The Call of the Wild--Comment on Hei He's Animal Novels

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Keywords: Eco-Literature, Equality of All Things, Non-Anthropocentrism, Animal Nature.

Abstract. Hei He's animal novels embody the concepts and ideas of Eco-literature. The idea of universal equality and the notion that man is an integral part of nature are the key ecological thought which possess the philosophical connotation of non-anthropocentrism. He abides by the animal novel’s writing norms and requirements. He claims reality strictly, depicts the natural and instinctive nature of animals vividly, and describes the destruction and reconstruction of human civilization.

Introduction

Hei He, the animal novelist of Mongolian nationality, travels from place to place in the mountain and the wilderness, lives in the tents of herdsmen, chases wild beasts all year round. Hiding in the vast forest of northern Tibet, or the snow-covered plateau. He uses the animals as the protagonist, describes their lives and shows the charm of life. His novels reveal grand scenarios, tough without losing the sense of elegance, full of wild and savage appeal. The primary folk customs of the herdsmen are gradually presented in the novels like a scroll.

Adhere to the Principle of Non-Anthropocentrism

Hei He's animal novels claim the ecological consciousness of the harmony between man and nature, and embody the ecological ethics of life Freemasonry. The philosophy of harmony of everything is the key thought throughout Hei He’s works. All outstanding animal novels, exclusively from “God’s perspective”, give deep thought to animals’ essence of life and right of existence of natural, and positioning of human beings, to create a future picture of the pursuit of the nature of harmony and common prosperity. Hei He’s animal novels show the writer’s thought of the destruction of the nature, the lack of simple humanity, dying out of the divine culture, and the ecological crisis phenomenon of animals. Hei He’s animal novels praised the unity of nature and the nomadic civilization, praise the wonder of wild animal, calling for human to establish new ecological humanity, reflecting an excellent animal fiction writer on the artistic level and depth of thought.

Kids in the Wolf Valley, Tara used an injured female wolf as bait, attracted the male wolves of the grassland. Once the male wolf appeared, Tara would drive after it until the wolf exhausted, he killed the wolf. By this way, Tara had killed 7 male wolves, and finally killed female wolf. Since then, there was no wolf on this piece of prairie. On that very night, an old herdsman Jabu argued with Tara in the yurt fiercely. Jabu angrily shouted “what will happen as there is no wolf, which means there won’t any wolves at all?”. Hei He's animal novels concern the selfishness and cruelty of humans, who are driven by lures and anthropocentrism, resulting in the extinction other species, which is the beginning of ecological disaster, the darkness after the losing of natural balance. In Kingdom of Reindeer, the old grandmother told the granddaughter “kid, this is the gift of the forest, on which our generation feeding, but we had never broken branches, the new herb will grow tomorrow”. Human shall restrict desires, do not overdo anything. If they merely seek short-term interests, they will end in a lose-lose situation. “My forest kid, you are not born to suffer, I was not born to starve, please forgive me. The grazes, the wolf eat sheep, the wolf turns to dust, nourishing grass, which is life cycle in the nature.” Those words touch the hearts. All creatures in this world
including man, wolf and sheep, are in one unity, have to experience the origin of life, the multiplication of offspring, in essence, all life is in the struggle to survive. “These animals and all the birds are like us, the reindeer, we are all forest children.” What the grandma said is there is a bit of me in you and a bit of you in me, we need each other.

Hei He’s animal novels are rarely didactic. Calm and undemonstrative, the writer never preaches as moral preacher or leafleteer, his thoughts on ecological ethics and ecological development convey to the readers through charming stories in a natural way. Beneath the temperance and calm is thought-provoking meditation. The novel *Qin Mu Qie* is a story about a dog named Qin mu qie, which means the “six toe” in Evenk language. “I” suggested to Baa Jay to cut off the extra toe which is also called dew-claws, because it was unnecessary and might cause massive bleeding and infection. But Baa Jay did not do so, because she believed that all things are born with a reason, so there is no need to remove it. “I” can not help but admire the wit. What exist is reasonable. This is a typical perspective of non anthropocentrism. Respect the law of nature as the highest law, respect all the inherent nature and external form of nature.

