

Travel as a symbol of personal freedom, self-identification and truth in monkey a...

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Book Review Essay

The theme of travel, based on real journeys or imaginary ones, is one of the most popular in world's literature. In many stories, travel symbolizes life paths, experience and eternal knowledge. Travel is used as a canvas to describe deep personal feelings and life experience of a human. Both books 'Monkey' and "Gulliver's Travels" are based on the theme of travel and real journey made by the protagonists. Using the theme of travel the authors help readers to comprehend the meaning of the stories comparing life with non-trodden paths, which the protagonists have to carve. Thesis In both works, at the end of the journey the characters reach the truth which means self-identity, religious and social virtues.

The theme of travel in 'Monkey' is unveiled through the character of the monk who travels from China to India in search of Buddhist. Alongside the book impulse to self-creation to the development of the individual self as an autonomous being is described. Using the theme of travel, Wu Ch'eng-en portrays that life experience of a particular person, the monk, is subjected to events which have a direct impact on his personality, and some life experiences bring message to everyone to think over next step in his life. The reach of Buddhist is a symbol of future, and a person has a choice to choose his road while traveling. In contrast to this interpretation, Swift uses the theme of journey to unveil a version of different societies and the essence of human's motives. In Lilliput, while effortlessly admired and respected, Gulliver casually performs heroic exploits and insists on preserving a conquered people's liberty. In contrast to the second part, the third part unveils reaction of giants towards smaller people. It portrays

Laputa, and shows how society treats people who are different.

In contrast, “ Monkey” discusses up questions concerning formation of self and religious self-identity. The travel is a life path of every person and his self formation. This process is loosely connected with spiritual maturity which means for the monk liberty, absence of restrictions and compulsions. In contrast to this, Gulliver observes different societies, their social order and morals which help readers to reach the truth. Views and values of the protagonist have not changed greatly, but he vividly describes discrepancies of social orders. Similar to “ Gulliver’s Travel”, “ Monkey” is based on issues which include perception of the world and self, interpretation of freedom and virtues. Wu Ch'eng-en writes: “ Someone needs to go to the Eastern lands and find a virtuous person to go on a quest over the mountains to obtain the truth-revealing scriptures” (1994, p. 223). In contrast, Gulliver looks upon human history from the point of view of an innocent outsider, is astonished that man has such a capacity for both virtue and vice, for creating noble ideals and acting with vicious cruelty: “ because from these, degenerate as they are, I still improve in some virtues without any mixture of vice” (Swift 1998). On an even larger scale, the book can be looked upon as a sacrifice for personal choice and freedom. The symbol of travel plays a crucial role in the life of the monk. In contrast, using the theme of travel Swift shows the variety of human beings and social orders satirizing monarchy and inability of the King to support and develop his ideas and social life.

In sum, different viewpoints on the notions of ‘ truth’ are results of development, so travel becomes a symbol of personal freedom and truth.

Another similarity is that the journey helps the heroes to compare and test

false and real virtues and beliefs. Both authors portray that people ignore the gods and virtues that sustain life and make it rewarding. In both works, the protagonists reach the truth and self-identity based on high morals and universal virtues. The main difference is that Wu Ch'eng-en uses the theme of travel for the search of religious virtues while Gulliver is looking for social virtues. The symbol of “ Monkey” is divine love of God who represents eternal truth for the narrator.

Works Cited Page

1. Swift, J. Gulliver's Travels. 1998. Available at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext97/gltrv10.txt>
2. Wu Ch'eng-en, Monkey/Folk Novel of China. transl. by Arthur Waley. Grove Press; Reissue edition. 1994.