

Rescue and Peripateticism

--- Comments on Stone Image in the Novel *Gao Lao Zhuang*

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Abstract

The stone image in the novel *Gao Lao Zhuang* is built on the basis of traditional Confucian culture. But it also marks the end of it. It is in peripatetic state of Taoism, but at the same time try to save the already close to collapse of the patriarchal culture as well. This paper tries to explain the function of the stone, a myth prototype, in *Gao Lao Zhuang*, through comparing the stone image in "*Gao Lao Zhuang*" with the same image in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, in which we can finally get the mythic and realistic values from the stone image.

Keywords: *Gao Lao Zhuang*, Stone image, Rescue, Peripateticism, *A Dream of Red Mansions*

As we all know, the twentieth century was an era full of cultural conflict and remodeling. So does the novel *Gao Lao Zhuang*, written by Jia Ping-wa, showing us a picture of cultural restructuring, where a native of China's traditional culture, or, more precisely, a long-term culture in a closed state of Confucian ethics, when facing the impact of modern civilization, showed fear and helplessness. Liu Xiao-feng, a famous scholar in modern times, said that the loss of historical role "forced itself into dilemma, not only cannot bear to abandon its 'roots', but it is not content with their roots." (Note 1)

The prologue is that Mr. and Mrs. Gao came back to *Gao Lao Zhuang* for memorizing Mr. Gao's father who died three years ago. As one of the main images of this novel, the stone goes on stage, between conflict and suffering in culture. It reflects the difference between patriarchal culture and modern civilization. As a base camp of traditional culture, *Gao Lao Zhuang* has presented conflicts between barbarism and civilization for thousands of years. We can feel in subtlety that this village, used to be solid, is turning unsteady. And it is no longer the *Gao Lao Zhuang* that Pigsy always went back to in the novel *Journey to the West*. Mr. Jia buries the stone deeply inside his book. The stone is like an old man, staring at human beings with continuousness and change, in which the primary components are Stone, who is Zi Lu's son, monuments and figure bricks.

The author Jia Ping-wa was born in 1952, in the middle of the twentieth century. He was suffering from the stuffy political movements time after time. The social transformation was getting quicker and quicker during the 1990's. The Confucian culture was confronted with the conflicts between traditions and modernism, and it was getting worse increasingly. So in this changeable unclear moment, Mr. Jia re-scanned the modern civilization and patriarchal cultures, putting both of them compared over again, and re-considered the problems they had.

As he said in the postscript of *Gao Lao Zhuang*, that his root is always in the countryside of Shang Zhou, and the town of Xi'an. His birth and existence circumstance has determined that his writing is based from folk's perspective. Accordingly, his works focus on the countryside mostly. He is proud of writing these books in memorizing and criticizing.

It's undoubtedly that the stone is Xia people's totem. Xia Qi, the founder of Xia Dynasty, was born from stone, which can be confirmed in *Huai Nan Zi*. The stone thence is worshipped by the Chinese people who are living and relying on the Yellow River. The stone is sacred and spiritual in their mind.

The author tried to transfer the dialogue between God and human beings through this form, looking forward to being confirmed in the creation practice. *Zhou Yi*, a philosophy book, mentioned the relationship between meaning and imitation.

Confucius said: "The words are beyond the meaning, and the meaning is beyond the words." However, is the sage's purpose not visible? Confucius said: "The sage explains the meaning by establishing imitation, setting up hexagram to completely represent the real situation of the world and man-made enactment, compiling hexagram and line statements to express ideally the words, trying best to seek benefits through changeable forms and

reasons, using the principles from making people happy to realize the mysterious function ". (Note 2)

The spirit of Confucian civilization, to a great extent, is keeping on spreading its moral doctrines to achieve, even though all these are just wishful thoughts in my mind. Of course, it has its feasibility, because when people don't have heart, they have no other choices but to seek help from their ears. Confucian culture has its far-reaching significance in China, for masters in ancient China have been making annotations constantly for Classics. Confucians put the meaning and imitation into moral preaching, so in the modern fiction *Gao Lao Zhuang*, what the author wants to reveal and criticize is just about the illness of Confucian culture.

Stone is not only a character in the novel, but also a myth prototype. As an undercurrent in the deep psychology of characters, it unconsciously promotes and masters everyone's thoughts. It constitutes latent clue of production. From characters to readers, even the writer himself, are deeply towed and attracted by it.

