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The Cultural Differences between Eastern and Western Epics through the Comparison of Satan in *Paradise Lost* and Monkey King in *the Journey to the West*

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Abstract

This study tries to evaluate the similarities and differences between Paradise Lost and the Journey to the West through the characteristics of Satan and Monkey King. In Paradise Lost, the spirit of Satan revolts God is just like the spirit of Bourgeois revolts the Feudal Aristocracy; however, Monkey King's figure in the Journey to the West is a character with rebellious spirits. In the western world, they often advocate punishments afterward, while the eastern world notes social orders and rules. Although eastern epics have distinct differences toward western epics due to the different cultural and historical backgrounds, the results that the winners at the end always get supreme powers are the same.

Keywords: Differences; Similarities; Epic; Eastern; Western

1. Introduction

Paradise Lost and the Journey to the West are two magnificent masterpieces with similar historical but different cultural backgrounds. Paradise Lost is a magnum opus written by an England famous writer John Milton in the 17th Century. The British Bourgeois captured the regime from the Feudal Aristocracy and went on the historical stage in the 17th Century; therefore, people connected Satan in Paradise Lost with the British Bourgeois at that time because they both used forces to revolt their enemies. The spirit of Satan revolts God is just like the spirit of Bourgeois revolt the Feudal Aristocracy. However, the Journey to the West is one of the greatest chef oeuvre written by Wu Cheng'en in the Ming-Qing Dynasty. During the innovatory historical period of time, the humanism thoughts which went against feudalism were on growing; thus, Monkey King is also a character with rebellious spirits. Paradise Lost is one of the most significant epics in western literature, while the Journey to the West is one of the four classic epic novels of Chinese literature. Although the contents are already well-known by people, they barely understand the relevance and connection between these two works. This paper intends to focus on the part which the two masterpieces both depict the main characters' rebellion under the supreme power oppressions; however, they still have many different aspects because of the differences between the eastern epics and western epics. For instance, theories of "Winners and Losers" brought up by David Quint mentioned that "the winners' epic that projects the losers' resistant narratives, the losers' epic that is still deeply committed to the motives of the winners it opposes". In a word, this research will focus on the literary significances between eastern and western through the two major characters among these two epics.

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2. The similarities of Satan and Monkey King

It is no doubt that Satan and Monkey King shared the same high capabilities and rebellious spirits. Satan was the archangel, and he was able to change his form into anything. In order to govern the universe and gain the freedom, Satan led 1/3 of the Angels to rebel. He thought that although he was less powerful than God, he still had the right to be free. Moreover, he regarded himself as a pre-determinate governor and refused to serve others affably. When Satan's army was driven back to the lake of fire by God's troops because of his failure, he chose to be fearless and convened multitudinous demons rose from the ashes:

"What though the field be lost?

All is not lost; the unconquerable Will,

And study of revenge, immortal hate,

And courage never to submit or yield:

And what is else not to be overcome?" (Book 1, 105-109)

He always knew what he wanted and what he fought for. He made up his mind by saying:

"Here we may reign secure, and in my choyce

To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:

Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n. " (Book 1, 261-263)

This grandiloquence showed us Satan's rebellious spirit that he would fight if it was for achieving his goals. After that, Satan took the lead and flew to Eden to conduct his revenge plan. We saw a hero who turned desperation into hope and changed tragedy into valor, and we noticed that he was always undismayed by failure and defeated until the end.

On the other hand, Monkey King was a monkey born from a stone which sustained by the spirit of heaven and earth and the radiance of the sun and moon. He was "accompanied by wolves and insects, and in groups of tigers and leopards; friends with the roe deer, and relatives with macaques". He lived a life "playing in the pine woods and cleansing in the clear ravines", and experienced a happy and free life "without administrated by Kylin¹, without governed by the Phoenix² and without the rules of the human world". In order to avoid samsara³ and to be immortal, Monkey King found a master who taught him how to handle seventy-two metamorphoses and how to somersault for five-thousand kilometers in one second. After that, he made "Si Hai Qian Shan"⁴ surrendered and got rid of "Jiu You Shi Lei"⁵, so the Jade Emperor from heavenly palace conferred him as an officer "Bi Ma Wen", whom in charge of feeding the horses in welkin. When Monkey King realized that "Bi Ma Wen" was a low-class corvee, he was so mad that the Jade Emperor treated him this way and pushed the

¹ Kylin (Chinese: 麒麟) is a mythical hooved chimerical creature known in Chinese and other East Asian cultures, said to appear with the imminent arrival or passing of a sage or illustrious ruler.

