiting class, via helping them to persecute other ordinary people that come from the same class of him. He is not only a victim of the dark society, but part of the darkness.*

Keywords: *Camel Xiangzi, Detective Sun, Proletariat, Minor Character Image, Underclass*

1. Introduction

Camel Xiangzi is a literature with universal praise. The image of rickshaw puller, Xiangzi, has long been deeply rooted in people's hearts. This literature also has lasting influence on the Chinese literary circle. At present, academic circles mostly study main characters in it. Thus relevant researches have been very plentiful. Conversely, they seldom research minor characters (for example, Detective Sun) the author described less on this kind of character. In addition, this kind of study is mainly teaching focused on research materials of middle and primary school with little content.

Through reading up the original text of Camel Xiangzi, we intend to analyze the character image of Detective Sun through his words and behaviors and the reason why shaping his image. Ultimately, the study will reflect living status of underlying mass in old China from a different perspective other than past researches. This paper will carry out character image analysis to Detective Sun based on using and drawing on analysis method and thinking of minor character image to other literature. Firstly, this article will analyze content about Detective Sun extracted from the original of Camel Xiangzi, then conclude his humanity and barbarity of image. Secondly, we will deeply analyze and reasonably speculate why Detective Sun has certain utterance and behavior. Thirdly, we will find content related to Song Enzi, Wu Xiangzi, and their children who have donned the mantle of their father (two biological fathers and sons, they are all detectives) from Tea House. Then we will carry out the same analysis to them. Finally, we will conclude common points and reason in their characters of these five people.

As an organic part of the overall idea of a novel, the minor character is a harmonious and unified part of the general plotting through a certain structure, the main characters in the novel, the plot and the living environment. These minor characters play an important role in setting off the side, rendering the atmosphere, connecting and promoting the development of the plot and other aspects. In a novel, minor characters are not as important as the main characters or protagonists and carry little length. In fact, they are indispensable parts in a novel. [1], The antagonists among the minor characters in a novel are the model of ugliness of human nature, and often are the object who are attacked and despised by the author. Nevertheless, because of these successful description to negative characters, the image of protagonist and positive character are contrasted better, and it intensifies the criticism in a way, then it makes the plot conflict further sublimated. The negative characters are generally mean, shameless and

ugly, with the foil of these characters, people's sense of justice and the same feeling for the positive characters can be aroused. From this point of view, the negative image has an indelible role in deepening the theme of a novel. [2]When speaking of <Camel Xiangzi>, Xiangzi is the protagonist while figures like Detective Sun and Mr. Cao are supporting character. However, it doesn't mean these characters do not matter. On the contrary, without these characters, the novel could neither highlight Xiangzi's transformation nor reflect cruel oppression of the old society on people who lived at the bottom of the society in a better way. Because he is the chief culprit that causes Xiangzi's material poverty as well as mental injury. Every time when Xiangzi's dream was about to come true, Detective Sun would always take actions to destroy over and over again. As he is familiar with and knows well about Xiangzi, he is able carry out series of blackmail to Xiangzi, which completely reflects his oppression on people of the lower class. In this sense, Detective Sun's character is very important in the novel.

2. The Character Image of Detective Sun

At the beginning of *Camel Xiangzi*, Detective Sun was a platoon commander in a warlord army, and he indirectly led to the first low period (namely, his soldier seized Xiangzi's rickshaw, the result of three years of labor, and detained Xiangzi) in "three ups and downs" of Xiangzi without showing up. From this accident, Xiangzi firstly had a grudge against this unfair world in his pure inward world. Detective Sun came on the stage secondly and officially as Xiangzi pulled the rickshaw for Mr. Cao. At that time, he was on a mission to track down and arrest Mr. Cao, a left-wing progressive intellectual. But Mr. Cao survived because he ducked in time. By contrast, Xiangzi was arrested by Detective Sun ambushing where he returned to the house of Mr. Cao. Detective Sun showed his former warlord platoon commander's identity with the carrot and stick, hoping Xiangzi to be compliance to confess the whereabouts of Mr. Cao. After a psychological struggle, Xiangzi decided to give up his agreement with Mr. Cao, and said the whereabouts of Mr. Cao. Even though Xiangzi acted as Detective Sun's instructions, he still failed to avoid his misfortune, Detective Sun said: you must pay for your free. He also blackmailed Xiangzi on the excuse of Xiangzi's interest and his poor family. Although Xiangzi tried to resist for his hard-earned money, he was still defeated by Detective Sun who had gun and outside help. As such, Xiangzi surrendered his meagre money for life. At this point, Detective Sun no longer appeared, and Xiangzi's fate took a turn for the second time, returning to poverty. Xiangzi's mood also changed at this time. He felt numb and powerless to his personal fate and the suffering society imposed on him. He began to think whether he accepted the reality or not and gave in to the fate. It can be seen that Detective Sun (platoon leader) is the initiator of a major negative turn in Xiangzi's fate. Mr. Law Shaw wrote little content on Detective Sun, but he is a character cannot be ignored. Detective Sun not only represents the social dark forces—the old society's minion, who are insidious and cunning, but also is a low-level figure— as a small patrolman. He has to support many people, and when he is oppressed by others, he also oppresses the common people at the bottom. He directly influences Xiangzi's tragic life because his attack to Xiangzi just "hit the spot".

