

How does Disaster Impress Literature: a Primary Analysis of the Literary Turn in the Post-Pandemic in the Context of "Disaster Culture"

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Abstract: Every disaster outbreak in human history has either implicitly or explicitly promoted literary creation. The new epidemic sweeping today has become a great catastrophe common to all humankind since the new century. Under the epidemic, what does literature do? It is an inevitable question that must be answered in the post-epidemic era of literary transformation. Therefore, this paper, while feeling grateful for literature's eagerness to respond to the call of reality and intervene in human psychological healing, creatively uses the concept of human destiny to look at the empirical and theoretical expansion of disaster narratives, explores the comprehensive and diversified expression of such "epidemic" themes in literary creation, and considers how to write about disasters while taking into account aesthetics. In addition, we explore the comprehensive and diversified expressions of such "epidemic" themes in literary creation, and consider how disaster writing can take into account the three essential dimensions of individual trauma, collective experience, and identity construction while taking into account aesthetics, to continuously rewrite and even expand the connotation of epidemic literature and actively promote the literary turn in the post-epidemic era.

1. Introduction

1.1 Analysis of the current status of the research

At present, several well-known academic scholars have discussed the issue of "anti-epidemic literature," each offering their insights into "anti-epidemic literature" and analyzing its meaning. [1]

This paper also defines the concept of "epidemic literature" by synthesizing the different views of scholars in the current academic community. The "epidemic literature" studied in this paper refers to writing that reflects the complex structure of nature, human beings, and society in a three-dimensional and multi-dimensional manner, with the occurrence and evolution of large-scale epidemics as the main temporal and spatial background. In terms of content, it reproduces the pathology of the epidemic in a realistic and scientific manner, reflects the social problems and social roots of the epidemic, spares no effort to reflect on the psychological and ideological ills of human culture and civilization, and is a kind of literary writing that combines all the ideological dimensions of the relationship between man and nature, man and man, man and society, and man and self.

The definition of "anti-epidemic literature" has not been studied separately in foreign countries. Still, many literary works related to epidemic themes have been

published abroad, such as "We in the New Crown Period." There are more studies on "disaster literature" in foreign countries covering natural disasters, plagues, war trauma, etc. Foreign scholars call such "disaster literature" and "trauma literature."

1.2 Purpose and significance of the study

The German thinker Adorno has a shocking aphorism that is often mentioned, namely, "After Auschwitz, writing poetry is barbaric" [2]. In terms of the impact of a global event on the entire world, the Newcastle pneumonia epidemic that has ravaged the world will certainly be a "Auschwitz" in another sense that will change human history. [3] Compared with the war, the epidemic is even more widespread, involving not only social and national issues, but also the fundamental issues of civilization and humanity, and is inextricably linked not only to the relationship between man and nature, but also to the relationship between man and man. If we can call the period we are in and the subsequent era we will face the "post-epidemic" era, where will the literature of the "post-epidemic" era go from here? This is already a proposition of the times we have to face, think about, and fundamentally reconceptualize the value of literature.

This thesis has theoretical value. As a concept, the term "epidemic literature" has not received sufficient attention in the past and has often been generally blended

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into the categories of suffering narratives, disaster literature, and disaster literature, and fewer people have examined it independently as a unique genre or used it as a unique perspective in broader literary studies. To respond to the topic of "where to go with literature" in the post-epidemic era in the context of "disaster culture" is a new direction for constructing Chinese literary theory.

Second, this thesis has practical value. At the crossroads of the post-epidemic era, epidemic literature, with its unique subject matter and natural three-dimensional and comprehensive ideological effects, will undoubtedly attract significant attention and cause a re-examination and repositioning of literary historical narratives. Even if epidemic literature shows limitations, it is still a resource for analysis and a warning. Literature in the post-epidemic era should promote aesthetic exploration at all levels and realize the interaction and awakening of multiple consciousnesses from the spiritual soul level, such as human purpose and life purpose. This will undoubtedly be a difficult transition. Therefore, responding to the topic of "where to go with literature" in the post-epidemic era in the context of "disaster culture" is a new direction for the current practice of Chinese literary criticism.

1.3 Research content and critical questions to be addressed

First of all, at the level of theoretical construction, the core concepts of "worry and dark consciousness," "literary healing," and "trauma writing" open up the space of critical discourse and explore the cultural path of disaster narratives in epidemic literature. The cultural path of epidemic literature disaster narrative.

