A Comparison Between Forrest Gump and Ah Q
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Abstract: This paper makes a comparison between the protagonists in Forrest Gump and The True Story of Ah Q. It analyzes the different social backgrounds behind Forrest Gump and Ah Q, the different love stories of them and their different social values the two characters hold.

1 Introduction
Both Forrest Gump and The True Story of Ah Q made waves in Chinese and American literary circles after their appearances in both countries respectively. So do the protagonists: Forrest Gump and Ah Q. However, due to different cultural backgrounds, there are many differences between them.

2 Different Social Backgrounds Behind the Two Characters
The social background of Forrest Gump is all the significant political events since 1960s and it is a reflection of social life of Americans. It shows us the bewilderment, struggle, pain and expectation in life of an American generation through comedies and tragedies. While people found the meaning of life again, they discovered with surprise that the truth lies in their national character and national spirit which their ancestors formed when they developed the new world. It is their ancestors’ sacred motto: God helps those who help themselves. Forrest Gump is the symbol of American national spirit. As an outstanding character in Hollywood films in recent years, Forrest Gump will be written in the Hollywood film history without any doubt Forrest Gump is the embodiment of the group of people who were born in the twentieth century. They went through Rock, Vietnam, Kennedy, Nixon. They grew up in a peaceful disorder. Moral reconstruction and flamboyant individuality filled their life with uncertainty. It seemed that they lacked experience and staggered in their life. However, they gradually grew up after all. And they walked ahead with a speed surpassing their fathers. Forrest Gump is greatly influenced by the traditional American culture. Hard work, persistence and perseverance are the core of American values and traditional American culture. All man are created equal. For his bright future, everyone should work hard and struggle constantly. The immigrants came to the New World just because they had been enduring injustice. Therefore hard working and persistence are the core of American values and the basic parts of American culture. The author of “Forrest Gump” values the traditional American culture and the dominant American culture. their lives and work formed the contents of culture according to the human relations and social development. After the outbreak of the Second World War, the American people began to abandoned these culture traditions ant they began to look for the fast food culture without any historical accumulation. The blundering psychology of the American people shows these cultural values. The film “Forrest Gump” integrates the historical events such as anti-war movement, the Vietnam War, the change of political heads into one story and highly praises the American traditional culture. This film is a success because of these contents.

The novel “The True Story of Ah Q” is a masterpiece by Lu Xun intended to remold the Chinese national spirit. The novel was written in 1921. Lu Xun once said that the reason why he wrote the novel was that he wanted to reveal the weakness of the Chinese people. He wanted to expose the soul of the people at that time. Looking at the protagonist Ah Q from the perspective of modern time, we can easily discover that Ah Q is a typical soul of peasants at the old time. The novel “The
True Story of Ah Q” shows us a monstrous society and the true features of a group of Chinese people after the 1911 Revolution. The publication of this novel has a specific political, economic and cultural background. It satirizes the ugly soul of some out-dated Chinese people. The spirit-satisfied method of the rulers and their feudal anesthetic education are the causes of the spiritual unawareness of the laboring people. This kind of anesthetic puts the laboring people in a state of forgetting the oppression and humiliation they are enduring. They don’t have any spirit of revolt and fighting will. They are in a state of being oppressed, exploited, and poisoned forever. As a result, they become the flunkey and obedient people of the ruling class. With the calmness and profound thought of a thinker and the sensitivity and concentration of a writer, Lu Xun observes and analyzes what he has experienced and what he is thinking. He feels the pulse of that time, and gradually recognizes the revolution he is experiencing, the society he is in and the spiritual state of the people he meets with. According to the purpose of writing the novel by Lu Xun, his discussion on curing the weakness of the Chinese people and his statement on the origin of the novel “The True Story of Ah Q”, we can summarize his purpose of writing the novel as follows: to enlighten the Chinese people, to show the life of the Chinese people, especially the suffering, tragedy and ignorance of the oppressed and exploited laboring people. In the novel, the writer painfully cries out for curing the sick society and the sick people. Living around the 1911 Revolution, Ah Q’s living background is the uninformed and backward Weizhuang Village. It is a miniature of semi-feudal and semi-colonial Chinese society in the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic. The author integrates the whole society of that time into a local living environment. The reader can see the whole society through a glance at Weizhuang Village. The cruel oppression and exploitation of the Chinese feudal system and the corruption of the Chinese spiritual civilization are demonstrated by the Weizhuang society and Weizhuang civilization. Living in this special Weizhuang society and Weizhuang civilization, Ah Q is suffering oppression, exploitation and humiliation. Finally, he dies with a tragic reunion. With a realist method, Lu Xun analyzes the conflicts and entanglement between Ah Q and people around him. He reveals the profound significance of this typical character in the typical surrounding from multiple levels and multiple perspectives.

