

Influence of Wilde's Fairytales on Fairytale Development in China

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Abstract. In British literature, a writer, who had great impacts on the world, existed in literature history in a unique form. As a famous British literature playwright, Wilde was known in the world for his plays, fairytales and novels etc. Wilde was one of few fairytale writers in the world that could be compared with Andersen, but had rare fairytales for a lifetime. The reverse side of relatively few fairytales was high quality, and Wilde's only nine fairytales were included into Chinese materials for junior high school students. Chinese and foreign literary circles comment Wilde differently, which reflects that Wilde has huge influence on the world on the other hand.

Overview of Wilde and his fairytales

In history, Wilde was a famous playwright, poet and novelist. Born in the 19th century, he amazed the world with unique literature and art values of his works. In the world's literary circle, Wilde made remarkable achievements with different speech and behaviors. In his era, Wilde created literary quality works that left a good name forever, but his unruly speech and behaviors also left notorious marks in that era. Wilde lived for 44 years in the world he had described with highly poetic words, which seemed to be a little cramped by putting this time into the long history. Wilde had not described this world with wiser words, leaving too much regret and blank to Chinese and foreign literary circles. Wilde spent his entire life on pursuing literary aestheticism, and expressed his mental realm of pursuing aestheticism through both books and life. Wilde's pursuit of aestheticism was mostly reflected in his works, especially few of his fairytales. Wilde's fairytales broke traditional and straightaway characteristics. In creation, positive and negative personalities of characters in fairytales were distinctive and prominent. In terms of theme, the core theme of praising virtue and punishing vice run through Wilde's fairytales. Although tragic ending of fairytales reflected cruelty and ugliness of human society, it was such a cruel and ugly real world combined with theme of praising virtue and punishing vice that reflected Wilde's pursuit of aesthetic world. Wilde proved his pursuit of aestheticism from a negative perspective with unique acting and writing styles. Wilde's fairytales not only had huge influence on the UK at that time, but also had certain influence on China after translated and introduced to China in the early 20th century. Figures in Wilde's fairytales had more changes in personalities while keeping unitary personality of traditional fairytales. In short, compared with traditional fairytales, character personalities in Wilde's fairytales were more real. Such reality was also one of causes that Wilde's fairytales were unconventional. To make people know clearly about aesthetic realm that he pursued, Wilde added themes that violated traditional concepts such as praising virtue and punishing vice etc in fairytales, and revealed reality and darkness of society in originally beautiful fairytales, to express the aesthetic world in his mind. In general, Wilde's fairytales reflected his pursuit of aestheticism in fairytales through unconventional creation methods while revealing darkness of society in which he lived.

Characteristics of Wilde's fairytales

Fairytales for children

The so-called fairytales are to show the beautiful world through the most obvious symbols and metaphors. Creation of fairytales needs poetic words combined with children's wonderful ways of thinking. As a great poet, Wilde's words were poetic to some extent. Meanwhile, when creating fairytales, Wilde used a great number of poetic sentences. Poetic words made Wilde's fairytales in

line with his style of pursuing aestheticism. Meanwhile, fairytales were a literary form beyond reality, and poetic words could be integrated with such content beyond reality and thus formed harmonious and wonderful reading experience. Like traditional fairytales, Wilde's fairytales were full of imagination beyond time and space, as children could imagine everything. For children, broad imaginary space expressed in Wilde's fairytales could contain all imagination of children. Besides, Wilde showed his inner world to children through such a virtual fantasy world and characters. Meanwhile, in Wilde's fairytales, beauty and ugliness, virtues and vices were highlighted through sharp contrast and shaping, which precisely met children's innocent outlook on world.

Fairytales for both children and adults

The so-called fairytales are generally for children. When writing fairytales, the author generally contained children as readers in works. However, as mentioned above, Wilde used unconventional fairytale creation methods when writing fairytales, and thus his fairytales were actually open to adults who still retained childlike innocence. His fairytales were highly open to adults. Just like what Wilde had said in a letter to one of his friends, his fairytales tried to please deliberately British people while pleasing British children. Therefore, in his fairytales, lots of words in the adult world were contained, and some such as irony etc were beyond children's understanding. At the same time, tragic art images in his works brought more or less stress to children's psychological enduring capacity. Wilde's interpretation of the entire real world was gloomy to a certain extent, and his works contained lots of aestheticism that children could not accept. All these characteristics indicated adultification of Wilde's fairytales. Wilde integrated lots of ironies and rational interests in fairytales, and thus his fairytales were more attractive for adults in terms of reading. Humor was a high-level representative of wisdom, and a sense of humor contained in Wilde's fairytales often made readers laugh when reading. In terms of rational interests, Wilde's fairytales often aroused readers to think deeply on life. Creation of fairytales could not be separated from inspiration of childlike innocence, but meaning extended from fairytales would often cause resonance of adults who still retained childlike innocence. In other words, Wilde's fairytales were not only for children, but also those who still had childlike good souls.

Influence of Wilde's fairytales on early development of fairytales in China

Development of fairytales in China

In China's history of literature, the word "fairytale" was only put forward in the 20th century. However, "fairytale" works of China had occurred in the Spring and Autumn Period. Many literary classics such as *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* and *A New Account of the Tales of the World* etc had all contained lots of wonderful fairytales. However, compared with western countries, because of mechanism etc, China's fairytales were excluded by so-called orthodox literature for a long time. Therefore, unlike ancient Chinese verses, ditties, odes and songs, ancient Chinese fairytales were not given orthodox names. Meanwhile, due to contempt and discrimination of traditional culture, there was a lack of spiritual input of scholars. In China in early 20th century, people began to attach importance to and reflect on children's literature. Therefore, "fairytale" occurred for the first time. It was just at this period of transformation of children's literature that Wilde's fairytales were formally introduced to China after being translated by a group of Chinese scholars.

