

Discussion on *the Hoh Xil Wolf* from the Perspective of Ecocriticism

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Abstract: *Ecocriticism is a literary criticism that explores the relationship between literature and nature under the guidance of ecologism, especially ecological holism. It aims to reveal the ecological thoughts contained in literary works and the ideological and cultural roots of the ecological crisis reflected in literary works. Du Guanghui's Hoh Xil Wolf is a masterpiece on ecology. The work will sort out the concepts related to ecology, briefly introduce the author, and deeply analyze the ecological themes and important ecological enlightenment contained in his works, thus arousing people's ecological consciousness and ecological concept and protecting the beautiful natural environment on which people live.*

Keywords: *Ecocriticism; Ecologism; Ecological thought; Consciousness*

1. Introduction

With the development of society and the intensification of ecological crisis since the industrial revolution, although all countries in the world are bearing the impact of ecological damage, the ecological problems are particularly serious due to China's large land area and rapid industrialization. China also has great potential to lead the world in protecting and maintaining the ecosystem on which life depends, thus meeting everyone's ecological civilization needs [1]. Therefore, ecological literature has attracted great attention. *The Hoh Xil Wolf* by Du, a Chinese writer, was published in 2010. The novel not only conveys his reverence for nature and ecological integrity, but also explores the unique ecological ethics of Chinese Tibetans. This work is a form of expression in which Chinese writers export their ecological thoughts and values to the world. *Hoh Xil Wolf* is one of the most famous works by Chinese writer Du. There is relatively little research on the work and its author from the perspective of ecocriticism. Taking ecological literary criticism as the theoretical framework, the specific embodiment of the author's ecological thought in the work and the important enlightenment of his ecological view to guide people to protect ecology were sorted out based on the in-depth study of the work.

2. Important Concepts

Ecological crisis intensified caused ecological literature. The prosperity of ecological literature and its research "is an urgent need for mankind to reduce and prevent ecological disasters in the field of literature, and is also the deep concern of writers and scholars about the fate of the earth and all life on earth in the field of creation and research" [2]. The rise of contemporary ecological literature in China can be traced back to the early 1980s. Writers with a strong sense of ecological crisis and social mission deeply feel that the surging industrialization and market economy under the background of reform and opening up have brought us abundant material wealth, while causing serious damage to the natural ecological environment. They all waved their pens and issued a strong appeal to the ecological ethics of harmonious coexistence between man and nature through literary creation [3].

2.1. Ecocriticism

Wang, professor of Xiamen University, defined "ecocriticism" as follows in European and American Ecological Literature: "ecocriticism is a literary criticism that explores the relationship between literature and nature under the guidance of ecologism, especially ecological holism. It aims to

reveal the ecological thoughts contained in literary works and the ideological and cultural roots of the ecological crisis reflected in literary works, and explore the ecological aesthetics and artistic expression of literature" [4]. In the late 1970s, "ecocriticism" has been comprehensively developed due to the promotion of the global ecological movement, and its theory has been continuously enriched and improved without exception. An "ecological aesthetics" led by ecocriticism came into being and gradually showed a trend of rapid development. Ecological aesthetics is a new discipline formed by ecology and aesthetics, which studies the relationship between man and nature, man and environment. Fundamentally, it is an aesthetic view of ecological ontology. Both ecocriticism and ecological aesthetics are writers or scholars who infiltrate their interpretation of ecological consciousness into literature, following the ecology-centered and nature-centered approach and examining literature from the perspective of the relationship between man and nature [5]. Although there are different definitions on ecocriticism, generally speaking, ecocriticism includes four aspects. First, ecocriticism takes ecological holism as the basic guiding ideology. Second, the main task and purpose of ecocriticism is to reveal the ecological thoughts contained in literary works and the ideological and cultural roots of ecological crisis, and explore the ecological aesthetics and artistic expression of literature. Third, the research scope of ecocriticism must be limited to the relationship between nature and literature, and cannot be separated from nature to study the inner world of man, the relationship between man and society in the text. Fourth, the object of ecocriticism can be both ecological texts and criticism of all texts from an ecological perspective [6].

