

The Conflicts and Awakeness of Self-awareness -- On the Character of Sun Shaoping in the Ordinary World

Xiaoyang Dong

Department of education, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, England

1175401749@qq.com

Abstract. In the decades since *The Ordinary World* came out, scholars in the literary world have never stopped exploring it, because it is a masterpiece that has inspired generations of young people to struggle with difficulties in their life. Firstly, this paper selects the character of Sun Shaoping in the book as an example. Then, on the basis of author Lu Yao's background and several characters in the book who are closely related to Sun Shaoping, the paper analysed the reasons for the creation of character to deeply investigate what kind of factors and environments contribute to the formation of this self-awareness. Finally, all the efforts is to reveal the conflicts and self-awareness of character's inner world.

Keywords: Character, Sun Shaoping, Self-consciousness, Exploration, Self-awareness, Conflicts.

1. Introduction

Generally, the process of forming a character's image in a literary work is composed of two major aspects. One is the character in a work formed by the author's life experiences, the environment of the time and his own personality. The other is the character in the work that often closely connecting with the author's life experience, personality and the environment in which he or she is living, and thus manifests itself in the character. *In The Ordinary World* [1], Sun Shaoping is the most important character in the story. What can be seen in him is the self-image of Lu Yao's life, the product of his aspirations and concepts. Thus, the reason for digging deeper into the formation of Sun Shaoping's character will start from Sun's own character and experience, and Lu Yao's own life and concepts.

2. Organization of the Text

2.1. Sun Shaoping- Struggling for Surviving, A Humble but Powerful Man for Life

In *The Ordinary World*, Sun Shaoping is portrayed as a poor young man from the lowest level of the society, who does not have a complex mind, nor does he have any extraordinary experiences. Is it possible to say that his life can be summarised in just a few words? However, it is not as simple as we can see. Lu Yao's Sun Shaoping, though not a philosopher, is a person with insightful thinking ability. The figure reflects abundant cultural implications and profound social values. His life is a history of struggle, a history of suffering, full of the helplessness and tragedies. What he represents is the image of a young striver who is at the bottom of the society like him, a humble but powerful man for life.

2.2. The Road of Rural young man Who Is At The Bottom Of Social Class: Three Period

What makes Sun Shaoping the struggling figure - a powerful man of life in humble existence at the lowest class is precisely the result of his life experience. The spirit of struggling and perseverance runs through his life. I conclude his life consists of three crucial periods and highlights.

2.2.1 The First Period - The Life in Shuangshui Village

Sun Shaoping was born in a poor rural family at the bottom of society. With an elderly grandmother and a young sister, the family had a large population. He had to bear the heavy burden of life at a very young age. However, due to policy adjustments, the village high school was cancelled, and Sun Shaoping lost his opportunity to study in Shuangshui Village, forcing him to return home.

This was the first significant turning point in his life. A question was thrown to him: Was he to return to the fields and become a farmer like his father and brother?

Yet, Sun Shaoping did not choose the same path as his father and brother, staying in the countryside to live a normal life as a farmer. This was the first ideological struggle of his self-consciousness as well as the beginning of his self-awareness awakening. He yearned to escape from Shuangshui Village where is the root of his suffering to go outside to breathe the civilised winds of the city. Therefore, Sun Shaoping and his brother Sun Shao'an chose two very different paths. Sun Shaoping decided to adhere to his own aspirations after serious considerations. After leaving Shuangshui Village, he gave up his unchanging life, and was thirsty to explore a new life of his own.

2.2.2 The Second Period - Sun Shao Ping's Working Life in Huangyuan

He met Tian Xiaoxia during this period, a key person who changed his life. She is an opportunity for Sun Shao Ping to further enhance his self-consciousness. Sun was able to get touch with a large number of books, which established his own self-consciousness and beliefs in a short period. Influenced by Tian's rich spiritual world, the rapid elevation of his thoughts is a further improvement of Sun Shaoping's self-awareness, which prompts old consciousness and new ideas to conflict with each other in constant examination of the self and contemplation of the world. He searched for his self-redemption and awakening, and ultimately identifies his own ideals and goals.

