The Tragic Love of the Cultural Collision--Take
The Muslim’s Funeral as an Example
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Abstract. The Muslim’s Funeral is the first successful book in contemporary Chinese minority literature which shows traditional culture and real life of Hui people. It describes a Muslim family’s sixty-year ups and downs and the two crisscrossed love tragedies occurs in different forms. This novel, with its real and special view, reveals the Muslim’s spiritual journey under the cultural collision of Huaxia and Islam. This paper aims to show the tragic love in The Muslim’s Funeral, and then further analyzes and discusses the exchange and the collision between different culture hidden in love story. A staged scene of life dram in the book not only deduces the fragile life and love in cultural collision, but also reflects the confusion and pain in the process of cultural integration.

Introduction

The Muslim’s Funeral is a novel written by Huo Da, it mainly describes the ups and downs of a hand craftsman Liang Yiqing’s jade workshop. The author uses two clues to intertwine the fate of Han Ziqi and his daughter Han Xingyue together. Finally the two becomes one, showing the changes of Liang’s three generations fate. This novel has a strong historical sense and vigorous tenacious life consciousness.

Poignant Love Tragedy

In this almost 400000 words novel, the most impressive part is legendary and tragic love of Liang's three generations. From Han Ziqi and Liang's two sisters’ entanglements to Xinyue and Chu Yanchao’s forever part, this love tragedy not only constitutes the most magnificent part of this book, but also reflects the tragic ending of Muslim’s culture in the process of collision with modern civilization. This tragedy is particularly prominent in the Xinyue and Chu Yanchao’s love story. One of them is a pure girl of the Hui nationality, another is the innocent teacher of the Han nationality. They stages a twist and turn of love in pain and struggle. Their love is pure and beautiful, but ends up with tragedy, failing to resist the huge differences of cultural contradictions. Similarly, Liang Ziqi, who wanders in Liang’s two sisters, finally confesses that he is the Han nationality that pushes the tragedy of the book to a climax. Muslim families, which have a strong doctrines and pure faith, have long been unconsciously on the Han culture brand in the history of change. "Muslim funeral" begins with “funeral”, but also ends up with “funeral”. Three generations of joys and sorrows, ups and downs witnesses the fate of a family changes, and at the same time shows a nation's prosperity and decline.

Huge Cultural Conflict

Islam is one of the three religions tied to Buddhism and Christianity, also known as Muslim. Islam is Arabic, meaning obedience. People who believe in Islam are known as Muslim, meaning obedient. Ningxia is the place where Islam prevails. The story of The Muslim’s Funeral also takes place here. Muslims have a pious belief in Islam and the Koran. According to the Koran, the Islamic law stipulates that only men and women are both Muslims, or they cannot get married. This
provision constitutes the potential prerequisites of The Muslim’s Funeral, and also foreshadows the tragic love.

What the mutual contact and communication between the two different cultures can bring with is partial integration. However, the huge differences failing to integrate may cause collisions and confrontations between two cultures, which is the cultural conflict. With the continuous cultural exchange and integration of the nation, the deepening of knowledge and civilization, the traditional Muslim family, which strictly adhere to the Islamic, gradually falls apart. Different cultures of collision and integration will be infinitely enlarged when these circumstances is specified to a small family. This magnification leads to sharper collisions. As an Islamic writer, the author spilled a lot of ink in the novel depicting many culture-specific marriage and funeral customs of the Islamic. As a minority writer, it is Huo Da’s perseverance and faith. But at the same time, we can also notice that Huo Da is not a blind Islamic spirit and faith supporter. He is not anxious to claim his own Muslim identity, instead, he uses a unique view to hide his opinion and infuses many doctrines, beliefs into the complex character and relationship, showing us a tragedy of several generations in which no one is wrong.