² Phoenix (Chinese: 凤凰) were the mythological birds of East Asia that reign over all other birds. The males were originally called Feng and the females were Huang, but such a distinction of gender is often no longer made and they are blurred into a single feminine entity so that the bird can be paired with the Chinese dragon, which is traditionally deemed male.

³ The cycle of births and deaths.

⁴ Si Hai Qian Shan (Chinese: 四海千山) are all the mountains and oceans on the planet.

⁵ Jiu You (Chinese: 九幽) is the bottom of hell full of monsters and demons. Shi Lei (Chinses: 十类) are five immortals (Sky, Earth, God, Human, and Ghost) and five insects (Potter wasp, Scale, Hair, Plume, and Kun).

tables over and fought until he reached the sky gate. Moreover, he disordered the Flat Peach Convention, drank the top-quality wine, stole the elixir from the Senior Moral⁶ and defeated ten thousands of heaven troops. After Monkey King created a tremendous uproar in the heavenly palace, he was caught by Senior Moral and was put into an eight-trigram furnace; however, he didn't burn into ashes, contrarily, the furnace made him a pair of penetrating insight. While Monkey King despoiling the cloud palace of the golden arches, he made a primarily call of fighting to claim that the golden palace was not owned by him, but owned by everyone there. It was a powerful man who should in charge of heaven. He even stated that "the Emperor should take turns, and I should be the next one", furthermore, he told the Jade Emperor that "if you move out and give me the golden palace of heaven, then I will stop the war; or else, I will destroy everything here and leave you everlasting chaos". What we saw until now was also a hero character with high capability and had no fear of supreme power as Satan in *Paradise Lost*.

3. The differences between Satan and Monkey King

Firstly, Satan and Monkey King made different choices after failure. Satan was driven by God to the lake of fire, while Monkey King was punished by Tathāgata⁷ and left under the five-finger mountain. Satan and his subordinates were imprisoned and tortured for nine days by god before they stood up. Therefore, Satan decided that he would never surrender to god. He knew that although they suffered great losses, they are still powerful, and failure even made them smarter.

*"Though all our Glory extinct, and happy state
Here swallow'd up in endless misery.
But what if he our Conquerour, (whom I now
Of force believe Almighty, since no less
Then such could hav orepow'rd such force as ours)
Have left us this our spirit and strength intire
Strongly to suffer and support our pains,
That we may so suffice his vengeful ire,
Or do him mightier service as his thralls"* (Book 1, 141-149)

Satan knew that if he wanted to defeat God's despotism, he must not obey God's will. They caused evil through God's creation of kindness and destroyed everything which was beautiful. Satan's self-libertarianism urged him to pass through the chaotic world and flew to Eden to destroy God's masterwork – Mankind.

Nevertheless, Monkey King showed regret after 500-year imprisoned under the five-finger mountain. When the Guan Yin Pu Sa⁸ was looking for sutra-seeker in eastern land, he begged her to give him a chance to

⁶ The founder of Taoism and the leader of San Qing (Chinese: 三清), which is Yu Qing (玉清), Shang Qing (上清) and Tai Qing (太清).

⁷ Tathāgata (Sanskrit: [təˈt̪ʰɑːgət̪ə]) is a Pali and Sanskrit word; Gotama Buddha uses it when referring to himself in the Pāli Canon. The term is often thought to mean either "one who has thus gone" (tathā-gata) or "one who has thus come" (tathā-āgata).