2.2. Ecological Consciousness

In Ecological Philosophy, Mr. Yu wrote that "ecological consciousness is a new value reflecting the harmonious development of man and nature". Further, he explained the concept of ecological consciousness: "in a broad sense, ecological consciousness is the manifestation of human beings in natural ecology, and the reflection of the relationship between man and nature as well as the interdependence, mutual influence and interaction between society. In a narrow sense, it is the reflection of human beings to the practical problems such as natural resources, environmental pollution and ecological imbalance caused by the period of industrial civilization when the natural ecological environment has developed to a certain stage" [7]. Therefore, ecological consciousness is actually a cognition and reflection of the relationship between man and nature, man and society, and man and man.

3. Writer Du Guanghui and His Work *Hoh Xil Wolf*

3.1. Writer Du Guanghui

Chinese writer Du was born in the northern suburb of Xi'an in 1954. He was rated as a first-class Chinese writer and was a self-taught, struggling and productive writer. Hitherto, he has published four novels, *Hoh Xil Wolf*, *Surging Paste*, *Western Car Gang* and *Fairway*, 41 novelettes, such as *No One can Help*, *Road Cornerstone*, *Medical Road*, *Business Road*, etc., and 34 short stories, such as *Deep Mountain Road Keeper*, *Woman on the Beach*, *Life at a Remote Station*, *Shooting Star*, etc. Also, he wrote essays and comments of nearly 6 million words, such as *A Talented Scholar in a Poor Family*, *Torture the Ugliness in Human Nature*, *Creating Works Worthy of The Times*, *Hainan in the Eyes of a Writer*, etc. He has won the "first national excellent environmental literature award".

Due to his poor family, he had not graduated from middle school. In order to live, he resolutely decided to serve in the PLA Automobile Regiment despite the harsh environment on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. There, he experienced various severe environmental tests, such as hypoxia on the plateau, ice and snow, accompanied by death, etc. After his demobilization in 1975, Du entered Xi'an railway transportation school. After three years of technical secondary school, he was assigned to Dabashan Maobaguan railway station in 1978. It was a harsh place, inaccessible, surrounded by endless loneliness. In his loneliness, he chose to take the road of literature. As a young man who finished middle school during the "cultural revolution", he realized that he was far from the literary literacy required for creation. He often used public holidays to borrow bibliographies and publications elsewhere through various methods. He read a large number of literary journals eagerly, racing against time to make up for his lack of literary literacy. After studying hard for nearly three years, he began to try writing. After numerous times of rejection, his short story *Deep Mountain Road Keeper* was finally published in the provincial publication "Pentium" in 1983, and then he gradually embarked on the road of literary circles.

3.2. *Hoh Xil Wolf*

As one of the few ecological writers in modern China, Du's *Hoh Xil Wolf* is an ecological masterpiece. It was rated as the key supporting work of the Chinese writers association in 2009 and collected by the Australian library. The upper part of the novel tells the story that a PLA surveying and mapping team entering Hoh Xil depopulated area to perform tasks in early 1970. The lower part describes the thrilling conflict and game between man and nature as well as the good and evil in human nature when the surveying and mapping team members entered Hoh Xil again after demobilization under the background of reform and opening up and economic development. In the novel, Hoh Xil was originally desolate, primitive and beautiful. However, since human beings broke into Hoh Xil to search for gold, they not only seriously damaged the natural ecology of Hoh Xil, but also shot and killed a batch of Tibetan antelopes for money and extravagant lifestyle. This work shows the author's negation and sadness about human anti ecological civilization.

4. Ecological Theme in *Hoh Xil Wolf*

In *Hoh Xil Wolf*, the author Du explored the root of the imbalance between man and nature, and criticized the view of "anthropocentrism", human conquering and controlling nature. It also calls for and advocates the harmonious coexistence between man and nature. The ancients feared nature and believed that all things have spirituality. In China, the idea of "harmony between man and nature" is generally regarded as the cream of ecological civilization heritage by modern people. The idea of harmony between man and nature originated from Mencius, while the concept of harmony between man and nature was *dong Zhongshu* in the Han Dynasty. This thought attaches importance to the coordination and balance between man and nature, emphasizes that natural law is the most basic and unshakable law, and emphasizes that human behavior can not violate heaven, and can be integrated with nature. The popular folk prayer "good wind and rain" reflects the ancient people's thinking about the relationship between man and nature, and the primitive ecological viewpoint that they expect to live in harmony with nature while reverent to nature.