The Muslim’s funeral focuses on the love of several generations between two peoples (Hui peoples and Han peoples). If there is no Muslim identity and strict faith in the rules, then there is no love tragedies. Until the death of Xingyue, this contradiction and confliction reaches a climax. Chu Yanchao, regardless of his Han identity, participates in the funeral and explores the grave as Xinyue’s family. This can be seen as a rebellion against the traditional Islamic rules. And at the end of the story, with Han Ziqi conferring to his Han identity, the book reaches another climax. This is a complete rebellion against Muslims and Islamic faith, and it is also the core part of the tragedy. Here, the tragedy is infinitely enlarged and closely connected with each character in the novel, and the contradiction has also reached its maximum. Different faith leads to insurmountable gap of the two peoples, however, in the process of continuous exchange and integration, this insurmountable difference of faith is tried and overturned again and again, in this unavoidable historical process, this kind of tragic pain is inevitable, but it may not be completely miserable. On the contrary, this practice provides us with more than one kind of new national exchange and integration attempts.

There is no right or wrong in religion and culture. With the changes of times and history religion has been given a unique and obscure meaning in the collision with the Chinese culture, presenting its unique spiritual characteristics. The characters and love stories in the book, mapping through religious, have become an epitome of the times and a symbol of collision between different cultures. The two entwined love tragedies in the novel is the reflection of pains and injury caused by the collision and blending of different cultures, different values, different ideals, different ways of thinking and lifestyles.

**Complex Personality in Cultural Intercourse**

The intertwining and collision of culture has played an important role in promoting the storyline and perfecting the image of characters, and this barrier and collision between the cultures is also specified to the characters. Therefore, people function as different cultures. It is the fate of these people who represent different cultures; the ups and downs of their emotion that constitute the complete transformation of the works and also confirm the exchange and fusion of different nationalities and cultures. The specific characters in this family, where full of dramatic and uncertain factors, have become representatives and remarks of Chinese culture and Islamic culture. The ups and downs of the characters, in fact, displays the mutual influences and interaction of the two cultures.

Chu Yanchao, the teacher of Liang Xinyue, is a typical representative of the Chinese culture. As a teacher who has taught at Peking University, he has many virtues of traditional Chinese, such as simple and kindness, serious and responsible, frank and enthusiasm. In the whole work, he has a task of representing the Han national culture, so he instilled new ideas, new knowledge to Xinyue, and dared to break the bondage of religion to pursue their own love. He encouraged seriously ill Xinyue with love and brought with her hope. However, at the end of story, Chu Yanchao’s bold
behavior in Xinyue’s funeral, reflects Chinese culture’s great rebel against Islamic culture. He violated the rules of Islam, explored the grave with the identity of the Chinese and desperately kissed Xingyue. This is prohibited in the Muslim tradition, but is infinitely enlarged at the funeral. Here, the violent collision of the two cultures is also infinitely enlarged.

Followed by Liang Junbi, a devout Islamist who resolutely pursues the moral norms of the Muslims and the doctrines of the Koran strictly demands herself and her children. In the book, she resolutely opposed the love between Xinyue and Chu Yanchao, but she was very kind to poor “aunt” who is also a Hui people. She is a complex contradictory body. In the vast majority of Muslim women, such an image can be used as a typical. They are simply and directly and have close to the original logic of life; they use a near self-deception way to adhere to the so-called Muslim tradition. She is a direct fuse of Xinyue and Chu Yanchao’s love tragedy. Also she is the representative of the heterogeneous culture who follows the Islamic rules.

In *The Muslim’s Funeral*, such kind of staggered cultural collision is reflected on Han Xinyue. On the one hand, she, who is influenced by the Muslim culture, has a traditional concept for love and family; On the other hand, she has received a good education, and she has greatly influenced by Han culture to some degree. The two cultures integrated in her, shapes her contradictory characteristic. She eagers for love, and boldly pursues love. She relies on love to obtain hope for surviving however, her identity of Muslim and her mother's harsh opposition make her confused and doubted about the future and love more than once. Finally, she left world with despair and hope. The name of Xinyue (means a new moon in English) has a strong symbolic meaning. Different from Full Moon, a new moon, representing weak, small and helpless, is like Xinyue in the novel, who eagers to love but doubtful and hopes for the coming of tomorrow but often falls into the darkness of life.