A lot of Hei He’s animal novels use the Ewenki nation as object, and tell their jungle animal stories. Because of the modern civilization, young people are about to give up Ewenki tribal nomadic life. They go out of the tent, the mountains, at the cost of losing freedom. The writer felt sorry for the change of the Ewenki lifestyles in the near future. *Kingdom of Reindeer* is about the last batch of Ewenki people when they go out of the primeval forest completely. Baa Jay was an senior in the tribe, and she had a negative attitude toward what she called a sedentary life. She was not confused, she knew the past days had gone and there wouldn’t be a way back for the Ewenki people. The novel adopts the polyphonic structure, as it tells the story, it indicates Barbara Rajaj’s worry about Ewenki’s destiny, the denial of the destruction of the natural for the modern civilization. She singed out words like: “Do you look at the tree in the city center? They are bent by weep.”, “There are wrinkles on the heart of the people who live in the city.”, “Who on hell can hunt the can kill female wolf with calf? What kind of hunter will kill a pregnant female wolf? But the truth is there are this kind of hunter whose eyes are contaminated by greed. Even the crow would rather not to look at their greedy eyes.”, “Our God-given mountain, forest and water are destroyed. The sinners will be punished.” She refused to go with others, stayed in the camp, waiting for a reindeer called “jeans” to come back. Baa Jay silently watched the world, witnessed the human running against nature, killing animals wantonly. At the end of the novel, Baa Jay went deep in the woods with the reindeer, and the wolf, and the creatures. She chose the forest and become in one with the nature.

Hei He is very good at portraying characters in the natural environment, creating physical blending. Nature is boundless, it echoes the loneliness of life, in the meanwhile it breeds the desire for depending on each other. In the novel *Ice Lake*, an old dog and an old man constitute a unit, which take care of each other and can not be separated. In the eyes of the writer there is no difference between man and animal. The aging dog is in contrast with the aging man, who are very similar to each other. They both symbolized the ending of life and extinction. In the novel, the writer describes picture of a complete piece of silence in the end of time. The third living thing is a desperate Mongolian gazelle. When the death comes, man and animal couldn’t do but stand in front of god. The old and man took the risk of the frozen rive to save the Mongolian gazelle, while the old dog died. The time left for the old man wouldn’t be too much either. The novel reveals the human, animal and all creatures are equal in the universe, they share similar fate and destiny, and they also share mutual warmth and care. It is quite possible that the death of one breeds the hope for life of another. That is the circle of life.

**Highlight Animals’ Instinct and Touches on the Essence of Humanity**

Hei He’s animal novels praise the wonder and the inherent genes by the creator. The life of animals and the spirit of human constitute the main tone of the narration in Hei He’s animal novels. Literary critic Zhu Ziqiang had highly regarded Hei He’s works. In the preface he wrote for *Fella Ben*, he said Hei He is very honest to show the readers how much he knows about the animals. He
has just done what he can do. He said it is difficult to create animal novels. Try his best to learn about the animals, while not make up stories with reluctance, which is the right attitude shall be taken by the Chinese animal novel writers. It his honesty won my trust. “Without reluctance” implies not to overstate, not to exaggerate or make up. This is indeed an important requirement for animal fiction. Lacking of the “honest” and the real creation, the animal novels are usually unable to show the literary and aesthetic value and tend to be guilty of affection, which are, strictly speaking, even can not be called animal novels. Theorists Zhu and Hei He argue this view from different respective, based on their own specialties.