4.1. *Human Beings Should Protect Animals Instead of Torturing Them*

In his "respect for nature" theory, American philosopher Paul Taylor talked about how to deal with the relationship between man and nature. He pointed out that human beings should follow four basic rules: "the principle of non-harm, the principle of non-intervention, the principle of loyalty and the principle of compensatory justice. The so-called principle of non harm is not to kill individuals, not to destroy populations and life communities". Therefore, all things in nature do not exist as human servants. They are independent individuals with internal value. Human beings have no right to end their lives [8]. When the survey team faced with insufficient food supply, the survey team chose to focus on the wild animals in Hoh Xil for the sake of human food and life. After killing wolves and innocent wild yaks successively, they have attracted the revenge of wolves and wild yaks. Also for the so-called human safety, the survey team cruelly slaughtered wolves and wild yaks by seemingly clever but despicable means. Wang, the surveyor, even shouted happily after killing the wolves: "this time I have had enough addiction to guns" (Du, 2010: 59). Later, Wang shot Katyusha, the yellow sheep who always regarded human beings as friends and trusted human beings. The yellow sheep in Hoh Xil depopulated area will not associate the submachine gun with death, because "humans have never entered the no man's land, and the yellow sheep in the no man's land have never seen people, and there is no one among their natural enemies, and thus they are not afraid when they see people" (Du, 2010: 60). In his principle of loyalty, Taylor proposed the proper behavior of human towards wild animals, requiring people to "not break the trust of a wild animal to us, not deceive and mislead them, but to support their wishes" (Zhu, 2006: 11).

4.2. *Hatred of Human Destruction on Ecological Balance*

In his work *Hoh Xil Wolf*, Du described that there were hundreds of millions of wild animals in Hoh Xil depopulated area, such as Tibetan antelopes, wild yaks, snow bears, snow leopards, wild horses, wild donkeys, stone sheep, argali sheep, lynx, etc. There is an ice steamed bread like a huge emerald. It is two floors high and about thirty or forty meters in diameter. Also, there are picturesque snow scenes (Du, 2010: 27). However, the animals in Hoh Xil were not only shot due to the arrival of human beings, but also the original white snow plain and other natural landscapes were destroyed. Hoh Xil itself

constitutes a harmonious and balanced whole. In this pure world without external interference, life is equal and free. Living in such an ecological whole, every life is close to and interdependent with other life. However, human beings did not respect the whole nature and did not understand the natural laws of Hoh Xil, and thus they rashly entered. Finally, 24 young surveying and mapping soldiers lost their lives in Hoh Xil.

4.3. Criticism of Human Endless Desire

Thoreau, a famous American naturalist writer, pointed out that "human development is by no means the possession of material wealth, but the enrichment of spiritual life, the improvement of personality, and the increasing harmony between nature and people". Wang, a professor of Fudan University and a researcher of Chinese ecological literature, pointed out in his book *Ecology and Mentality* that "it is also reasonable for people to satisfy their desires and live increasingly comfortably. However, the ecological crisis since the second half of the 20th century tells us that there is an irreconcilable contradiction between people's unlimited demand for materials and the limited carrying capacity of the ecosystem. If human beings do not limit their development, the result can only be accelerated towards extinction" [9]. Du believes that the destruction of the earth's environment is actually caused by the malignant expansion of human desire, rather than an inevitable result of economic development. As long as human greed exists, no matter how beautiful the ecology will be destroyed by human beings. In *Hoh Xil Wolf*, human beings represented by Wang have gradually increased their desire after seeing the external value, and even changed from human nature to wolf nature. Driven by desire, Wang, et al., completely lost their humanity and morality and became numb. Wang's transformation from human nature to wolf nature is fundamentally caused by the change of consumption concept. The consumption concept of pursuing material desire and extravagant life makes Wang become the executioner who nearly exterminates Hoh Xil species and destroys Hoh Xil ecology. Therefore, it is urgent for man and nature to live in harmony, limit human desires and change people's extravagant consumption concept to protect the primitive ecology.

5. Ecological Enlightenment in Hoh Xil Wolf

Du, the author of *Hoh Xil Wolf*, is a writer with great conscience. He said: "I am eager for my work to be like a sharp scalpel, to thoroughly uncover the dirty veil of human society, to show its most essential core naked, to break and clean the pus hidden in the social background, and to show the beautiful and fresh world to readers" (Du, 2010: 59). He actively thought about the causes of the ecological crisis and the strategies to improve the ecological crisis.

