

Original Paper

The Comparison of Redundant Human Figures in Chinese and Japanese Literary Works: A Case Study of “The Sinking” and “The Quilt”

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Abstract

The novel “Quilt” by Tayama Katai is the founding work of Japanese private novels, and the main character Tokio has a full and three-dimensional image, and Tokio’s inner struggle reflects the spiritual dilemma of a generation of Japanese intellectuals. Under the influence of the trend of Japanese private novels, Yu Dafu wrote a shocking work in the literary world of the May 4th—The Sinking, the image of “He” in the novel and Tokio in The Quilt have both similarities and subtle differences. This paper will focus on the comparison of the two images to further explore the deeper meaning behind the similarities and differences.

Keywords

private fiction, redundant people, comparative literature

1. Introduction: Private Fiction Protagonists and the “Superfluous”

Private novels have always been known for their bold self-exposure, the author’s delicate strokes into the inner world of the protagonist, the most subtle corners of his heart in front of the readers, the protagonist of the private novels in the “torn” image of nirvana. Because of the strong self-consciousness of the protagonist, the image of the protagonist in private novels has received extensive attention from scholars and critics from all walks of life.

Whether it is Japanese private novels or Chinese private novels formed under the trend of Japanese private novels, the images of their protagonists all have one obvious characteristic—the sense of “marginality”. These protagonists have different social status and life experiences, and their recent life

situations are not the same, but they always have behaviours or thoughts that are contrary to the social norms, so much so that deep down in their hearts, they think that they are not tolerated by the society. Tokio in “The Quilt” by Tayama Katai is a depressed editor who thinks that “it seems as if he will never be able to communicate with this generation”, and the poet father in “Sad Father” by Yoshizo Kasai has to say goodbye to “everything” and seal himself off from the society. The poet father also wants to part with “everything” and seal himself off in a small space separated from society; the “he” in Yu Dafu’s “Sinking” feels that all the people in the world are envious of him, making light of him, and making a fool out of him; and in the “autobiographies” of the members of the Creation Society of the same time period, there is a description of the main character’s feeling that he is not accepted by society. In the “autobiographies” of the members of the Creation Society of the same period, there are also various depictions of the protagonist’s feeling that he is not accepted by society.

This “marginalisation” of the protagonist’s image from the society can be traced back to the creation of the image of the Russian “superfluous man”. The so-called “superfluous man” is a typical group of characters formed in Russian literature in the middle of the 19th century, when Russia was in the midst of the contradiction between the beginning of the development of capitalism and the deep-rooted serfdom. The “superfluous man” refers to those well-educated aristocrats who saw the ills of the upper class and did not want to co-exist with them, but also did not want to reform the serfdom system. Yu Dafu once accurately summed up this type of people: “Life is not beneficial to the world and death is not detrimental to the world”. In “The Quilt”, Tayama Katai bluntly said through Tokio’s mouth that “he felt that he was what Turgenev called Superfluous man”, and Yu Dafu once expressed that “it was entirely due to Turgenev’s influence that I began to read novels and began to want to write them!”, and Yu Dafu called the characters in his novels “Superfluous man”, and the term “Superfluous man” was originally Yu Dafu’s translation of Turgenev’s “Superfluous man”. The term “Zero Remnant” was originally Yu Dafu’s translation of Turgenev’s “redundant man”.

However, what I need to point out is that even if the writers themselves think that the characters in their works have been deeply influenced by the image of the “redundant man”, we should compare the image of the “redundant man” in different writers based on the text, and use it as an entry point to find out the deep reasons behind the differences and similarities. We should also compare the images of “redundant man” written by different writers based on the text to find out the subtle differences, and use this as a starting point to find out the deep reasons behind the differences and similarities.