Detective Sun is the only person in this novel who indirectly causes "Xiangzi's First Low Ebb", and directly lead to Xiangzi's "Second Low Period". Detective Sun reflects another sadness of underclass different from Xiangzi—under the long-term exploitation, they lost their compassion and kindness to all people and things except themselves, and used their only power to spare no effort to oppress the poor people at the lower class, then causing more misfortune.

3. The Analysis on the Reason of Detective Sun's Character Image and the Meaning of His Character

The portrayal of Detective Sun and his tragic fate is a very representative of the times. What we can get from original text is that Detective Sun served as a lackey who comes from low social strata in a state of utter poverty and chose to become a mark of the exploiting class by clinging to them, bringing persecution to ordinary people of the same origin as himself. Such was the way he earned his living. He was not only a victim of the darkness of the old society, but also a part of it. When analyzing why he degenerated, we can divide the reason into internal cause and external cause by the philosophical theory that "internal cause is the basis of things change, and external cause is the condition". Firstly, as for the character of Detective Sun himself (that is the internal factors that form his image), we can get little information directly from the original text. We can conclude that he is insidious and cunning, greedy for money and unsympathetic from the analysis of his behaviors. The above conclusion is

related to his negative part of the character, while there is few text information, we don't know the specific details of forming this character. However, it can be concluded that the immanent cause of Detective Sun's character is his personal limitations, which are mainly embodied in the following three aspects. Firstly, in the years when the old warlords were fighting in chaos, he was a platoon leader that was demobilized from the warlord army and was a typical ruffian soldier. During that period, the military was indisciplined and bully, the law of the jungle prevailed. What he constantly saw and heard in the army shapes his behaviors and habits, he therefore was inevitably contaminated with all the soldier ruffian habits. As it is revealed in the <Camel Xiangzi>, "harboring unkind thoughts, to contact Xiangzi with strong purpose"[3], life experience is one of the most important internal cause of his character. Secondly, he is also reflected by the petty farmer idea that was born with him. Due to the social unrest, economic distress, and popular destitution at that time, people at the bottom were struggling to survive. In order to survive, he had to earn a living via the same ways as he did in the old army, which is to oppress people like Xiangzi who is at the bottom of the society within the sphere of his influence. Aimed at illegal possessing, he makes use of victim's fear to occupy others' possession via threat.[4] As a detective, he knows what he is doing is illegal, but insists on bullying the weak, forming his extremely distorted character and behavior habits. Thirdly, The other immanent cause that lead to his character is the lack of school and family education. Lack of education and his life experience intensifies the formation of his character of a ruffian. In a sense, he is also a rascal at the bottom of the society. Good family education and parents' good example helps teenagers shape right moral views and regularize their behaviors. On the contrary, poor family education and parents' wrong thought or wrong view of value may cause bad habits and lay a negative influence on the formation of person's view of value and life. [5]Based on a full understanding of above opinion, the author regards that, lack of school and family education lead to his abnormal character directly.

Secondly, As for the external cause, combined with the Law Shaw's writing historical background, the reason and formative process of Detective Sun's character is related with whole old social condition. Every person's future and destiny is closely related to the fate of the era and society in which they live. Firstly, the society was in chaos. Sun lived in old China at the beginning of last century, when warlords fought over each other and the country was forced to open its door because of invasion of western countries.