First and foremost, we can see that the consequences about deconstruction of patriarchal culture and the infiltration of modern civilization are serious. The stubborn ills of Confucian culture and its inertia history are exposed unreservedly in front of us, among which the most important and ridiculous is the race issue as the author believes. Gao Lao Zhuang people, generations after generations, stubbornly defended the purity of their own ethnic origin, insisting on not marrying people from outside world.

Ancestors had not been short until they migrated to Gao Lao Zhuang. Even if a Gao Lao Zhuang woman is raped by people from other races, her descendants is not allowed to survive. In that case, people in Gao Lao Zhuang launched large numbers of wars with other nations desperately to keep the purity of their own nation. However, history is dialectical. Chinese nation has a defensive nature, which can be proved from the construction of the Great Wall. This long-term xenophobia makes the nation extremely arrogant, resulting in countless losses. Similarly, if a nation stays in the original constraints in the blood for a very long time, it is bound to lead itself to genetic degradation and serious contraction of ethnic vitality.

This long-term closed not to intermarry with other races leads to ethnic degeneration. An old monk in a temple predicted that after fifty years, people's heads are getting bigger and bigger, while the legs are slimmer and slimmer, which indicates that the human beings will confront with worse serious ethnic degeneration.

Gao Lao Zhuang's posterity is born short, both in legs and figures, with submissive, self-abased and arrogant characters. Of course, Zi Lu is the person who is taken pride in being a member of the villagers and who has the same name with Confucius outstanding student Zi Lu. As a university professor studying ancient Chinese characters, he himself is proud for being the Han and the Confucian traditional successor.

But the funny thing is, he and Ju Wa's child is a genetic freak. What's more, due to genetic corruption, Zi Lu cannot even create a new gene with his new wife who comes from other nation, which also illustrates the failure of not being able to generate a more vital gene with another nation when the original gene is corrupted. At this time, as a national totem of Xia nation, the stone has suddenly become a focal point. We have to say that the stone indicates the end of the traditional Confucian culture.

In the aesthetics world, beauty and ugly are always opposite. We can see variety of stones everywhere. It is either precious or not, and either weird or lovely. If it is precious and lovely, it has active aesthetically value, which is so-called "beauty". Otherwise, it's called "ugliness". In this novel, I can sure the stone represents "ugliness".

The child named Stone is disabled, with his face flat, and ears exceptionally high. He inherits elders' aging genes but more extremely. This creates a mystical effect. Jia Ping-wa, in his *Ugly Stone*, wrote that "This strange and ugly stone is originally from heaven! It used to mend heaven, glowing and shining. Our ancestors might have looked it over. It gave them brightness, yearning and dreaming; It fell into polluted soil, the grassland, lying for hundreds of years? ...Extremely ugly is extremely beautiful." (Note 3) He also mentioned that "I'm interested in images, and I always want to make the novel full of ambiguities." (Note 4) The surface of this image is a kind of weird people and things, and its deep meaning is the aesthetic ideal close to the Taoist.

Liu Xiao-feng, in his book *Rescue and Peripateticism*, states that "a relentless rock is the final outcome of Taoist aesthetics. 'I do not know why it makes a living, and why it passes away; I do not know the light, and I do not know the latter, if it becomes an object', the character of the stone is the Taoist aesthetic personality. It is of course transcending life and death, time and community. It wipes out the care and develops a great wisdom without me and object, including indifference, wandering heart, wisdom." (Note 5) This unfettered state is based on the characters of stone that Taoist leads to.

Ultimate concern of Taoism is to make Heaven, Earth and people ruthless, loveless and empty, so that the stone will become ruthless as well. *Gao Lao Zhuang* describes it in this way:

"It's weird since the child was born that the family had no peace any more. Firstly, stone smashed roof of the building, then my father died, and I was divorced. Things that should never happen just happened. It is possible that demons from Bai Yun Qiu attached to the body."

As a result, under the constraints of patriarchal culture, we can see that values and attitudes of Gao Lao Zhuang people are out of order. And the emergence of this child, to a certain extent, means such chaos is taking shape. The Heaven, established by Confucians with false representation, looks particularly ridiculous under the emergence of the prototype in this myth. Because of Stone's strange appearance, which is different from his ancestors who are of pure blood, he becomes a freak. He lives in his own world, speaks words only he himself understands, and often does painting.