On closer comparison we can see that in fact the image of the main character in Japanese private novels is closer to the image of the Russian redundant man. In terms of external characteristics, their social status is higher, Russian redundant people are often down-and-out aristocrats, and Japanese redundant people are engaged in respectable jobs such as poets, writers and so on. However, the protagonists in Chinese private novels are mostly ordinary students with no family background. As the disadvantaged group in the society, students naturally could not compare with aristocrats and writers in terms of social

status. In terms of internal characteristics, the depression of Russian redundant people and Japanese redundant people is endogenous depression, while Chinese redundant people are exogenous depression. To sum up, although the Chinese and Japanese images of the redundant man are derived from the Russian image of the redundant man, there are some similarities and differences. By tracing back the image of the redundant man, we find that different countries, due to specific social and historical reasons, present the image of the “redundant man” in their works with obvious national characteristics. Therefore, in the following article, the author will compare the images of redundant people in China and Japan based on the characteristics of the images of redundant people.

2. The Same “Diseases” of Chinese and Japanese Redundant People

The author finds that in the novel text, both Tokio and “he” have many behaviours and ideas that are different from the mainstream of the society. Because these behaviours and thoughts are not “normal”, the author classifies them as “illnesses”. These diseases are all evolved from the image of redundant people, and the main reason for the diseases is “redundancy”. Through the detailed reading of the text, the author summarises the symptoms of Tokio and “him” as follows: “melancholia”, “nostalgia”, “apostasy” and “impulsivity”. Impulsive Disorder”.

First of all, it is depression. Zhao Yaling points out that the daily performance of “he” in “Down” basically conforms to the internationally recognised diagnostic standards for mental disorders, and the words “loneliness”, “sadness”, “pity” and so on have been used many times to describe “his” mood in the text of “Down”. The words “lonely”, “sadness” and “pity” are used many times in the text of “Down” to describe his mood, and this sad and lonely emotion has been running through his life as a student. He always wept inexplicably: “Two lines of tears welled up in his eyes, and he didn’t know what caused them” “A few cold tears suddenly rolled down his hot cheeks” In real life, anything can trigger “him”. In real life, anything can trigger his sadness, but what triggers his melancholy the most is the feeling of not being accepted and not being able to integrate into the society: he cares too much about other people’s eyes, and he always feels that “everyone is there staring at him”. He is too concerned about the eyes of others, and always feels that “everyone was there gazing at him”, and “his precocious nature had squeezed him into a situation that was incompatible with the world”. Correspondingly, in the novel *The Quilt*, the main character Tokio is often “bitter”, “remorseful”, and “despairing”, and in the novel’s portrayal, the reason for these negative emotions is also the sense of loneliness of being out of the world. In the novel, the reason for these negative feelings is also a sense of loneliness that is not allowed to be seen in the world. Shixiong has a lot of feelings about the new era, and he often feels “outdated”, unable to understand the literary ideas of the new era and the behaviour of the students of the new era. The book describes many times that he feels separated from the mainstream society, for example, “There had been a number of similar experiences in his life. He had lost touch with destiny by a single step, and was always excluded from the circle, the bitter taste of

loneliness and depression was something he often experienced". Melancholia" is a common feature of the image of redundant people, and also an important factor in the image of "redundant people", and its causes involve all aspects of the life experience of the novel's protagonist, but it is the inability to form a "socialised self" that is the most important factor in the redundancy. Although its causes involve all aspects of the protagonist's life experiences, the inability to form a "socialised self" is the most important cause of redundancy.

Secondly, there is the "nostalgia disease". The protagonists in both novels often reminisce about the past, they are dissatisfied with the present situation, and they need to derive pleasure from their past experiences. In *Down to Earth*, his nostalgia focuses on his hometown and his youthful days. Chapter 3 of the novel devotes a whole chapter to his memories of his hometown, in which he writes, "Though he loved the landscape and the scenery near the school, his heart was always a little rebellious. Although he loved the landscape near the school, there was always a sense of rebellion in his heart". His nostalgia is always a struggle and a contradiction. Even though he explicitly admits his nostalgia, his nostalgia for his homeland is not a single love and nostalgia. In *The Quilt*, Tokio's nostalgia is also multilayered, and he misses the traditional era in which he was nurtured. Many times in the text he laments the changes that have taken place in the times, such as "the train has made a big difference in Tokyo's traffic" and "female students are getting stronger and stronger, and I don't see the kind of traditional girl I fell in love with anymore". Tokio is clearly confused by the current era and feels that he "can't communicate with this generation", and he is also dismissive of the new generation of young people, represented by Yoshiko and Tanaka. However, subtly, between Yoshiko and his wife, who represent both the old and new generations, Tokio clearly favours the former. As a result, Tokio's nostalgia is also contradictory, as he is both confused and distressed by the changes of the new era, and at the same time has a passionate desire to integrate into the new era.