Influence of Wilde's fairytales on early development of fairytales in China

Wilde's fairytales were initially translated by well-known Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren and were thus introduced to Chinese literary circle. In early 20th century, Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren published a collection of novels translated jointly in Tokyo, and Wilde's *The Happy Prince* was translated into 《安乐王子》. According to records made by Zhou Zuoren in relevant books, Wilde's fairytales were translated and introduced to China in order to "transfer temperament and transform society". However, in initial version of translation, they translated into classical Chinese because of inaccurate positioning, and thus there were few readers. Therefore, the first fairytale of Wilde introduced to China did not cause great influence. After that, Wilde was introduced as a playwright in the New Culture Movement. According to relevant data, Wilde's fairytales were introduced to China again in

early May Fourth Movement, during which his fairytales were translated into vernacular Chinese and introduced to China. At the beginning, the main purpose of translation was to advocate “humanism” contained in his fairytales. While Wilde’s fairytales spread widely in China, lots of Chinese writers began to write fairytales instead of reading or translating. Wilde’s fairytales gave lots of creation inspiration and enlightenment to these writers. At that time, fairytales of many writers had strong traces of foreign fairytales. Ye Shaojun, a great master of China’s children’s literature, said bluntly that his fairytales were affected by foreign ones. In particular, by analyzing carefully the content of his work *Scarecrow* with *The Happy Prince*, it could be easily found that both works were similar in terms of story structure and plots. Besides the influence of difference between Chinese and western cultural traditions, there were many similarities in fairytales between Ye Shaojun and Wilde. Thus, it could be seen that Wilde’s fairytales had profound influence on fairytale creation in early 20th century in China.

Influence of Wilde’s fairytales on the development of fairytales in China after the founding of the country

After the founding of new China, Wilde’s fairytales still maintained influence in China because of uniqueness. In China in which there were usually various interpretations about a literary work, interpretation of Wilde’s fairytales was always unanimous. “Humanism” advocated in Wilde’s fairytales had been leading the Chinese to read along this clue since introduction to China. In terms of readers of Wilde’s fairytales, readers were undoubtedly adults for cultural changes due to needs of social changes before the founding of new China. At the early stage of the founding of new China, readers of version translated by Ba Jin were children and adults according to social situation of that time. In the Cultural Revolution, Wilde’s fairytales revealed darkness of capitalist society to some extent, and thus were exempted from being banned. In the 1980s after the Cultural Revolution, aestheticism in Wilde’s fairytales aroused disputes in Chinese literary circle. Among these disputes, many people thought that aestheticism that Wilde pursued was equal to decadentism. However, under the influence of the thought of seeking truth from facts, more people focused on study on Wilde’s fairytales. With recovery of Chinese literature, researches on Wilde’s fairytales developed constantly. Meanwhile, as ban of the Cultural Revolution was lifted, translation of Wilde’s fairytales and other works reached a peak again. Since the 1990s, researches on Wilde’s fairytales were greatly increased on previous basis from perspectives of both depth and breadth. For example, some researchers studied on the relationship between Wilde’s aestheticism and consumer culture from a cultural perspective. Researches on the relationship could reveal characteristics of early consumer society in works written by Wilde from a unique perspective. For study and reading of Wilde’s fairytales, an increasing number of scholars and writers interpreted from the perspective of combination of aestheticism with fairytales in Wilde’s fairytales. Through such interpretation, some Chinese writers of children’s literature added certain thoughts that they advocated in fairytales, rather than being confined to beauty and ugliness simply. Wilde’s fairytales were also studied by scholars by extending the cultural perspective to new fields in researches of the end of 1990s. Among these researches, dual conflicts reflected in Wilde’s fairytales were consistent with virtues and vices advocated in religions. Besides, praise of love in western religious myths was also reflected in Wilde’s fairytales. In particular, respect for gods of main characters in Wilde’s fairytales was closely related to western religions.

In the new period, Chinese fairytales achieved further development in further researches on Wilde’s fairytales. After the founding of new China, Wilde’s fairytales spread in China, so that Chinese fairytales contained educational effects, and Chinese fairytale creation focused more on expressing aesthetic characteristics of realism. Moreover, under the influence of Wilde’s fairytales, Chinese fairytales began to focus on description about real world for children. An increasing number of children’s literature scholars began to attach importance to reflecting real human society in fairytales under the influence of Wilde’s fairytales.

Conclusions

To sum up, Wilde had an influence on era in which he lived. In China after several years, the spread of Wilde's fairytales witnessed the development of a country, and his fairytales also had great influence on the development of Chinese fairytales. Due to historical causes, Chinese "fairytales" were introduced from foreign countries. Thus, Wilde's fairytales had profound impacts on Chinese fairytales and especially the development of China. Aesthetic artistic style and poetic words of Wilde's fairytales affected China significantly. Current fairytale creation of China still lacks romantic factors and ethnic writing language as in Wilde's fairytales. With today's continuous development of literature and art, Wilde's fairytales of the last century still provide great reference and inspiration for China.

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