3 Different Love Stories

Forrest Gump’s first love is his childhood Jenny. He loves his Jenny. Since his childhood, Forrest Gump is asked by Jenny to run. He is in ceaseless running. He runs into the rugby team, to the university, to the Vietnam War battlefield and back to his hometown. Finally, he welcomes the return of his beloved Jenny and accompany his beloved Jenny to finish her life. After graduation from college, Forrest Gump is drafted into the army and goes to Vietnam. At the same time, Jenny degenerates and lives a dissipated life. Forrest Gump has been loving Jenny all the way. But Jenny has gone very far. Gump meets Jenny at a peaceful assembly after the Vietnam War. They meet each other in a hurry and separate in a hurry. Living in reclusion, Gump often misses Jenny. For Gump, they grow up together gradually. Someday Jenny leaves her hometown to look for her own life. At the same time, Gump has to begin his new life too. However, no matter where he is and no matter how Jenny treats him, Gump is concerned about Jenny all the time and loves her with loyalty and devotion. Gump goes to the female school to see Jenny and messes up Jenny’s dating. Gump’s expression from his inner world is “you are my girl.” Gump gradually sublimated his emotion for Jenny into affection for Jenny unconsciously. He did not allow anybody to heart Jenny. Each time Jenny had difficulties in her search for fame, Gump would help her overcome it. As long as he saws Jenny suffer a beating, Gump would beat other men angrily. One day Jenny came back and she lived with Gump for some time. On a night, Jenny fell into Gump’s embrace and left him the next morning. Jenny was the only close female of Gump except his mother. Jenny was bright, beautiful and compassionate. However, her mother died early and her father was rough and obscene, so she experienced the brokenness and pain in her early years. Perhaps because of this Jenny could understand and sympathize Gump’s adversity. She could understand Gump’s disturbing of her
dating. Jenny was caught in a dilemma in terms of her emotion for Gump. She maintained a lukewarm relationship with Gump. Many times she left Gump and then came back to him. Gump bore this silently all along. He waited for Jenny's coming back to him all along. At last, Jenny was tired of the wandering life and came back to Gump. This showed that Gump was concentrated and persistent in his love for Jenny. When Jenny left him again, Gump became depressed and sat on the chair blankly.

The reason why Ah Q chose Aunt Wu. Wu as his prospective spouse was solid, rational and sound: both Ah Q and Aunt Wu are single and lived lonely. Aunt Wu lived in other’s house and was a long-term hired hand in the Zhao family. Ah Q made his living by working for others and was a short-term hand. This also shows that Ah Q was subject to the traditional culture. it is a great wonder that Ah Q had the courage to choose the widowed Aunt Wu as his prospective spouse. After Ah Q—a man whose physiology developed more slowly than ordinary people—stroked the fresh and tender skin of the little Buddhist nun, he felt very comfortable for a long time. The little Buddhist nun condemned Ah Q as a man who would die without descendants. This upsets Ah Q. He thinks that he should have a spouse. Otherwise, he would die without any descendant to supply him. Ah Q was not an atheist. Both the ghosts and gods and feudal code of ethics had influence on him. Ah Q’s outlook on women was as follows: all the Buddhist nuns must have committed adultery with the Buddhist monks; if a woman walked outside her house, she must be tempting men around her; if a man and a woman were talking with each other, they must have a dirty deal. In order to punish them, Ah Q often stared angrily at them, or threw a little stone at them from a solitary place. He spit and cursed the nuns from the nunnery or stroked the little nun’s scalp and at the same time said some dirty words. Ah Q’s behavior startled Aunt Wu with fright. She threatened to commit suicide and told Lord Zhao the injustice Ah Q had done to her. Lord Zhao chided Ah Q grimly. It is obvious that Ah thought Q was poor and lowly and not qualified to court her. Even a widow lady like the handmaid Aunt Wu was not willing to marry Ah Q. Ah Q did not hate Aunt Wu: somehow, he did not hate her from his mind. However, every night when he could not fall asleep, he would grumbled about Aunt Wu: “Humph! Aunt Wu! Whether you would accept my courting or not depends on yourself! I have not done something wrong to you yet. You should not go so far as to threaten me with death! You are not a woman who has never met men! You are a prudish woman!” By contrast, Aunt Wu is a little self-righteous. She was not a swan, but she disciplined herself as if she were a swan. She was doom her life. She screamed, cried out for justice and threatened with committing suicide. It is obvious that she was praising herself! As a result, Ah Q’s life underwent great changes and the outcome was inestimable. After that, Ah Q’s life became very difficult. Ah Q pursued his love with good intentions but received contempt from others. His life began to turn to the impasse till the end of his life.