He didn't allow anyone to touch any part of his body, and he felt painful during haircut. When his stepmother Xia Xi found him painting, as the novel mentioned, that "Stone didn't speak, he just sucked his tongue gently placing Shih's tone clusters. The butterfly magically flew again from the bamboo broom, and still stopped at the Cherry tree, fluttering wings. Xia Xi surprised for a long time looking at the stone and said: 'Can it understand what you say?' Stone didn't say anything. " Cinnabar nevus on his body "seems something like characters, but they are not characters actually"; Those three-legged men, hanging on the long drag to the genitals, which are in his paintings, are much like those in Bai Yun Qiu's paintings as Tsai lao-hei said; on "Beetle Warriors Map", the " decorative pattern in warriors' arms is very similar to the decoration on the bronze."

This description records the Stone's weird action, especially his silence towards his stepmother, or in other words, people around him, meanwhile his vivacity towards the living insects. This stone is originally silent, but it contains the most richest and vivid secret of the human society and nature. The Buddhists and Taoist often use stone to explain illusions, while poetry usually uses stone to put on their emotion. All of these make stone the most meaningful language.

Jia Ping-wa mentioned the effect of the novel *A Dream of Red Mansions* to his own works in *Gao Lao Zhuang's* postscript. *A Dream of Red Mansions* is a tragic novel, as well as a monument in Jia Ping-wa's heart. The creation of "*Gao Lao Zhuang*" is just the conscious follower of *A Dream of Red Mansions*. Wang Guo-wei, a famous scholar in modern China, wrote in his book *comments on the A Dream of Red Mansions*, thought it as an entirely tragedy. And this tragic character made Jia Ping-wa frightened and wandering. So the description towards the Stone in *Gao Lao Zhuang* is really the same as what Mr. Liu said, "This stone-like person is a real Taoist! He is as simple as stones in prehistoric time, with no heart and intestinal, so that the world cannot catch his heart, for he has no heart. " (Note 6)

The Buddhist verse in *A Dream of Red Mansions* says that "Unfit to mend the azure sky, I passed some years on earth to no avail" (Note 7) is Taoist thoughts and feelings precisely. We can see the author's intention of production. Cao Xue-qin was broad-minded, liked drinking, and also was good at poetry and drawing, especially drawing stones. Special stone is just like his special temperament. Because he saw the society insolvably fell into decline—although it was during Qian-long era, he still had particular sensitivity as a writer, and finally wrote down the prosperity and decline of Jia Mansions.

The naughty stone from Qing Geng Mountain left the earth, and became Jia Bao-yu. He fought with the feudalism manners for continuing "The Oath of Wood and Stone". Jia Bao-yu's birth was mentioned like that, "who came into the world with a piece of clear, brilliantly coloured jade in his mouth. There are even inscriptions on the jade. " (Note 8) "his wild ways, aversion to study and delight in playing about in the women's apartments. Apparently he was so spoiled by his grandmother that no one could control him. " (Note 9)

This Jade was essence of the nature, together with the universe. It finally disappeared with the Taoist priest named Reverend Void in the universe, which showed Zhuang Zi's thoughts about " being Peripatetic with morality".

So the author tried his best to write spiritualism and beauty of stone in an obvious purpose. While Jia Ping-wa arranged stone as an image in *Gao Lao Zhuang*, it was a fierce fight with the stone which was always the representation of beauty.

In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, Jia Bao-yu could not stand to live in barren hills together with nature, and he would rather go to that rich and gentle village than bearing vacant space alone. To be "fake" precious jade, not to be "real" stone, is his choice. Cao Xue-qin here designed a Grand View Garden as a living place of stone, where it staged a variety of embarrassing scenarios of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. In contrast to exquisite ornate, colorful shade, prosperity spawned, Jia Ping-wa designed Gao Lao Zhuang as the background. When the child named Stone was born, he is not child with a jade in Jia Mansion, but a freak.

Despite of lacking exquisite and lovely appearance, Gao Lao Zhuang has some simple and primitive cloak, where moral values have a continuous fission and spiritual degradation. This brings us to the *Journey to the West*, in which there is a monkey born from stones that helped Tang Monk achieves Scriptures. So in my opinion, the role of stone image serves as a Christ. If Monkey King appears as the herald of rescuing the human's spirits home when men are exhausted, and if Jia Bao-yu is the relief product for consoling people's empty feeling, the stone image in Gao Lao Zhuang is the representation of the gradually shrinking and degenerating of patriarchal culture.