Finally, there is the backward moral impulse disorder. The redundant figures in *The Sinking* and *The Quilt* are clearly aware that their behaviour is against morality, yet they are unable to control their desire to break through the moral boundaries. In "The Sinking", this immoral impulse is embodied in the fact that "he" sinks in the pleasure brought by sexual desire again and again, and "he" calls the act of masturbation a "crime", and every time "the crime" is finished, "the crime" is committed. He calls masturbation a "crime", and every time he commits a "crime", he needs to eat raw chicken and cow's milk to make up for his guilt. In addition, under the traditional Chinese social structure dominated by patriarchy, he even wants to take revenge on his elder brother: "Because he wanted to avenge his brother's death, he threw away his medical studies". In *The Quilt*, Tokio's impulse to betray morality is manifested in his marital relationship. He is clearly aware of his betrayal of his wife, and he would be so distressed that he could not sleep at night, "peering at her sleeping face, he could not help but condemn his own thoughts that went against his conscience", Tokio's breakthrough of morality and ethics seems to be an outburst of a long time's accumulation of pent-up feelings, waiting for an

opportunity to bring out his inner immorality. He is waiting for an opportunity to release his inner immorality. In Tokio's mind, "once the opportunity came, it was easier to break through the moral and secular forces than to tear a piece of silk".

"Melancholia", "nostalgia disease", and "apostasy impulse disorder" are not only common features of the image of the redundant man in the novels of *Down and Quilted*, but they are also virtually common to the redundant man in all the novels. common feature of the redundant man in almost all novels. As stated in the first chapter of this paper, the image of the superfluous person is often born at the time of the transition between the old and the new era. The inappropriateness of the new environment will cause the protagonist to feel "out of time", and the incompatibility between the self and the external environment will naturally lead to melancholy. Nostalgia is essentially an escape from the new environment of the new era. At the point of transition between the old and new environments, it is difficult for the redundant to find their own identities and positions, the "ego" is infinitely suppressed, the "self" will rebound, and those primitive desires become an outlet for catharsis, forming the impulse to go against the morality.

3. Different External Conditions for the Image of Redundancy

From the point of view of external conditions, the economic conditions and social status of Chinese and Japanese figures of redundant people are very different. Although the main characters of the redundant people in Japanese private novels also face some difficulties in life, their material living conditions are definitely not scarce, and most of their occupations are writers, poets, and other occupations engaged in spiritually productive activities. However, Chinese private novels were born under the wave of the May Fourth Movement, and students, as the protagonists of the era, naturally became the main subjects of private novels. Compared with the Japanese redundant people who worked as editors and writers, the Chinese redundant people, mainly students, were undoubtedly disadvantaged in terms of economic conditions and social status.

The textual details of the two novels are compared and contrasted to show us the different existential environments of Japanese-style redundant people and Chinese-style redundant people. Firstly, Tokio in *The Quilt* is a geography book editor in a publishing house with a stable job and income. Tokio calls himself a "writer" and is very dissatisfied with his job as a book editor, as he writes, "A writer is actually a geography book editor...His literary experience is already outdated, and he has only written a few short stories!" It can be seen that Tokio's work is not only editing, but he also publishes his works, and has two incomes: salary and remuneration. Financial problems were not a problem for Tokio, and we can also see Tokio's favourable living conditions from the dining table in his house. When Tokio is drinking to relieve his worries about Yoshiko, his wife prepares for him "fresh tuna sashimi and cold tofu seasoned with green shiso". Generally speaking, motsunabe, or pickled vegetables, are a regular feature of Japanese drinking, and are popular because they are inexpensive.