⁸ Pu Sa (Chinese: 菩萨) is a bodhisattva. And Guan Yin Pu Sa (Chinese: 观音菩萨) is an East Asian bodhisattva associated with compassion as venerated by Mahayana Buddhists. She is commonly known as the "Goddess of Mercy" in English. The Chinese name Guan Yin is short for Guanshiyin (观世音), meaning "The One Who Perceives the

cultivate himself according to religious doctrine. Therefore, Monkey King chose to be tonsured and be a monk so that he could protect his master Tang Seng⁹ to go to the Western world to get the sutra. In Chapter 8, Wu Cheng'en clearly stated that "in the southern part of China, there were numerous of murdering crimes, and people there were always enjoying the extravagant life and laughing at the poverty. The catastrophes always came from the small talks. Now that I have Xuan Zang's sutra, I can finally persuade them to be kind". The world-ruler Tathāgata intended to use sutra to educate people so that he could change the chaotic situation at that time, and helped people to live better lives, which made the journey to the west sacred. Monkey king needed to be free after 500-year imprisonment by the world-ruler, and the ruler needed someone to protect Tang Seng to go on a pilgrimage for Buddhist scriptures. So they chose to be alliance under the terms of collectivism. As the main character of protecting Tang Seng to go to the west, Monkey King changed from a monster who created the havoc in heaven to a warrior who fought for public interests and defeated the devils. It showed us the eastern collectivism.

Secondly, because of their different choices, they had different endings. Satan's free will made him chose to be evil against God, but he encroached on his innate quality first before he injured others. For instance, Satan spoke to the demons at the beginning as:

"One who brings

A mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time.

The mind is its own place, and in it self

Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n." (Book 1, 252-255)

Satan realized how correct and painful it was by saying that:

"Me miserable! which way shall I flie

Infinite wrauth, and infinite despaire?

Which way I flie is Hell; my self am Hell;" (Book 4, 73-75)

He chose to be evil, which led him to be doomed; he would never be able to escape from hell because hell was inside of his heart. In order to peep the Eden and seduced and destroyed mankind, Satan changed his form constantly, and each of the change made him closer to the ground, which made his spiritual level lower. When he was bragging about his achievements, he and his subordinates had to change their forms into snakes and tasted the dust of the forbidden fruit every year. However, Monkey King went through numbers of difficulties and helped Tang Seng reached the western world, therefore, he was ennobled as the Winning Buddha and was able to enjoy the honor forever.

4. The reasons for causing different endings

Satan became a demon at the end, and he was against the western God, and God was the almighty creator who gave Angels and mankind free wills. As far as I am concerned, God used self-libertarianism as an excuse to connived Satan to be evil. Although God beforehand has known that mankind and Angels would fell, he didn't stop them, and he thought the only way to prevent the Angels and mankind to be fallen was to changed their natures, took their free wills away, and turned them into slaves. Therefore, when Satan rebelled because of his self-liberalism, God didn't stop him for being evil because he didn't want to compel Satan to obey. Moreover,

Sounds of the World".

⁹ Tang Seng (Chinese: 唐僧) is also called Xuan Zang (玄奘), he is a Chinese Buddhist monk, scholar, traveler, and translator who traveled to India in the sixth century and described the interaction between Chinese Buddhism and Indian Buddhism during the early Tang dynasty.

when God defeated Satan and his subordinates' rebellious army, he imprisoned them into the lake of fire in hell; however, it only took them nine days to stand up so that they thought they did it all by themselves, but not with God's mercy. If God could have imprisoned them longer and let them suffer more, Satan might introspect on his actions and reconsidered whether he had the power to fight against God or not. In addition, before Satan went to seduce Eve, he went through a hard time by fighting against his heart:

*Ah wherefore! he deservd no such return
From me, whom he created what I was
In that bright eminence, and with his good
Upbraided none; nor was his service hard.” (Book 4, 42-45)
How due! yet all his good prov'd ill in me,
And wrought but malice; lifted up so high
I sdeind subjection, and thought one step higher
Would set me highest, and in a moment quit
The debt immense of endless gratitude,
So burthensome, still paying, still to ow;
Forgetful what from him I still receivd,
And understood not that a grateful mind” (Book 4, 48-55)
“And in the lowest deep a lower deep
Still threatning to devour me opens wide,
To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n.
O then at last relent: is there no place
Left for Repentance, none for Pardon left?” (Book 4 76-80)*

