

# Stepping on the Thorns into Straight Trees, Changing the Face of the Countryside in the New Era

## —Comments on Zhao Defa's *Jing ShanHai*

Yucong Gao<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shandong University of Technology, Zibo, Shandong, 255100

Correspondence: Yucong Gao, Shandong University of Technology, Zibo, Shandong, 255100.

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### Abstract

*Jing ShanHai* is a narrative novel of the new era, which came into being in the process of Rural Revitalization and the trend of ecological civilization construction in contemporary China. Its “new” is not only reflected in the new era of narration, but also in the new construction of characters and the new exploration of local literature. *Jing ShanHai* combines history and reality, and roots in the modern elements of the times in the creation of the novel. It presents a literary work closely linked to the revitalization of the countryside and conforms to the trend of the times.

**Keywords:** countryside, women, awakening, exploration

### 1. Introduction

Local literature has always been an eternal important part of Chinese literature for a hundred years. When facing the writing of local themes, Chinese writers have been trying their best to excavate the spiritual original appearance of traditional villages, root local themes in the current society, and reflect the typification problem of society. They either write the local customs of traditional villages, or show the rural changes in the process of modernization. While shaping the local world, they also shape a large number of typical characters. After entering the new era, to follow the call of rural revitalization, Chinese local literature began to make a qualitative leap. *Jing ShanHai* is such a book that stands out under the poverty eradication policy, holding the banner of the vanguard of the times. *Jing ShanHai* tells the story of the process of the little man “Wu Xiaohao”, who originally lived at the bottom of the society, growing from an inconspicuous wormwood into a towering tree under his own hard work. In the process of township grass-roots reform, Wu Xiaohao, with his own faith and strength, turned Kaipo Town, which was originally backward and poor, into a town with common development and progress of culture and economy. By writing the personal growth history of Wu Xiaohao, a female figure, we can present the rural development and progress under the strategy of township revitalization in the new era, and shape the appearance of grassroots female reformers in the new era. This paper will analyze and interpret Zhao Defa's *Jing ShanHai* from three aspects: the evolution and development of local literature after entering the new era, the awakening and transformation of female characters, and the exploration and prospect of local literature. It also explains the current local theme novels and their value in being adapted into film and television.

### 2. Local Literature in the New Era

Since the reforming and opening up, with the continuous changes of national policies, Chinese villages have experienced great changes. This is not only an inevitable requirement of the policy, but also a manifestation of the rural development in great strides. In previous rural works, we can often see the oppression and resistance of social transformation experienced by Chinese villages and people living in this land. After suffering, they finally

cut through thorns or fell. They were suppressed by society and expected to break through the shackles of the cage. After entering the modern era, the change of the background also brings about the change of the focus. Chinese rural areas have been on the road of revitalization. This theme of the times makes rural narrative useful in a new political context. *Jing ShanHai* came into being under the background of such a new era. Zhao Defa, the author, with his profound cultural heritage and his keen vision and unique sense of history, closely linked with the theme of the new era, shaped the image of Wu Xiaohao, a typical rural grassroots female cadre. Through the current rural events seen in *Jing ShanHai*, we can feel a strong modern flavor: island tourism, islanders live broadcasting, drones and salmon breeding. These new era characteristic elements fully and stereoscopically show the new era characteristics of the novel to the readers, and depict a rural picture full of modern flavor for the readers.

Apart from the content, from the stylistic point of view, *Jing ShanHai* is a typical masterpiece of realism. With the Rural Revitalization as the background, and the personal growth history of Wu Xiaohao, a female figure, as a series, it shows the new era of the countryside. The typical current affairs issues such as precise poverty eradication, environmental sanitation integration and demolition were interspersed with Wu Xiaohao's work. Zhao Defa said frankly, "in order to solve this problem, I not only pay attention to the cultural and philosophical connotation in the materials, but also mainly take a historical perspective." The judgment of things is not only limited to the present, but also puts historical experience in the process of modernization. This is the strongest embodiment of the modernity of local literature, rooted in history and looking to the future.

As one of the representative works of local literature in the new era, *Jing ShanHai* not only sees the transformation of traditional rural construction, but also sees the nirvana of local society. This Nirvana not only exists in the reform and construction of rural areas, but also is reflected in the creation of local literature. The change of the background of the writer's creation theme also means that the cultural atmosphere and humanistic spirit of the local literature are changing synchronously. The progressiveness of this change determines the unshakable position of new elements in the local literature of the new era. In the face of the integrated construction of sanitation, Wu Xiaohao was reprimanded by the sanitation workers for cleaning the streets by hand. Because the wages were not in place in time, the problem of private appropriation of public funds was exposed. In the process of solving this problem, it was found that there were accumulated drawbacks in the system during the new year. The author boldly shows these practical problems without evasion, so that everyone has a further understanding and understanding of the grassroots. The novel *Jing ShanHai*'s description of the countryside in the new era not only closely follows the main melody of history, but also blends the current new countryside and new countryside into the novel, showing the readers the local new literature in the new era.