Like an uncivilized and uneducated child who was born with defects, the country was poor and weak. Exploiting thoughts and sense of hierarchy was deeply rooted in the society. Lacking of social security system and legal system, homicide, robbery and racketeering occurred frequently at that time. People had no sense of law, most of people in the city attached importance only on money and tried to gain money and power via whatever ways. In such years, money was paramount, poverty never had a chance to speak, let alone dream. Secondly, people's living is hard. At that time, the living conditions of the proletariat (especially the workers and peasants) were extremely bad, and the broad masses in this kind of living conditions can only meet their most basic needs—survival, what's more, they are more easily become insensitive, and devoid of conscience. Meanwhile, society delivers very limited way out for proletariat, and most way out—such as long term hired hand, tenant farmer, small handicrafts man and other occupation, cannot serve considerable remuneration for the individual, the essence of it is selling their labor force to the landlords and other exploiting classes. If you choose to join the army or become police spy, you can get an opportunity (for instance, robbing and blackmailing the poor) to get interest for yourself in virtue of violence system in the condition of becoming the minions or chess pieces of warlords or other reactionary forces. Thirdly, exploitation was prevailing. Guan Zhong, the ancient Chinese ideologist, once said: "Grub first, then ethics". There is no doubt that there is only a limited number of people, who like Xiangzi in his early days, have high tolerance and can hold their own bottom line, while Detective Sun is likely to be similar to Xiangzi. When he firstly entered the society, he had a certain degree of hope and disappointment, and then finally despaired. In order to survive, he chose to attach himself to the exploiting class and become a part of his violent tools. He merged with the darkness of the old Chinese society. Even so, the living condition of people like Detective Sun will not be improved by their behavior. That is because exploiting class will exploit whoever and whatever contradict their interest in this land. In essence, Detective Sun is just a trivial part, which can be replace and discarded at will, of the vast exploitation machine of the exploiting class. If one day Detective Sun is unable to fulfill the task of his superiors, he may be removed from the police force and end up begging for food on the street, or even die miserably. Detective Sun play role in pushing development of plot (namely, set the stage for Xiangzi's tragic end), and reveal dark reality of old society from another point of view, causing reader to think.

4. Analogy Analysis

Detective Sun's experience is not an isolated case, there are many people who make the same choice as him in the old society. We can find similar character in other works of Law Shaw and other writer, for example, Song Enzi, Wu Xiangzi and their sons in Tea House, many military policemen appeared in The Good Soldier Svejk. Two generations of Song and Wu and their sons respectively hold the post of nark in Qing dynasty and the Republic of China, specially monitoring utterance and behavior of common people. The military policemen in The Good Soldier Svejk are responsible for suppressing the poor of each nation of Austro-Hungary, monitoring their utterance and behavior. These people themselves are not the exploiting class, thus they only get interest by means of brutal method. Maybe this kind of people had unfortunate experience in the past, but they all made a living by fawning on the superiors and bullying the subordinates, oppressing the common people and helping villain to do evil.

5. Conclusion

We can draw a conclusion from above analysis that every person's future and destiny is closely related to the fate of the era and society in which they live. Laose, the author of novel <Camel Xiangzi>, who was born as an ordinary member of the lower class in the city, has an inborn affinity for the small potatoes of his works. The portrayal of Detective Sun and his tragic fate is a very representative of the times. Detective Sun's image is formed together by his personal reason as well as social conditions. In author's opinion, the tragedy of Detective Sun is not only his personal tragedy, but also the tragedy of countless people at the bottom like Xiangzi who are industrious and kind or used to be industrious and kind as well as the tragedy of the society and the era. From Detective Sun, we can catch a glimpse of the stark contrast between the difficult living conditions of the proles in that era featured by numbness and helplessness and the greed and cruelty of the ruling class and classes with vested interests. Meanwhile, these minor characters run through the whole story, liking integral part of the story chain, and these mistakes also lead to chain reaction.[1] In conclusion, the formation of his character was affected by various aspects, including personal reason, the era he lived and social ills. Under the unbalanced destiny that interacted by many social factors, each person's future and destiny, especially the fate of tragedy would gradually expand, and the human tragedy will be a common in the dark days. However, the underlying reasons behind the tragedy requires for careful understanding and need to be reflected in people's introspection of nowadays.

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