**Structure Strengthening the Contradiction**

Most of the literary works are written through one clue. In order to pursue the broad contents and the ups and downs of the plot, some works will describe in a two-line or even multi-line structure. *The Muslim’s Funeral* is the one that uses two-line structure to describe. But what the unique point is that the novel is adopted on the play of the polyphonic structure. This structure, filling of contradictions and tension, fits the conflicts of two different cultures and riches the forms of contradiction. Also, the polyphonic structure reinforces the contradiction and the collision.

The story is divided into two series called “moon” and “jade”. Moon and Jade, as two clues, are promoted parallelly but cross elaborately. Part “Jade” mainly elaborates Liang Yiqing’s twists and turns life, and the love and tragedy between Han Ziqi, Liang Junbi, and Liang Bingyu under the historical and social background. In this part, author tries to describe Liang’s three generations’ struggling process in the pursuit of balance and development in traditional Islamic culture and modern culture. While another part takes “moon” as the center, which mainly describes the love tragedy of Han Xinyue to perform the process of the third generation of Liangs’ hopes for breaking away from the national yoke, and pursuing the freedom of love and independent personality. The two parts are intertwined with each other to form a polyphonic structure.

And in the shape of the tragedy of this family, Ho Da pursues a dramatic contradiction and tension. The text begins with flashback, and then launches with the two clues and merges the two parts at the end of the story. This very dramatic way of writing gives the text a great deal of tension. The ups and downs of the plot and the inheritance of the story also use the way of drama to maximize the contradiction. The tragic story of Liang's three generations starts from the “funeral”, also ends in “funeral”. The tragedy of the book is infinitely enlarged because of the dramatic structure and layout. The beauty, which refined from the tragedy, is silent and lasting that people are unable to touch.
Great Hope for Cultural Fusion

*The Muslim’s Funeral* describes the love tragedy of Liang’s three generations most vividly, but in fact, it is easy to notice that what the author displays is a progressive relationship of three generations. From the first generation Liang Yiqing of conservative tradition, to the second generation Han Ziqi and Liang Junbi’s seeking for balance between modern culture and traditional Muslim culture, and then to the third generation of Han Xinyue’s brave pursuit of love and liberation to try to break the traditional bound, these kind of gradual promotion of the relationship between the characters actually reflects the author’s great hope for cultural exchange. Although Xinyue eventually left the world in the intertwining of hope and disappointment, this driving force of breaking the cultural constraints pregnant with new hope as the new moon in the night sky.

At the end of the story, Chu Yanchao stands in front of Xinyue’s crescent. He plays the violin of a melodic interpretation of the famous music “Butterfly Lovers”. At the same time, Xinyue’s mother Liang Bingyu is standing not far away, staring him for a long time to memorize the passing young life. The victims of the two love tragedies are closely linked at this moment through Xinyue, and the two different ethnic groups are waiting for the born of Xinyue in the night covered by dark clouds. This treatment at the end of the story lays a mournful but not distressing keynote.

Conclusion

Huo Da makes a bold attempt for the integration of different cultures in making use of a family’s ups and downs. Although the tragedy of the funeral is inevitable, the final music “Butterfly Lovers” represents the hope of cultural exchange of the two peoples. From the title of the whole work “The Muslim’s funeral”, it is easy to find out author’s aims to break through the depression of traditional teachings and to pursue cultural exchanges and continuous progress. Here the “funeral” is not the “death” in traditional meaning, but it symbolizes the “baptism” in Islamic religion and means rebirth, holding the meaning of the Phoenix Nirvana. Ancient Islamic civilization, confronting with Chinese culture and even the impact of Western advanced culture, should not rest on its laurels. Instead, it needs continuous innovation and break-through, and thus achieves the cultural exchanges of various nationalities well. The different love tragedies in the novel are bold challenges against the traditional doctrines, although they all end up with tragedy, these challenges is undoubtedly a valuable exploration and attempt for national communication.

References