### 3. Consciousness Awakening of Female Characters

In the past local works, most of the female images we saw were covered and suppressed, and the shaping of these characters was also closely related to the social background at that time. Wu Xiaohao, the heroine of *Jing ShanHai*, is a typical figure at the bottom of society. Her father values sons over daughters, and her mother has no voice in the whole family. Although she disagrees with her father's views, she is unable to refute them. The five daughters born in a row in the family make the father who values boys over girls even less cherish his children. From the names of Xiaocao, Xiaohao, Xiaolian, Xiaopeng and Xiaoai, we can see that he treats his daughters like grass. It is this family background that has created Wu Xiaohao's cowardice and inferiority complexity in her heart. In the novel, the positive image of Wu Xiaohao is not described too much, but it is only mentioned that Wu Xiaohao is a class flower. It is precise because You Haoliang, has focused on Wu Xiaohao, which also foreshadows the later marriage and love life.

The name You Haoliang mentioned in the novel was obtained by his father from the red light. Every time he saw the name, Wu Xiaosong was particularly angry because she felt the contrast was too sharp. Wu Xiaohao would hate to see this person's name. It can be imagined how much she resists and rejects You Haoliang. But such a person was his husband. During the time with You Haoliang, Wu Xiaohao had been plagued by domestic violence for a long time. If she didn't, she would suffer a lot. Wu Xiaohao's relationship line had been struggling. She didn't want to be with him, but she had to be together. She didn't want to marry him, but she has to marry him, and she wants to divorce. Considering the political future, she gave up this decision. Finally, he found it unbearable and finally decided to divorce. Her feelings was twists and turns. The description of her and You Haoliang in the novel is contradictory and exclusive in both psychological and behavioral aspects. She also met her dawn, but was strangled in the cradle by Hao Liang before lighting herself up. When she met Liu Jingjing in college, Wu Xiaohao was addicted to a better life, but escape did not make her really escape. The punch given by You Haoliang to Liu Jingjing woke her up from her dream, and she always couldn't get rid of You Haoliang. From many details in the book, it can be seen that Wu Xiaohao is more afraid than dependent on You Haoliang. She had to... She couldn't... such sentences often appear in the story. Until the end of the story, he did not divorce You Haoliang successfully. Although the cage was built by Hao Liang, she had to say that she entered it herself.

Different from the female images portrayed in the previous local novels, Wu Xiaohao did not feel sorry for herself and give up herself when she found herself in a predicament. Instead of the previous routine of women being oppressed and fruitless, she boldly broke through the cage and sought a different world to save herself by jumping out of her original organs and units. This is a redefinition and interpretation of women's discourse power. She hated her cowardice at that time, but she did not choose to endure it, but realized her escape and rescue through her own efforts. She worked hard step by step. In addition to her dedication to work, she still wanted to escape from this family cage to a large extent. Wu Xiaohao started to change her job because she felt that she could not bear the face that her father-in-law often put on. She wanted to change her job and escape from her family. After she got to work, her sense of mission made her start to do her best to benefit the soil and water. The application for intangible cultural heritage was successful, and the archaeological team of the tutor was invited to Kaipo to make great achievements. With the help of Liu Jingji, the aquaculture industry of "deep sea No. 1" was implemented, which greatly promoted the modernization process of aquaculture.

If the reason why Wu Xiaohao didn't fight before was because of the hidden female consciousness, the process of seeking self-consciousness was also the process of awakening female consciousness. *JingShanHai* gets rid of the classic female arrangement of traditional realism narration. Wu Xiaohao has the courage to fight against the established status quo and break through the shackles. What is hidden behind it is transformation is the excavation and presentation of its spiritual power, which is also the conscious image of women in the new century that the author wants to construct.

#### 4. Conclusion

*Jing ShanHai* has created a character image of a knowledge-based female cadre under the background of historical changes. Wu Xiaohao has presented a different color for this historical picture of the changes of the times. Women's independent liberation, pursuit of freedom and independence are greatly presented in this novel. From the lack of regular script to the forest of regular script, it is not only the great change of regular script, but also the painstaking efforts of countless grass-roots workers. The author presents the historical era with Wu Xiaosong, a small figure in the historical background, to write the present with history, combining realism with historicism. He breaks through the traditional image of women while shaping the image of new women in the era and shaping the awakening era of women. This way of writing local themes with new female consciousness and writing the grand era with female delicacy is an attempt and innovation of local literature.

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