However, Tokio used expensive fresh sashimi as a side dish for drinking, which is a good indication of his high economic level. In addition, Tokio has a high social status. There are two details in the text that show Tokio's fame and power: the first one is that Yoshiko claims to be an admirer of Tokio's in her letter to Worship Tokio, which is full of admiration. Interestingly, after receiving Yoshiko's letter, there is a passage in the text in which the author describes Tokio's psychological activities from a zero-focus perspective: "He writes beautiful and elegant novels, and is more or less famous in the community, and has so far received a lot of letters from admirers and admirers from all over the world. There were those who wished to help revise their articles and those who requested to be taken as disciples, and it was impossible for him to pay attention to them all". In fact, Tokio had a clear idea of his status and position, and perhaps it was because he felt that his status did not match his work that his bitter feelings arose. The second place is when Tokio steps in to help Tanaka get a job after Yoshiko and Tanaka's affair comes to light; without a certain level of connections and status, Tokio could not have helped Tanaka so easily. However, the situation of "he" in "Down" is quite different. In terms of financial conditions, his life is very difficult. Worrying about rent, school fees, and things is one of the sources of worry in his life. Even when he pays prostitutes, he is "red in the face" because of his shyness. In terms of social status, he has no family background and is just an ordinary student. From an external point of view, Tokio does not seem to be a qualified "redundant person", and his social status and economic conditions do not predispose him to be a person "whose life is not beneficial to the world and whose death is not detrimental to the world".

4. Different Intrinsic Characteristics of Redundant Human Figures

However, under the favourable external conditions, there are also many struggles and pains in Tokio's heart, which are very different from his inner characteristics in Down and Out, but together they constitute the complex and subtle inner world of the "redundant man". First of all, the difference between Tokio's inner characteristics and his is reflected in their different attitudes towards women. Tokio's attitude towards women is arrogant; he hates his wife for her traditionalism, and although he likes Yoshiko, he is annoyed by her new style. His love for Yoshiko is more possessive than simply bored with his wife. When his rival Tanaka appears, Tokio tries everything to keep Yoshiko by his side, believing that "even if his rival is powerful, occupying his lover will be a relief". Tokio initially stays with Yoshiko at his wife's sister's house, but later, as his inner turmoil about his rival grows, he takes Yoshiko back to his own house. This behaviour is actually a manifestation of Tokio's strong possessiveness; he wants Yoshiko to live close to him and distance herself from Tanaka. Tokio's arrogance towards women is also a kind of self-righteous gender superiority. In his eyes, women are objects, appendages of men, and not independent thinking individuals. There is a passage in the text in which Tokio's observation of Yoshiko is full of the meaning of the male gaze: "Her youthful heart longed for a colourful love story, and her expressive eyes glittered with a meaningful light. The

fashionable sheltered hair, the comb between her hair, the hair band, the light reflecting on her half". This description occurs after Tokio teaches Yoshiko Turgenev's short story Faust, a complex tragedy revolving around love and morality, and in Tokio's eyes he concludes that Yoshiko is longing for a colourful love rather than contemplating the more complex depths behind the novel. After this unwarranted assumption, Tokio shifted his attention to Yoshiko's dress, which Tokio could see in her fashionable hairstyle and half of her body in the soft light, and the women were closely connected to these dresses.