Secondly, we focus on various literary forms and genres, such as disaster writing, disaster literature, and disaster resistance literature in disaster culture. We also analyze and define the concept of "Chinese epidemic literature."

Finally, we focus on the hot topics of disaster writing and devote critical attention to contemporary Chinese people's experiences of physical and psychological epidemics, especially the "fight against the new crown" and the science fiction imagination of the future world disaster landscape. We will explore how and from which levels literature in the post-epidemic era can be transformed to promote a systematic innovation of epidemic literature at a deeper and more structural level.

2. Literary role: the current situation calls for literary intervention and innovation

The history of human civilization is a history of human struggle against disasters, and the recent outbreak of COVID-19 has unprecedentedly wrapped every nation and every individual around the world in fear and challenge. From the discovery and outbreak of the epidemic to the effective restoration of order in our lives. However, the global epidemic is not yet over, we are, and

we will be in the "post-epidemic" era for a long time. The long experience of fighting the epidemic has already impacted all aspects of social life and inevitably pushed the development of literary creation. Facing the impact of the epidemic and the challenge of the disaster, how literature, as the bearer of collective memory and the medium of transmission, can respond in the academic field is a hot issue of concern to scholars worldwide.

When we calmly try to look back and summarize the creative achievements of Chinese literature since the epidemic, we can find that the communication and documentary genres occupy the majority of the published works related to the epidemic, and the observation and recording of all people's experience in fighting the epidemic is the focus of their themes. So far, we have not yet seen any documentary texts that track the healing of the suffering groups and the "lost" who were swept away by the epidemic and affected by their daily lives, reflecting on themselves and struggling to rebuild their identities from multiple perspectives. Few non-fiction works with philosophical excavation and aesthetic construction has appeared. Nevertheless, in this significant global disaster, the temporary absence of literature and the transient loss of words of writers are not worthy of excessive worry and blame, and the creative explosion after the precipitation will be inevitable.

In the discussion on "Where to go with literature in the post-epidemic era" hosted by Cong Zhichen, many scholars and writers have focused on the symbiosis and coexistence of ordinary individuals of different identities with the epidemic, as well as the efforts of people in the context of the epidemic. Many scholars and writers have focused on the coexistence of ordinary individuals with different identities and the epidemic, as well as people's efforts to close the social and psychological distance between themselves and others. "The epidemic is not yet completely over, and the novel needs to be delayed in time; it should summarize, reflect on, and extend the events as a whole." [4] It can be said that writers in the "post-epidemic" era must constantly remind themselves not to forget all the effects and revelations of the epidemic and never subjectively dissolve the inevitable connection between the epidemic and literature. As Dostoevsky's "Handbook of the House of the Dead" puts it, "I am only worried about one thing: I am afraid I am not worthy of what I have suffered." [5] This is a calm and rational tone urging people to choose their hearts and eat themselves, radically changing their self-existence, life consciousness, and cultural concepts from the root. Only in this way can we be "worthy" of the misery of this epidemic era. Let us recall Lu Xun's deafening cry in "Diary of a Madman": "You can change, starting from your heart!" [6] Therefore, in the future, no matter how distant a writer is from the time point of 2020, the meaning of "post-epidemic" cannot be diluted, only in this way can the literature after the epidemic seize this once-in-a-century opportunity for innovation and avoid the "unworthiness" that Dostoevsky feared. Only in this way can the post-epidemic literature seize this unprecedented opportunity for innovation and avoid the

"unworthy" suffering of people in this unprecedented epidemic, as Dostoevsky feared.

3. Literary Presence: Empirical and Theoretical Expansion of Disaster

The global reflection in the "post-epidemic" era has gradually elevated the topic of "disaster" to a contemporary "epiphany." Responding to disasters with literature, expressing the genuine grief of individual lives, and making words take up the responsibility of framing the moment and carrying the memory of disasters have also become significant growth points of Chinese literary creation. "What is the literature of disaster?" has become an urgent need to face, think profoundly and clarify the proposition of the times. When the sudden new epidemic breaks the balance of everyday behavior and thinking controlled by pragmatism, over-generalization, and the principle of possibility, people need not only medical treatment and isolation but also literature to return to the "everyday" and inject them with a spiritual placebo to relieve their fear and pain, and to seek security and safety in the literary memory of the disaster. In addition to medical treatment and isolation, people need literature to return to the "everyday," to provide them with a spiritual placebo to relieve fear and pain, and to seek security and a sense of belonging in the memory of disasters in literature, and to combat the innate weakness of forgetting.