The birth of Stone gave Zi Lu—a university professor who studies ancient Chinese, a greatest hit. During Stone's subsequent days, Stone was absorbed in painting. It seems that he had feeling about this world. Universe, life, heaven and earth, monster, are all "transformed dream shadows in this handicapped but smart boy's mind, the weird manners of handling the world." (Note 10) This indicates Stone as a terminator to Chinese patriarchal culture, and implies its past, present and future. Ugly is something like anti-tradition and anti-harmony. It gives people strong visual impact, which makes the object reorientation. And writers in modern time bring this method into ultimate play. Ugly seems a negative status of ideality. The broken heart is satisfied with enjoying ugly. But the ultimate ugliness is something that makes people considers differently, which means some certain needs to transform into an opposite side.

In the novel, the deformation of birds and beasts depicted by ancestors in Bai Yun Qiu's stones are primitive arts, which also records exploration of time and space by human beings. And the varieties of images in paintings are just about portraits of human's childhood. The authors here tried to arouse the memory of upright and decent characters of ancient Gao Lao Zhuang people through primitive ways of thinking presented by stones. In other words, the existing patriarchal culture went broken under the attack of modern civilization and the change of people. Retrospect of ancient culture is to rescue them.

What is more, the discovery of stones and brick portraits also indicates the spirits of a savior. Gao Lao Zhuang stones represented the geographical character, history, farming practices, government notices and so on. The brick building, engraved with scenes of ancestors, represented the growing power of Confucian culture in Gao Lao Zhuang. After a long period of time, it is still connected with current life in a subtle way. It makes people in Gao Lao Zhuang become sophisticated and mean. In this pure world of Stone, not only can we see a free Taoist world, but also the spirits of a savior. Of course, what Liu Xiao-feng said about the Rescue and Peripateticism mean differently. Unfortunately, Engraved stone was used as toilet stone or wall base. When Uncle Mi Hu took those stones back, he received a gibe. Painting bricks were taken by Cai Lao Hei as well. This phenomenon indicates the failure of the spirits of the savior. The stone fragments recorded with historical and spiritual essence could not be understood and it indicates the ending of Confucian culture. What a tragedy if a nation could not recognize its shining ancient culture!

The final outcome is this: after Stone was kidnapped, he suddenly came back. The article mentioned that he "again watching TV. Television is showing the Star Wars, with starry night sky, flying people and UFO." It seems to be back in a free state, which is called "harmony between human being and nature". This means that people in Gao Lao Zhuang did not accept their ancestors, or their ancestors abandoned the depredated offspring. They would prefer to continue dreaming at the foot of the wild mountain.

The paradox is that, as a fruit of Confucian culture tree, Gao Zi-lu fled away from Gao Lao Zhuang, and this leads to deep thoughts. In Gao Lao Zhuang, what he cares indeed, and what he does not want to give up, is the sentiment to Stone's mother Ju Wa. Stone is Zi Lu and Ju Wa's love fruit. In other words, Zi Lu and Ju Wa united under the circumstances of this village, and as a result gave birth to such a weird and disabled son. This indicates if the country culture does not search for reconstruction openly, it will still walk down towards degeneration. When he realized the villagers Cao Lao-hei and Wang Wen-long were both attracted by Ju Wa, when he saw for himself that Ju Wa and Cao Lao-hei were together, he lost his mind, and was in desperate.

And the combination of Zi Lu and Xi Xia, in the view of culture revolution, is the combination of reconstructed country culture, city culture and modern culture. Maybe there will be a new culture, a vigorous one. But obviously Jia Ping-wa does not fulfill their notion. Zi Lu married a downtown girl Xi Xia, who is like a horse from Da Yuan, hoping to cultivate a good breed. However, the plan of changing genus in Gao Lao Zhuang did not succeed what so ever. They had planned to have a baby to memorialize Gao Lao Zhuang, but thanks to Zi Lu's decline of sex ability, as well as worrying about the worse zoology crisis and ethnic degeneration, they gave it up.