On the other hand, there is some respect for women hidden in the image of "he" in "Down". "He has a natural desire for women, but it is a physical desire rather than a possession. He is very nervous around women, "his breath tightened" when he met the schoolgirls on the road, and his face "flushed green and red" when he entered the brothel and talked to the prostitutes. "He never feels a sense of gender-oppressive superiority over women, but rather an inferiority complex. Inferiority complexes are often born out of the gap between oneself and the object of comparison, and it is precisely because "he" believes that women are beautiful and that he is timid that he develops an inferiority complex and shyness. After spending the night with the prostitute, he pays the bill in full, and even uses all his money to pay the prostitute's tip, saying, "Don't be shy, please take it". The fact that he paid and tipped the prostitute shows that he considered the money to be the prostitute's due, and that he respected the fruits of the prostitute's labour, even though he failed to recognise that prostitution was a form of exploitation and oppression for the prostitute at a time when prostitutes were prevalent.

Secondly, the difference in the internal characteristics of Tokio and "him" is also reflected in their different attitudes towards the motherland. According to the traditional research on private novels, the "private" of private novels is to write about "self" and "self surrounding", and to distance from the social politics. However, through a close reading of the text, the author finds that the influence of the social era has a significant impact on the formation of the character of the redundant protagonist of the private novel. Tokio's emotional attitude towards his motherland is embedded in his sigh of the times, and he is more dissatisfied with the motherland in the new era than loving it. Tokio's dissatisfaction with the new era is mainly centred on his attitude towards the new women, and towards the new era of male-female relationships. He laments that "female students are getting stronger and stronger, and they no longer see the traditional girl they were when they fell in love", and when admonishing Yoshiko, "his words against the new school of women were particularly bitter". Tokio hates Yoshiko's relationship with Tanaka, as well as Tanaka's. Tokio's obstruction of Yoshiko's relationship with Tanaka is not only out of love for Yoshiko, but also out of disgust for Tanaka. The text describes that "the first thing he felt personally was Tanaka's obnoxious, unpleasant, Christian-inculcated moralism" "That obnoxious rolling of the eyes upwards was the way he [referring to Tanaka] prayed". What Tanaka represents is the influx of Western ideas after the Meiji Restoration, and it is clear from Tokio's attitude towards Tanaka that he is dissatisfied with a fully Westernised Japan. Living in this era, he is

unable to stop the change of the times in the direction he dislikes, and this helplessness is also the reason why Tokio becomes a “redundant person”.

In *Down to Earth*, he is more resentful than resentful of his country, and his love for it is greater than his resentment. Almost all of his melancholy and inferiority in a foreign country stem from the fact that the motherland is not strong enough. It is because of his strong love for his country that he feels so deeply about its weakness. In the text of “*Sinking*”, “his” love for his country is almost straightforward, “he” wrote in his diary, “China, China! He wrote in his diary, “China, China! Why don’t you get rich and strong, I can’t hold back any longer”. Even though China was in a backward position in the international arena at that time, he still felt that everything in his hometown was good: “English poetry is English poetry, Chinese poetry is Chinese poetry, why translate and translate?” “Are there not beautiful mountains and rivers in my hometown, and are there not beautiful women like flowers in my hometown? Why do I have to come to this island in the East China Sea!” His love and resentment for the motherland were entangled until the end of his life, and on the seashore where the sea breeze was chilling, he cried out his last love-hate complaint against the motherland: “Motherland, motherland! My death is caused by you! Get rich! Get stronger!”

5. Reasons for the Differences and Similarities between the Images of Chinese and Japanese Redundant People

The reason for these similar “diseases” of the Chinese and Japanese redundant people is closely related to the background of the era in which the Chinese and Japanese private novels were born. The novel *The Quilt* was published in 1907, thirty years after the Meiji Restoration, when Japan embarked on the path of total westernisation. Thirty years was enough time for Japan to put on a shell of westernisation in politics, economy, science and technology, but for cultural thinking, it was almost impossible for a complete transformation to take place within thirty years. At such a point in time, Tokio was born as a redundant person who “caught up with the trend of the times, but was abandoned by the trend”. Similarly, the “he” in *The Sinking* is also a character born at the time when the old and the new were changing. *Sinking* was published in 1921 after the outbreak of May Fourth Movement. In this era of general awakening of intellectuals, Yu Dafu obviously realised the predicament faced by the young intellectuals: they had accepted the new ideas and education, and gained a more forward-looking perspective, but they were in a backward country, and were unable to obtain the support of the motherland to show their ambitions, so this strong sense of disparity gave rise to a series of pathological psychological problems, such as inferiority complex and sensitivity. Such a strong sense of discrepancy makes them develop low self-esteem, sensitivity and a series of pathological psychology.