In the webinar titled "Disaster Culture and Chinese Literature: New Directions in Theory Construction and Critical Practice," co-sponsored by Zhejiang University and Harvard University's World Literature Workshop, Dewey Wang (Harvard University) reported in his keynote speech "On Disaster: Narratives of Anguish In his keynote address, "On Catastrophe: Narratives of Sorrow and Darkness," Dewey Wang (Harvard University) reported on the latest narrative approaches to catastrophe in contemporary fiction and the derivation of related themes. He focuses on the dialectical relationship between the two intertwined discourses of "worry consciousness" and "dark consciousness" in the study of Chinese narratives in order to reveal how contemporary writers further expand their intellectual, ethical, and even ideological commitments through the imagination and presentation of disasters. The study of Chinese narratives reveals how contemporary writers use their imaginations and representations of disaster to further expand their personal intellectual, ethical, and even ideological commitments and dialectics. By analyzing and summarizing this enlightening and forward-looking practice of disaster narrative criticism, we can draw inspiration from the fact that the ideological path from "worry consciousness" to "dark consciousness" provides the basis for a shift from "natural disaster" to "human disaster" narratives. The ideological path from "worry consciousness" to "dark consciousness" has laid the discursive conditions for the reversal of the disaster narrative from "natural disaster" to "human disaster" vision. Looking back at modern Chinese literature, Lu Xun's "Formation of Nothing" can be said to be a

symbolic representation of "dark consciousness," which realized the "dark consciousness" of Zhang Hao's "moral trap" as the starting point and Xia Ji'an's "dark consciousness" as the starting point. It achieves a double transcendence of Zhang Hao's discourse on "dark consciousness," which starts from moral sinking, and Xia Ji'an's discourse on "the gates of darkness," which presupposes revolutionary sacrifice. Therefore, the Lu Xun-style "dark consciousness" thesis can provide a new path for us to rethink and re-examine Chinese literature in the post-epidemic era fundamentally.

This function of literature is an indispensable vision of disaster narratives, which is echoed by the traumatic recognition and writing of disasters. Carlos Rojas' article "Aftershocks and Aftershocks: From Tangshan to Wenchuan" focuses on several earthquakes that occurred in the Bohai region of China in the 1960s and 1970s. He cites Professor Zhou Chengyin's three-stage division of earthquakes into "foreshock, mainshock, and aftershock." He borrows the concept of "aftershock" to incorporate the psychoanalytic terms of "subconscious/unconscious" and "trauma" theory. The concept of "aftershock" is integrated with the terms "subconscious/unconscious" and "trauma" in psychoanalysis, and the concept of "pre/post-trauma latency" is creatively proposed. Taking Zhang Ling's novel "Aftershock"[7] and its film adaptation, as well as A Lai's novel "A Tale in the Clouds"[8] as examples, the "aftershocks" of the mind of those involved in the disaster are revealed. It can be seen that the memory of disaster as a factual memory only begins to take on literary significance when it is transformed into the memory of trauma as a valuable memory. Only by activating the facts with imagination can the suffering be condensed into a kind of trauma, and the memory of disaster condensed into a universal national experience, can the literary writing acquire inner depth. This is the real meaning of the existence of epidemic literature and the rethinking of the eternal topic of literary intervention in real life, which is to eulogize the times under the grand narrative and praise the group without neglecting the individual fate in the disaster and glorify the victory against the epidemic without forgetting to trace the root cause of the epidemic and other disasters.

4. Identity Construction: The Literary Turn in the Post-Epidemic Era

The issue of people's spiritual and identity reconstruction in the post-epidemic era should become a vital landing point for the creation of epidemic literature. A disaster can often destroy a person, a family, or a city in just a moment while restoring and rebuilding the normalcy of life and mind is rugged and long-lasting. In "The Plague" [9], the people celebrate the opening of the city and run to their loved ones, who have been cut off from the outside world for a long time, "left behind by the horror of those who came in the same car, but did not wait. These "lost" people need to gather the courage to go home alone to confirm the suspicions they are afraid of. For these people, the fear has been buried deep in their

hearts by repeatedly laying down their emotions over a long period, and only the newly aroused sorrow accompanies them; the pain of bereavement will always be too much for them to bear - for the unfortunate ones, the meaning of the unsealing day is completely different, the pain of isolation is realized in them. The pain of isolation is magnified and magnified to the greatest extent. The parents, husbands, wives, and children who had lost all their joy and for whom the plague was far from over because their loved ones lay beneath a layer of lime in a pit of bones or in a small handful of cold ashes in a mound of earth, who cared for the loneliness of these mourners?"