5.1. People Should Love Nature and cherish all life

The limitation of natural resources and the unrestrained nature of human seizing resources from nature will undoubtedly have a negative impact on human survival and long-term development. Du expressed the view of reverence for life in *Hoh Xil Wolf* that we should limit and restrain the behavior of destroying ecology, thus benefiting the long-term development of man and nature. In his works, Tibetan Rendan Caiwang regarded Hoh Xil depopulated area as the holy land of Buddha, and was full of reverence and fear for everything in Hoh Xil. Among the Tibetan people, Hoh Xil is the holy land of the Buddha. Tibetans regard their fat sheep, yaks, highland barley, brick tea and butter as the gifts of the Buddha. Tibetans abide by the rules of generations, do not step into the Buddha's holy land, and do not enter the Hoh Xil depopulated area. They regard every tree and grass in Hoh Xil as the Buddha's holy things. The basic meaning of Schweitzer's "reverence for life" ethic is that human beings must maintain an attitude of awe not only for human life, but also for plant and animal life. He believes that human beings are members of the earth's life community and do not exist independently. It depends on the harmony of other life and the whole world. "We live in the world, and the world also lives in us" (Shi, 1992: 21). Therefore, human beings should fear all life, because caring for other life is basically caring for human beings themselves. If human beings do not respect other life, human respect for their own life is not guaranteed.

5.2. People must Establish Ecological Consciousness and Assume Ecological Responsibility

The 20th century is a century of vigorous development of science and technology, but also a century of problems. The current ecological crisis is caused by human beings. Therefore, as a member of nature,

human beings must take responsibility for it. Only when everyone undertakes the corresponding ecological responsibility and natural mission can the current severe ecological crisis be alleviated and solved. Only by rebuilding the ecological balance of nature can human beings make all species on the planet survive healthily and continuously. Carson once pointed out that "if human beings with unlimited ability continue to conquer nature irresponsibly, irrationally and intelligently, they can only bring complete destruction to the earth and themselves" (Wang, 2011: 249). Therefore, it is the duty of every citizen to protect the natural ecology from being ravaged and to repair the wounds caused by human beings. Only in this way can people improve the precarious tension between man and nature and realize the orderly and sustainable development of human beings. As a member of the ecosystem, human beings are responsible not only for the whole earth, but also for all life forms as a member of nature [10].

5.3. People should be guided to appreciate the Beauty of Nature as a Spiritual Enjoyment

Carson believes that human destruction to natural beauty is closely related to human spiritual decline. She pointed out that "I believe that natural beauty has an indispensable place in the spiritual development of any individual or any society. I believe that whenever we destroy natural beauty and replace natural objects with man-made and manual things, we will hinder the development of human spirit in some ways". In *Hoh Xil Wolf*, the author attaches importance to the relationship between natural beauty and human spirit. The description of natural beauty not only brings readers' interest in cultivating their minds, but also triggers readers' yearning for a better ecological environment as a green emotional link, which plays a positive role in protecting natural ecology. Traditional natural aesthetics is usually characterized by instrumentalization of nature. However, Du broke free from this idea and highly praised and appreciated the natural beauty of Hoh Xil, which was unspoiled and unaltered by human beings. On the one hand, his description on beautiful natural scenery of Hoh Xil brings spiritual pleasure to the readers. On the other hand, it also leads to the readers' hatred on destroying the natural beauty, which plays a positive role in awakening the readers' ecological consciousness. Only when people have the consciousness of appreciating natural beauty and regard enjoying natural beauty as spiritual enjoyment, can they actively love nature and protect the ecological environment.

6. Conclusions

Harmony between man and nature is the most ideal and expected ecological concept of human beings. If the original ecological beauty on the earth is artificially destroyed, human beings will lose the pleasure of feeling the natural beauty and can not really obtain happiness. Although the creation of ecological novels does not necessarily change the readers completely, adhering to the natural beauty itself as the aesthetic purpose can make people feel the charm of the original natural beauty, thus purifying the human spirit and arousing people's longing for the beautiful natural ecology. Taking the *Hoh Xil Wolf* as an example, this work deeply analyzed the ecological theme and ecological enlightenment contained in his works from the perspective of ecocriticism, thereby arousing people's ecological consciousness and ecological concept and consciously maintaining the harmony and beauty of the ecosystem.

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