Zi Lu felt unprecedentedly scared. The happy feelings of returning to his hometown in glory in the first place had totally eliminated. Endless trouble brought by complicated relationship. In fact, the attitude of Zi Lu towards

what happened in Gao Lao Zhuang was apathy. He was a spectator, when he saw forgiveness and humanity once controlled ancestors' performance was abandoned in the modern society, he could do nothing at all. Since he cannot change this fact, then people don't need him. So that Zi Lu's inspirit bay was dashed to the ground completely.

In the end of the novel, Zi Lu ripped off the notebook he collected painstakingly recording dialects and idioms in Gao Lao Zhuang, which were all his efforts. Even he left Xi Xia, and fled away to the town himself in a hurry. This seems that he broke from the traditional culture and country inspirit home. It seems that the author described Zi Lu as the traditional bearer of the Chinese people and Confucian, so that reposed the reflection of the traditional culture.

The novel mentioned that Xi Xia found the Gao family's pedigree, which was recorded that family Gao is the only Han. The generations maintained Han's pure blood, that's the reason Xi Xia thought caused Gao Lao Zhuang people and the Han people' ethnic degeneration. This degeneration, from exteriorly stage, is ugly appearance, and from the internal stage, is personality limitation of culture. In this case, there comes a question that if the ethnic group is going to be changed, if a new personality of culture is going to be built, you must change the survival environment and achieve the transformation of culture. However, as a representative of the modern civilization, Xi Xia stayed initiatively. Rationality and tolerance shown by her towards different cultures enables Gao Zi-lu ashamed. We can say that modern civilization is of more vitality and continuity.

Let's talk about the monument. There are twenty-four monuments which are all recording Gao Lao Zhuang's propagation. Xi Xia, who works for the museum studying fresco, is indulging in the monuments at all. Therefore, when she found the first monument in the toilet of San Zhi's house, things became unmanageable. She paid attention to every place she walked. The monuments introduced this village's geography, history, farming convention, and government, etc. it's apparent the complementation of Gao people, but it's ironic in fact.

Why the author used stones to disparage the present? It's worth discussing. Gao Lao Zhuang ancestors established stones into monuments, marking their notions, so that their offspring could be in high ranks and of great wealth. However, the ironic thing is that: the foreigner, or more precisely, the person outside this village, Xi Xia first found these monuments, and before this, these things were used as gateways of toilets or footstones of the wall. What's more, some were backed up to the village by Uncle Mi Hu. He was a madman in Gao Lao Zhuang, at least the offspring deemed. But it's the madman who brought the ancestors' monuments was mocked by them, which was amazing.

In addition to collecting monuments, Xia Xia found the figure bricks accidently. In the toilet wall of Cao Lao-hei's house, Xi Xia found that on the surface of some bricks, there were bossed pictures, which led her to realize that these bricks were historical relics. So that stimulated Xi Xia to explore the secret of Gao Lao Zhuang. She even urged Zi lu to see tombs in Niu Chuan Gou accompanied with her, hoping that there might be some bricks in the opened tombs. But they only found some valuable bricks there. At the same time, there appeared mysterious flyer, which made this trip full of coincidence and surreptitiousness. Under the construction of a tower, Xi Xia found a brick with migration painting, which arouse a big disturbance up and down. Each said he was right. But in the different opinions they couldn't cover up the proud of Gao Lao Zhuang(of course the pride was parochial).

Camus Albert once said: "All Sisyphus' silent joy is contained therein. His fate belongs to him. His rock is his thing...But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. " (Note 11) So we can assure that happiness and suffering themselves are paradox. When we look back to see the stone image based on the destiny of the nation, it seems very ridiculous. Unfortunately, the so-called national inferiority mentality has not changed, the suffering soul is not rescued, but even more fell into deeper trouble.

What the myth meaning of stone exposes is the consideration of human being's survival, while the realism depiction is the author's anxiety about this time. The two of them reappear the lost of humanism, and incarnate profound concerning of author in modernity. This is perhaps the reflection the stone image brought to us.

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Notes

- Note 1. Liu Xiao-feng, (1988). *Rescue and Peripateticism--the Chinese and Western poets' different attitudes towards the world*. Shanghai people's publisher, p.30.
- Note 2. *Rectifications of the Meanings of Zhou yi*, Volume
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- Note 5. Liu Xiao-feng, pp.240-241.
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- Note 8. Tsao Hsueh-chin and Kao Hgo, p.26.
- Note 9. Tsao Hsueh-chin and Kao Hgo, p.44.
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