In the post-epidemic era, those who have been attacked by the virus and those who have been isolated from the community not only face the permanent pain of losing their loved ones but also must face the dilemma of disintegration of the previously harmonious survival community and the physical and mental isolation of the social community that once gave them a sense of belonging and security. It is difficult for people in the epidemic to complete the transition from "otherness" to "empathy," and the nuances of the "lost" norm are emphasized and highlighted. Therefore, when trying to restore the order of life and promote spiritual reconstruction and identity reconstruction, reflecting on the cultural identity of individuals becomes a top priority. Therefore, we need sensitive and delicate writers to heal the scars of individuals and the whole nation with empathy after the disaster and to honestly face the hardships of soothing the hearts of the "lost" and rebuilding their identities after the disaster so that such texts can effectively play the role of intervening in reality while being aesthetic.

In addition, perhaps what we currently consider inadequate about epidemic literature is not, as it happens, an exaggeration of the actual situation but rather an aspect of the artistic imagination that has not yet reached an absolute level of reality. For example, the city of Yan in "The Corolla Virus" [10] and the city of Ming in "The White Mask" [11] are both places where the outbreak of the epidemic is concentrated, and being away from them naturally means safety. Furthermore, the attack by other countries on China, which is caught on an isolated island, also means that foreign countries seem to be able to stay away from the situation. In other words, in the narrative situation constructed by the work, there is an absolute territorial boundary between countries and cities that can block the virus. Perhaps the traditional way of spreading the plague still subtly influences the creator's imagination, but the community of human destiny is no longer an "imaginary community" but a tangible one. The carnival of globalization and the conveniences of the global village allow each individual to enjoy their great benefits without fully realizing their potential dire threats. From this, we can see that there is still much unknown space for writers to explore and explore the horizons and values to be constructed in the post-epidemic era of literature.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of the search results of authoritative databases such as Zhiwang, Wanfang, and Vipul shows that although many scholars have studied literature and other related issues under the New Epidemic, most have focused on literary issues such as "epidemic publishing" and "epidemic books." However, this does not mean there is no possibility and necessity for developing literary inquiry in the post-epidemic era. Therefore, this paper is in line with the current social hotspot of the "New Crown Epidemic" and explores the core concepts of "worry and dark consciousness," "literary healing," and "trauma writing" from a new perspective. It explores the cultural path of disaster narratives in epidemic literature. Focusing on the hot topics of disaster writing, he devotes his critical attention to contemporary Chinese people's experiences of physical and mental epidemics, especially "fighting against the new crown," and science fiction imaginations of future world disasters. This paper explores how and at what levels literature in the post-epidemic era can be transformed to promote systematic innovation in the literature of epidemics at a deeper and more intrinsic structural level. To sum up, this paper is a relatively new literary theory and critical practice topic, which has specific innovative points. Based on a combination of literature research, case study, quantitative analysis, and other research methods of analysis and inquiry, we cannot help but conclude the following.

In this era of rapid development of new media, some functions of literature have been replaced. Still, literature transcends the limitations of reality and offers unique insights into the depths of human nature, writes metaphors of disease, and examines the moral relationship between disease and society, which cannot be replaced by technological intelligence or other arts. At the crossroads of the post-epidemic era, epidemic literature, with its unique subject matter and natural three-dimensional and comprehensive ideological effects, will certainly attract attention and cause a re-examination and repositioning of literary historical narratives. Even if epidemic literature shows some limitations, it is still a resource for analysis and a warning. If the literature of the epidemic has yielded many revelations on the levels of nature, society, man and self, and their relationships, it has not, on the whole, been systematically revolutionized on a broader and intrinsically structural level.

Therefore, how to dissolve a large number of pompous and hypocritical writings in the creation of epidemic literature and invoke the soul for the severe literary core is an intricate problem that writers facing marginalization should ponder and solve. It is also the title of the disaster narrative. Literature in the post-epidemic era should not only promote multi-dimensional aesthetic exploration on all levels but also realize the awakening and interaction of multiple consciousnesses, such as human-centeredness and life-orientedness, on the level of the spiritual soul, which will undoubtedly be a difficult transition. However, it is inevitable that literary writing is actively and eagerly responding to the call of the post-epidemic era. The

literature of the post-epidemic era will be the literature that reflects on the ruins of humanities crushed by the new epidemic and stands up again, the literature that integrates itself among the fragments of civilization and starts with a new face after removing the falsehoods and preserving the truth.

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