The turning point in the second period is also visualised in an argument between him and his brother Sun Shaoan, which is the first face-to-face conflict of ideas between the two young men. What Sun Shaoan represents is the former Sun Shao Ping and the old ideological concepts of the time. Otherwise, with the self-awareness has been initially awakened, Sun Shaoping and Tian Xiaoxia was inspired by the new mindset. The conflict of ideas between the two brothers is a clash of old and new concepts. In the end, Sun Shao-ping rejects his elder brother's proposal to go back to run the brick factory together. Instead, he continues to pursue his own aspiration, which also completes the transformation of his old and new concepts. This face-to-face conflict deepens the awakening of his thoughts and self-consciousness.

2.2.3 The Third Period - Sun Shaoping Came To The Tongcheng Coal Mine Factory

With the help of Tian Xiaoxia, Sun Shaoping came to the coal mine to become a coal miner. After witnessing the deaths of two of his friends, Wang Shicai, his leader, and Tian Xiaoxia, his girlfriend, both of whom sacrificed their lives to save others, Sun Shao Ping was once again in a state of loss and agony. He lost his spiritual support, which was the third turning point in his life. But in the end he did not give up. He didn't throw away his life as a miner, didn't refuse the opportunity to go to the county town, and decided to stand firm on his ideals and create excitement in his life through self-struggle. He chose to stay in the mine to complete the awakening of his self-consciousness. As Li Jianjun (2021) illustrated in his article *Go, Moses, Come, Sisyphus - On Sun Shaoping*, "In search of his dream, Sun Shaoping treads the thorny path of suffering to a faraway place, wandering in a foreign land. He is destined to go through suffering before he can reach the end of the treacherous journey of life. In the process of striving, what he needs will no longer be the rigid literature of romanticism and voluntarism, but the literature with flexibility and strength..." [2]

The formation of Sun Shaoping's character is closely interrelated with his experience. His tragic life and uncompromising spirit create his ordinary while extraordinary experience. The experience is the result of the completion of self-consciousness awakening, determination of his own ideas, and the image of struggling peasants at the bottom in the emergence of the conflict between old and new ideas. The conflict of his thoughts and beliefs is also critical to the continuous refinement and formation of his character.

2.3. The Conflict between Old and New Beliefs and the Awakening of Self-consciousness: The Different Life Choices of Sun Shaoping and Sun Shao'an

Sun Shaoping and Sun Shaoan's ideological conflict, is a specific manifestation of Sun Shaoping's self-consciousness awakening. Rather than the two brothers' ideological incompatibility, it is more

like a conceptual conflict between the old and the new ideas. The analysis of the ideological differences between the two is the crucial point in analysing the formation of the struggling character of Sun Shaoping.

Sun Shaoan is a realist because he thinks about things based on reality. After graduating from high school at the age of thirteen, he went to work, supporting the whole family with his father. His primary concern was how to feed his large family and support his siblings in school. The burdens of life made him think in terms of the realistic needs of a large family.

The difference is that Sun Shaoping is an idealist. Through a lot of reading of books and newspapers, as well as under the guidance of Tian Xiaoxia, he opens his eyes and discovers an incomparably wide world from which he gains a deeper insight into the meaning of life. In the book (2021), Sun Shaoping said, "The most painful thing is that you were born in a peasant family where you want to be free. Unlike his brother, Sun Shaoan, he is not willing to be a farmer in his hometown. From his perspective, it is worthwhile to pursue his dream in the outside world, even if it is difficult. After reading many literary works and biographies of famous people, he looked forward to facing the hardships of life. Later, he left his hometown to work as a construction worker in a big city to fulfil his wish of venturing into the world.

Therefore, in contrast to Sun Shao-an who lived in reality, Sun Shao-ping lived more in ideals. Sun Shao'an is a realist, struggling in the flood of reality to become an outstanding farmer. Whereas Sun Shaoping is an idealist, living in a dream all the time. He has a very rich spiritual life in the midst of a hard-fought real life. This eventually created a different world view between the two, towards a different life. Sun Shao'an, as opposed to Sun Shaoping, ultimately did not have the awakening of self-consciousness, having lived in the old times. Whereas Sun Shaoping was at the forefront of the times, with a mind of his own, his own path, his own ideals.