Not only that, but the image of the Russian redundant man was born between the old and new eras. As mentioned in the first chapter of this paper, the image of the Russian redundant began to appear at a

time when serfdom was under attack, when society was in transition to a capitalist society, and when the old and the new were in violent conflict with each other.

It can be found that the era of alternation between the old and the new is the common background of the image of redundant people. Surplus people are in the gap between the old and the new era, naturally squeezed by the two contradictory forces, this invisible pressure makes them unable to face life easily and comfortably, and the psychological distortion under great pressure produces some similar psychological problems.

On top of the similar era background, the exchange and mutual understanding between Chinese and Japanese cultures since ancient times is also the reason for the similarity of the image of redundant people. Japan is located in an island country, surrounded by the sea on all sides of the geographic environment makes its communication with the outside world is less, the population flow is less, the information is closed, the whole is in a kind of “static”, so the Japanese society in the history of the development of the slower, which led to the Japanese culture of the heavy features. The solidity of Chinese culture comes from the closedness caused by the self-sufficient small peasant economy, the superior development of the agricultural economy and self-sufficiency, with few opportunities for the exchange of goods with the outside world, which led to the lack of opportunities for Chinese culture to collide with foreign cultures. The staid character of Chinese and Japanese cultures led people in both countries to constantly repress the ego, suppressing themselves with the social principles of the self and the moral demands of the superego. In Freud’s psychodynamic theory, the ego will bottom out when it is subjected to too much pressure, just as the protagonists of *Down and Quilted* have a certain kind of rebound from the “backward moral impulse” under the oppression of the heavy culture. In addition, the similarity of “exclusivity” in Chinese and Japanese cultures may be the root cause of the sickness of the image of Chinese and Japanese redundant people. Chinese culture has developed socio-economically and culturally earlier and faster, and this advantage has led to the characteristic of “precocity and immaturity” of Chinese culture, the superiority of “heavenly kingdom” has always existed in the hearts of Chinese people, and they have been repulsed by foreign cultures as “barbarians” and “savages”. The Chinese people have always had a sense of superiority over foreign cultures and have always rejected them as “barbarians”, which is a manifestation of exclusivity. When the modern era came, the fact of backwardness in front of the eyes, the redundant protagonists have not yet come out of the sense of superiority, they are forced to face the influx of foreign advanced culture, they can not be completely open-minded acceptance of advanced foreign cultures, this “exclusivity” since ancient times into the source of their contradictions and pain. Japanese culture is “both open and conservative”. When the island isolated from the outside world is subjected to cultural impact, absorbing foreign culture in order to survive is a helpless action, perhaps because of the recognition of this “helplessness”, the Japanese people for the protection of the traditional culture of their own country can be said to have reached the degree of madness. In the Japanese cultural psychology, there is always a ruler, marking the cultural

“you and I”, which is a unique exclusivity in Japanese culture. This is the unique exclusivity of Japanese culture. Tokio in *The Quilt* is holding up such a yardstick, constantly weighing up the culture of the new era and the old era, and his sense of “exclusivity” makes him unable to face the new foreign culture positively.