Satan cudgled his brain with these ideas, but he eventually decided to conduct his revenge because of his proud:

*“None left but by submission; and that word
Disdain forbids me, and my dread of shame
Among the Spirits beneath, whom I seduc'd
With other promises and other vaunts
Then to submit, boasting I could subdue
Th' Omnipotent.” (Book 4, 81-86)
“The lower still I fall, onely Supream
In miserie; such joy Ambition findes.
But say I could repent and could obtaine
By Act of Grace my former state” (Book 4, 91-94)
“All hope excluded thus, behold in stead
Of us out-cast, exil'd, his new delight,
Mankind created, and for him this World.
So farewell Hope, and with Hope farewell Fear,
Farewel Remorse: all Good to me is lost;
Evil be thou my Good; by thee at least”(Book 4, 105-110)*

Satan's desperate analysis on himself and God made people sympathized, and the almighty God should have known why Satan was anguished. If he could talk to Satan to resign his pain before he made eternal mistakes by seducing mankind, Satan wouldn't be able to turn into a snake forever. The afterward punishment had no benefits on both God and Satan.

Contrarily, Monkey King became a Buddha at the end because his cultural background was Chinese culture which emphasized on collectivism ideology and social peaceful order. As an eastern country opposed to self-liberalism, the rulers took all kinds of measures to educate the rebelled Monkey King so that they could maintain the social order. The ruler Tathāgata imprisoned Monkey King under the five-finger mountain for 500 years without freedom so that he could be suppressed. He “drank copper water” and “ate iron balls” for 500 years to suffer the consequences for his loss by creating a tremendous uproar in the heavenly palace. However, the punishment wasn’t everything. The ruler Guan Yin Pu Sa gave the Monkey King love and lead him to kindness. She promised that she would go to the eastern country to find a sutra-seeker to save him, which made him realized that Guan Yin was the only one who could end his torments. Whenever Monkey King was in trouble on his way to the western world, Guan Yin always showed up to help him. It could be inferred that his cultivation has something to do with Guan Yin’s education and caring for him. In addition, although Monkey King was hard to manage, he was a scarce talent. When he ruled his kingdom in the Mountain of Flowers and Fruits, he managed affairs methodically, which showed his leader talents; he walked thousands of miles in order to learn skills, which showed his curiousness in the study; moreover, he was clever and suitable for defeating the devil. Therefore, the best way to stimulate Monkey King to abandon evil was to put his advantages in good use and made his life value admitted, which was protecting Tang Seng went on a Journey to the west. However, Monkey King was a monster after all. In order to restrain him, the ruler gave an incantation of the golden hoop to Tang Seng so that he could use incantation to make him having a headache, which assured the disciplines.

5. Epilogue

Different encounters and destinies of Satan and Monkey King reflected the different culture and educational concepts between Eastern epic and Western epic. Western epics usually focused on self-liberalism, whereas Eastern epics always emphasized on collectivism. And Western often focused on the punishments afterward, while eastern noted social orders and rules. The image of Monkey King reflected Wu’s opinion on how he treated rebellious spirits – Monkey King was indeed a hero, but no matter how hard he tried to fight, he was destined to compromise at the end because of eastern values. However, Milton showed his sympathy to Satan because of the western values and social background at that time. In fact, Satan was a revolutionary during his war with God, which made him a hero. Speaking of the winners and the losers, the author’s opinion is that although Satan and Monkey all fought for their rights in the beginning, they were both losers at the end because they were both defeated and cursed by God or the rulers of the universe. Although eastern epics had distinct differences with western epics due to the different cultural and historical backgrounds, the results that the winners at the end always got supreme powers were the same. The comparative studies between *Paradise Lost* and *the Journey to the West* through Satan and Monkey King will eventually lead to more discussions among these two great epics. The cultural and historical influences will always restrict authors’ creation under any circumstances.

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