3. Reflecting on Lu Yao through Sun Shaoping: The Brave Man Who Wrestled with Pain

There is a profound causal and interdependent relationship between the author's work and his life experiences. Therefore, it is only by carefully examining the author's personal life that one can understand the author's intentions.

From Li Jianjun's (2020) article *On the Tragic Problem in the Narrative of Lu Yao's Novels*, Li specifically describes the characteristics of Lu Yao's life and biographical profile, "Almost every day at every stage of his life, Lu Yao experiences the unique mental pain of that stage, suffering from the trials and pressures that seem to be destined for him." [3]

Lu Yao's life is full of pain, confusion and troubles, which contributes to the fact that all the characters in his works are a microcosm of his life. From the perspective of tragedy, Sun Shaoping is portrayed as a humble but powerful person, whose life is full of pain and sorrow, just as Lu Yao's life. The confusion between the two men at various stages of their lives is even more similar. Consequently, Lu Yao's novels are an epic of painful struggles, such as his life in general. However, at the same time, Lu Yao is also full of ideals and the spirit of striving. In the midst of his painful life, he desires to look for liberty. Thus, in his creations, his ideals and self-salvation are shown in all of his works. Sun Shaoping's life is the liberty of Lu Yao's pursuit of his own ideals and a journey of suffering. He finally becomes a coal miner through endeavours and self-awakening. He achieved the goal of struggle in the real sense. Although he is far from realising the ideal of self and the real meaning of life, his struggle process and perseverance quality of life, with its sublime beauty, and also Lu Yao's longing for the ideal, are all shown in Sun Shaoping's figure.

At the meanwhile, Lu Yao did not give Sun Shaoping the final moment of realisation of his life value and ideals in the *The Ordinary World*, which seems to be a tragedy or an abrupt end, but is it not an answer? What Lu Yao is looking forward to is people like Sun Shaoping, who may have different lives and different personalities, but no matter what era they live in, these people have their own ideals. For Lu Yao, every struggling young person in the future, like Sun Shaoping, is the best

answer to this book and the actual reflection of the ultimate value of Sun Shaoping's life. Sun Shaoping's mindset was the theme of the novels and the times during the turn of the 20th to 21st centuries, when a large number of young people from small towns in the countryside entered the cities. "'Country people moving to the city' became the main stream of the new age literature, and Sun Shaoping's mindset was in line with that of the youth of today (Xu, 2021) [4]. What Lu Yao wants to see is that every generation of young people with ideals and goals, just as every struggling person now, is a Sun Shao Ping, which is also Lu Yao's idea of creating this image, representing Sun Shao Ping's present and past, and Sun Shao Ping's future, or the ideals and the future that Lu Yao fails to realise and see, is entrusted to every struggling person in the future. This also explains the continuation of the image of Sun Shaoping that is handed over to the alternation of the old and new eras at the time of its creation, as well as the end of the young people of the future who create it with the reality.

4. Summary

Sun Shaoping's life is a tragic and stirring battle song. Along the way, he grew from an ordinary rural farmer and eventually to an urban worker with advanced ideas. He became a trendsetter who jumped out of the bondage circle of thought. In the period of the collision of the old and new social consciousness, he had lofty ideals and firm beliefs, which made him become the image of a young striver at the bottom of the society. The formation of the collision and awakening of Sun Shaoping's self-consciousness is also caused by the characters and experiences set in the novel itself, as well as the consciousness and thoughts of the author Lu Yao. Because of this, Sun Shaoping's character image has also become a model to encourage generation after generation of young people to grow up, and constantly encourages the young people who are confused in difficulties, so that they can finally find their true value and ideals in their own efforts and struggle.

References

- [1] Lu, Y. (2018). *The Ordinary World*. New World of Composition (Junior High School Edition).
- [2] Li, J. J. (2021), *Go, Moses; Come, Sisyphus - On Sun Shaoping*. *Literary Controversy* (8), 28.
- [3] Li, J. J. (2020). *On the Tragic Problem in the Narrative of Lu Yao's Novels*. *Research on Contemporary Chinese Literature*.
- [4] Hsu, T. D. (2021). *Rereading Lu Yao's Ordinary World*. *Contemporary Writers Review* (1), 6.