The roots of the differences between the Chinese and Japanese images of redundant people can also be found in the differences between the Chinese and Japanese cultures. First of all, the different “public-private consciousness” of China and Japan leads to the different attitudes towards the motherland in the images of redundant people in the two countries. In traditional Chinese cultural values, the public-private concept can be seen as an extension of the “group-self relationship”. As early as the pre-Qin period, the Hundred Schools of Thought made a profound discussion of the group-self relationship: Confucianism believes that the ultimate goal of self-improvement is the harmony of society as a whole; Mohism advocates love for all and love for the common good, taking the benefits of the world and the harms of the world as the ultimate criterion for value judgement; Legalism expands the authority of the monarch into the broader sense of the word “public”, and uses the monarch’s “public” to exclude the “public” from the “public” of the monarch. The Legalists even expanded the authority of the monarch to mean “public” in a broad sense, and used the monarch’s “public” to exclude the “selfishness of the self”. As we can see from the understanding of the “group-self relationship” in each school of thought, it is a consistent value orientation of Chinese culture to emphasise the group over the self, which is translated into the concrete manifestation of the Chinese people’s emphasis on the collective, the state, and the public norms. Against this background, all the abnormal behaviours and thoughts of “He” in “Down” can be explained. “He is deeply influenced by the traditional Chinese concept of “public and private” and has a strong love and attachment to his motherland. With deep love and strong responsibility, his individual self even dissolves under the consciousness of “public”, and the logical starting point of all his behaviours originates from the weakness of “public”. The starting point of the logic of all his behaviours comes from the lack of security brought about by the weakness of “Gong”. In the novel, “he” repeatedly calls out for his motherland and expresses his love for the motherland from the bottom of his heart, but when “he” has to leave the soil of “public”, the “private” individual faces the foreign world alone. When “he” has to leave the “public” soil, the “private” individual faces everything in the foreign land alone, “urban nostalgia” arises, and all the emotions come from the strong patriotic feelings under the “public” thinking.

In Japanese culture, however, the sense of “privacy” is a more traditional and enduring value. The birth of the *Kojiki* was a time when the sense of “privacy” was in its infancy in Japan. Interestingly, this was the period when Japan sent a large number of emissaries to China, and the Chinese concept of “public” appeared as a counterpoint to “private”, and the spread of the “public” consciousness made the “private” concept even more popular. The widespread spread of “public” consciousness made the

concept of “private” grow stronger. Since then, the sense of “private” has been continued in Japanese literature, and the works of female writers such as “Pillow Grass” and “The Tale of Genji” have marked the foundation of Japanese “private” culture. This sense of “privacy” continued to grow, and in the Taisho period, a cultural trend of “private novels” became popular. Under the light of the Japanese sense of selfishness, extreme individualists like Tokio were born. The ancient tradition of “visiting wives” established the indifference to family relations in Japanese culture, and the “private” in Japanese culture is not a self-centred “self-collective”, but rather the “private” in Japanese culture is not a “self-collective” extended from the self-centred self, but a more complete self independent of the family. This explains Tokio’s indifference to his wife and family. As a being outside the family, he arrogantly regards his wife, and even Yoshiko, who he fantasises might become his wife, as personal belongings rather than as existences on the same level of “self”. It is also because of his extreme individualism that Tokio is unable to treat his country as an existence closely related to himself and share his honour and disgrace, as he does in “Down”. Therefore, when the trend of the new era collides with the old trend that Tokio is accustomed to, his first reaction is to be dissatisfied rather than to be happy that the new trend can bring progress to the country.

6. Result

This paper carefully classifies and summarises the similarities and differences between the images of redundant people in Chinese and Japanese private novels, and tries to find appropriate words to summarise each pair of similarities and differences with the support of textual details. Finally, the author traces the similarities and differences of the image of the redundant man in Chinese and Japanese cultures and the background of the times, and finds that the similarities of the image of the redundant man are related to the background of the times when Chinese and Japanese private novels were born, and that the conservative and serious external characteristics of Chinese and Japanese cultures also lead to the similarities of the image of the redundant man. In addition, the differences in the image of the redundant man are closely related to the concepts of public and private in Chinese and Japanese cultures.

In today’s increasingly frequent exchanges between big countries, cultural exchanges have become a bridge for countries to learn from each other and understand each other, and the study of comparative literature between China and Japan can not only promote the academic exchanges between the two countries, but also enhance the understanding of each other’s cultural traditions and national spiritual outlook.

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