4 Different Values of Gump and Ah Q

Before the stronger, Ah Q was the weaker forever. He was narrow-minded. Each time he was bullied by the stronger, he would look for a weaker person to be mollified. For example, he insulted the little nun on order to mollify himself. Ah Q was good at humiliating himself. Each time after he was beat by others, he would abuse himself as a beast. He often looked for a kind of spiritual victory. He was lazy. Making a fortune in his eyes was just a kind of stealing and gambling. Modern Chinese Literary History defines “Ah Q’s Spirit” as follows: a loser who cannot face the reality in real life; blind pride and arrogance, self-humiliating, bullying the weaker, amnesia, avoiding shortcomings, taking pride in ugliness and so on are the marvelous ways to spiritual victory of self-deceiving, self-comforting and indulging in self-delusion. with the transition of times and the changes of social environment and values, “Ah Q’s Spirit” has got its new definition and application: to rationalize the unpleasant things in order to get mental tranquility and peace. It has been more than eighty years since the novel The True Story of Ah Q was created and it has been more than seventy years since Mr. Lu Xun passed away. However, we can still find the sign of “Ah Q’s Spirit” from ourselves and people around us. Ah Q’s image is laughable but at same time tearful. Most
ordinary and normal people will continue to struggle after experiencing pain when they run into failure, humiliation and difficulty. They become angry and cannot forget these unhappy things. Then they will struggle to change the difficult situation. Facing , Ah Q does not do like so. Facing the awkward situation, he has a particular coping way to deal with it which is a sign of morbid psychology. This way is “Spiritual Victory”. Ah Q’s “Spiritual Victory” is the cause of Ah Q’s image which is laughable but at same time tearful. Let’s see what Ah Q’s “Spiritual Victory” includes: blind arrogance, self-contempt and self-humiliation, self-deceiving and deceiving others, bullying the weaker and fearing the stronger, and insensitive forgetful. It is a kind of spiritual opium. It is a specific summary of the deep-rooted bad habits of the Chinese nation and it is the outcome the feudal culture.

In contrast, facing the stronger, Forrest Gump never reveals his weakness. When his mother was reprimanded by her boss, Gump warned that boss. He has never thought of revenging those people who take advantage of him or those who were once his opponents. On the contrary, he gives them jobs. Gump often scolded himself an idiot. By doing so, he intends to condemn others or ridicule others. Gump makes a fortune through his hard work. That he contends with others strength or wrestles with others is a kind of gambling, but he makes a living through his own strength. Maybe everyone who has read the novel Forrest Gump has got the following inspiration: life is just like a feather flying in the sky. Sometimes it pounds the wind, sometimes it flows with the wind or flies in the blue sky or crashes into the abyss. Gump is the personification of virtue. He is honest, trustworthy, earnest, courageous and values emotion for others. He is always ready to contribute to others and never wants to get payment from others. He never cares about others’ refusal. He faces his life with generosity and frankness. He focuses his sole intelligence, honesty and courage on one point. He does not care anything else except running. He just runs constantly by intuition. He runs across the discrimination by his childhood classmates, the university football field, the morass of the Vietnam War, the battlefield of Chinese and American ping pong diplomacy, all over USA, and finally arrives at his destination. The general style of the film Forrest Gump is just like a life fable. In the film, the intelligence quotient of Gump is not so high. However, he embodies the honesty, trustworthy, courageous, earnest and has a peaceful mind. At the beginning of the film, we may be amused by Gump’s numb. We are filled with superiority complex before him. However, at the end of the film, we have to be moved by his sincerity. We finally find out that the experience of Gump is the embodiment of the innocent years of us. In contrast, we have too much prejudice and vanity in our mind.

5 Conclusion

From the above analysis, we can see that both Forrest Gump and Ah Q live in the bottom of their respective societies, but they have different love stories of them and different social values due to their different social backgrounds they live in.

References