Hei He writes in accordance with the animal’s natural characteristics strictly without fake designing or adding any plots out of guess or fiction literature. Hei He insists on arranging the story according to the real animal habits. In his novels, it isn’t possible to find out the fictitious fairy-tale-like emotional entanglements between animals and human beings. In Spitz, Aya was a mixed-blood fox, mixed with fox and dog. To a great extent, it was a fox with a cunning nature, then, it was also a dog with enthusiasms, so it liked to be close to me, but never wagged. It can not be a partner to “me”. At the end of the novel, Aya caught a bonasa. When it tasted the bird’s blood, it went back to the wild world, following the hidden gene succeeded from its ancestor. “Standing at the entrance to the cave, I am calling its name. But there is no response, so I left alone. That is where it is belonged.” This is a true description, Aya did not become a true dog but a fox only because it ate my food, accepted my feeding, or was touched by me. It was a spitz all the way. Black Fire is the piece for which Hei He is awarded. It tells a story about a Tibetan mastiff named Geisang, which was from the Northern Tibet. As pure-blooded as Geisang was, the giant animal maintained the magic primitive animal spirit. It grew and changed as it met different people when it lived in different areas from Northern Tibet, Lhasa, Harbin, to Inner Mongolia grassland. The writer mainly described the emotion between Geisang and Han Ma, an university graduate. The most touching part is what had grown out of nothing between them, is how they changed from guarding to trusting, and is the emotion which was subtle at the beginning and finally became enthusiastic. Geisang had been faithful to humans by instinct in the past, but it couldn’t feel the impulse to love from the bottom of heart until the appearance of the Han Ma. Since then, the cold and tough dog burst into great passion, it fell in love with the new master without reservation. Unfamiliar to show love, it seemed quite impetuous. Although what restrained it is the strong self-esteem, it gave itself pleasure out of its nature. Hei He captured the Geisang’s psychological state of that moment, then described the touching and funny scene when the giant animal showed its emotion. Being adopted and trusted, Geisang owned his lover with love and warmth. From then on, it was Geisang’s way to show and feel love for to play with Han Ma. In the novel, one day, Han Ma was very tired, but he when he saw Geisang running towards him with expectation in the eyes, he tried his best to cheer up to play with it, rolling and chasing. This plot also shows that the Hei He’s serious attitude towards writing, for he doesn’t portrayed the animal into some magic beings, but write in accordance with the animal behavior strictly to the show their actual behavior and how they understand emotion.

Hei He’s animal novel describes the true nature of human beings as well as the animals. There is no need to beautify the animals or human beings. Hei He’s animal novels return the nature of animals and people to the original state. In Silent Birch Forest, as part of animal, the nomadic people are integrated with the nature closely. They kept a certain distance with the animals, and usually they acted according to the their gene codes hidden by the nature invisibly just like animals. In this novel, the writer wants to convey the idea that man is neither a God or a saint, nor a killer or a criminal. People struggled to survive facing the great power of nature just like the animals, under the harsh natural conditions of that bitter cold area. People, animal, mountain and forest are united in one, they shared the same destiny which is to survive and reproduce. So the people’s behavior are also out of instinct and urge to live. In Silent Birch Forest, the hunter Bartle did not kill the wolf, of which the reason is not out of his mercy or the unnamed tenderness for lives. Similarly, he killed the wolf not out of cruelty and stone-heart. The only reason was what he encountered, who the opponent was and how much they influence on their lives when he struggled to live, (in the birch forest, the opponent of human was the wolf). Every year, Bartle had to cut off a piece of velvet, but
this year, the appearance of the wolf destroyed his living condition. Therefore, they were opposite to each other. The only way to solve the problem is to kill one or another. Bartle took the actions. At first, he reminded the female wolf of his presence and let it go, but it didn’t work. The second time, he killed the baby wolf secretly to threaten the female wolf, it didn’t work either. He finally killed the female wolf at the third time, which ended the whole thing. From releasing the wolf to killing it, Bartle didn’t show much. The writer didn’t make up any up and down plots to show the extreme happiness and sadness. Just as what was written at the beginning of the story, “Bartle didn’t show off for he could be integrated with the forest, when he got access to the prey he made no sound to let it know, so that he was received as the trunk or rock by the animals” He is part of the mountain and forest. He didn’t see himself as a man, who wasn’t supervisor to anyone or slave to anyone. Even his daily behavior was out of his instinct of living in the forest. Killing the opponent, is the one of the forest principle. Just as the wolf, why he killed is not for killing itself but for survival, which is the same as any animal. Without any modification and dramas, there is no tenderness of the fairy tales, man and animal listened to their own instinct which was driven by the great power of natural principle, merely, they lived their own lives through out millions of year. The shock power of Hei He’s novels lies in the “truth” what a masterpiece asks for, as it is what the world is, with its true natural order and original state, no one is over it.

The aesthetic focus of Hei He’s animal novels is the competition between the living things which are wild, masculine and deep, the vigorous but subtle living principles, the universal equality for every species to obey the principles, the circle of life and death, and the praise for life facing the cruelest heat and chill. The Hei He’s animal novels are as pure as the beginning of the world, and the primary era when the mother of earth breeds.

References

