

# Orwell and hsun essay



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Literature should not exist for its own sake but should be a mirror through which the society looks at itself. It should therefore imitate the truth and portray it to the society for self-reflection. This is evident in George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant" and Lu Xun's "The Real Story of Ah Q". Shooting the Elephant is a real life reflection of the author's experience as a police officer in India. It is about the shameless irony of imperialism spread by western governments, which subjects even its own to discrimination.

The Real Story of Ah Q is a satirical piece that shows the irony of revolutionary movements. Whereas these two stories have similarities, they also have marked differences in form, style, and aim. This paper endeavors to highlight some similarities and differences especially in the aims and the writing style of these two authors.

The aim of these two pieces is to portray societies as notorious for curtailing the freedom of individuals. Not only do communities prescribe rules that must be followed by all but also have expectations on certain individuals that are out of touch with reality. The main characters in these two stories find themselves in odd positions where their individual freedoms are subordinated under those of the community.

Orwell was made to shoot the elephant against his will, while Ah Q had no right over his surname and was mistreated by the locals (Orwell para 7; Hsun para 3, 5). There is also a well-developed attempt to portray imperialism in its negative light (Orwell para 3; Hsun 2). The two authors also use irony to great extent. Ah Q thinks himself the enlightened one even though the

reader knows he is not, while Orwell agonizes under the realization of the irony of western imperialisms (Hsun para 16; Orwell para 3).

However, these authors also portray certain differences in their works. Hsun uses satire more overtly to laugh at the societies ills than Orwell. Ah Q thinks that he is the “ number one self-doubter” and when you remove “ self-doubter” you are left with “ number one.” So he is always number one (6). He also sees his failures as his victories (7).

Orwell creates a sympathetic attitude on the main subject while Hsun’s has comic relief (Orwell para 1, 2; Hsun 8). The aim of Shooting an Elephant is to describe the plight of those who rebel against their own culture, and are unappreciated by those they make this sacrifice for (Orwell para 2).

Hsun work criticizes satirically the failed Chinese revolution of 1911. The failure of this revolution is symbolized in the power of women who seduce men thus derailing them from their noble duty of revolutionizing the society. These women are demonized as the causes of the failed revolution (11).

Even though these two works were written years ago, they still find a lot of relevance in today’s society. They ironically mirror the struggles of modern societies and individuals against injustices, such as the denial of individual rights by societal norms and the failure of modern governments to meet the expectations of its citizens.

Hsun’s use of comic effect and satire is as effective as Orwell’s employment of sympathy and sarcasm. Therefore, these two authors prove that it is effectively possible to employ different styles to highlight similar themes.

Hsun, Lu. "The True Story Of Ah Q." 2002. Blackmask Online. Web.

Orwell, George. "Shooting an Elephant." 1950. 15 February, 2011.

<http://www.online-literature.com/>