

As Reflection and Response to Wartime Life: "Emotional Remnants" in Zhang Henshui's Anti-Japanese War Novels

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Abstract. The emotional writing in Zhang Henshui's Anti-Japanese War novels is a typical sample in the context of China's modern emotional transformation. Under the framework of the duality of elegance and popularity, the academic circle often separates his persistent writing of "Anti-Japanese War romance" from his early romantic works, or simply categorizes it as a continuation of the "essential traits of the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School", yet ignores the continuity and contemporaneity of his emotional expression. An examination of Zhang Henshui's reading and life experiences, sorted out an analysis of the internal logic of his emotional expression, reveals that Zhang Henshui's wartime lyricism shifted from expressing personal emotions to epochal emotions, but was always intertwined with the contradictions and diversities of three emotional structures. "Life" and "emotion" are two key terms Zhang Henshui frequently used to structure his Anti-Japanese War novels. "Life" integrates a wider range of social daily routines into the narrative of his works, and "emotion", as a method, serves as a vessel for responding to social issues. Wartime displacement and life reconstructed Zhang Henshui's emotional experience and practice, becoming a method for his literary imagination.

Keywords: Zhang Henshui, emotional transformation, Anti-Japanese War novels, wartime life

1. Introduction

Zhang Henshui, famous for writing social romance novels, has his emotional depiction in novels as a classic case for studying China's modern emotional transformation. Liu Yanling noticed his misplaced understanding of "love" through *Chunming Waishi* (1924), arguing that Zhang Henshui was still immersed in the dilemma of "emotion" in classical literature. Chen Jin saw Zhang Henshui's reform of popular literature in analyzing the romantic nature of *The Fate of Tears and Laughter* (1930). Zhang Henshui's novel creation during the Anti-Japanese War further brought the lyricism of novels since the early Republic of China into the wartime context, becoming a typical sample for examining wartime emotional expression and the innovation of emotional paradigms. The academic circle has reached a basic consensus on the research of Zhang Henshui's Anti-Japanese War novels: recognizing the shift of his creative focus from early romance to Anti-Japanese War reality, and affirming his historical contribution to exposing social darkness and inspiring the morale of resistance. Taking *The Flower of Warm Blood*, *Collection of Bending Bows*

and other works created by Zhang Henshui against the background of national crisis as examples, Tang Zhesheng pointed out: "These novels reflect the author's epochal mood and some changes in his creative direction." Liao Haijie analyzed the depiction of various unfair social realities in *Eighty-One Dreams* from the perspective of wartime economic life, starting with the inflation in the rear areas of the Anti-Japanese War. However, existing studies are influenced by the concept of "the duality of elegance and popularity". Most researchers often emphasize his identity transformation as an "Anti-Japanese War writer", falling into the stereotype of "criticizing romance when talking about it, avoiding romance when talking about the Anti-Japanese War", while ignoring the continuity of emotional expression in Zhang Henshui's creation. Zhang Lei noticed that popular writers in the early Republic of China had begun to "use novels to express emotions", with personal feelings pervading their works. As a "master of popular novels", Zhang Henshui has been noted by some researchers for the "strong autobiographical color" in his masterpiece *Chunming Waishi* [1], but no further attention has been paid to the emotional expression in his wartime creation.

The transformation of a writer's creation is often not accomplished overnight. Qian Xingcun's *The Shanghai Incident and the Literature and Art of the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School* is undoubtedly an earlier document criticizing Zhang Henshui's Anti-Japanese War novels. He stated: "Here, it must be pointed out that these novels of Zhang Henshui are still the same as his previous works and other works of the 'Saturday School', belonging to the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly genre, only wearing the cloak of 'national crisis'." [2] Although Qian Xingcun's criticism is slightly harsh, it accurately captures the continuity of creation. Just as Fang Weibao insightfully pointed out, Zhang Henshui had a "stubborn penchant for writing Anti-Japanese War romance".

The changes of the times allow us to cut into Zhang Henshui's novels in a scattered and novel way from external literary factors, but the rupture and dilution of attention to romance make us unable to sort out the development of Zhang Henshui's novel creation concepts in a coherent manner. Therefore, on the basis of previous studies, this paper attempts to take "emotion" as the entry point to sort out the contradictions and diversities of emotional structures in Zhang Henshui's Anti-Japanese War novels. As a transitional literati who was transitional literati, Zhang Henshui's emotional structure centrally embodies the collision, agitation and integration between Western emotional concepts and traditional views of love after their introduction into China. On the one hand, this paper takes reading history as a method to explore why Zhang Henshui had such a penchant for romance and how he inherited the lyrical heritage of classical literature. On the other hand, starting from life history, it probes into how Zhang Henshui responded to his previous emotional experience through wartime life, how he updated his concept of love, and then intervened in broader social issues during the Anti-Japanese War through his thinking on love.

2. The prehistory of love: the "prototype" of classical romance tradition

Eighty-One Dreams, created in 1939, was "one of the best-selling works of Zhang Henshui in the rear areas" [3]. Nowadays, most people praise the novel for its satire and criticism of the unfair social imagination in the rear areas from the perspective of satirical novels. When talking about the creative intention of the book in the preface, Zhang Henshui said: "I want to relieve the depression of people in the rear areas. The best antidote to depression is nothing but joy. Although I cannot discuss how many enemies our frontline troops have killed every day, I can still make readers smile after reading it." [4] From the key words such as "depression" and "joy", it can be seen that he perceived his own and the public's wartime life in a perceptual way. The emotional waves aroused by life became his way of understanding the times and life. Why did emotion become his way of understanding the times and life? Where did the lyricism in Zhang Henshui's Anti-Japanese War

novels come from? To answer these questions, we need to trace back Zhang Henshui's reading history before his creation to piece together the prehistory of his understanding of emotion.

A writer's reading history often forms the spiritual prehistory of his creation. He mentioned in *Memories of My Writing Career*: "To talk about my own writing, I must talk about how I started writing, which involves my reading experience." [3] This is not only a summary and recollection of his creation, but also an endorsement with a disclaimer. He devoted nearly half of the space to sorting out his life experience before entering the literary world, among which reading occupied most of his life. By sorting out his early reading texts, it can be seen that his reading scope mainly covers three categories: classical literary works, modern translated novels and modern popular novels, among which romance novels account for a considerable proportion. If works such as *The Scholars and Exposure of the Official World* profoundly influenced his world outlook and novel structure, *The Peony Pavilion*, *The Western Chamber*, *The Peach Blossom Fan*, *Short Story Monthly* and others imperceptibly shaped Zhang Henshui's early view of love. As he confessed: "The novels and dictionaries I read led me to become a worshiper of talented scholars." [3] The romantic works he read span from ancient to modern times, but all contain a similar Confucian emotional structure: centered on the ethic of emotion, yet still within the scope of ritual, pursuing differential love. It was not until the 16-year-old Zhang Henshui left his hometown in Nanchang and Qianshan for Suzhou to study that he came into contact with the popular *Short Story Monthly* and Lin Shu's translated novels. By sorting out Zhang Henshui's reading resources, it is not difficult to find that he had a deep obsession with classical literature, especially social novels and romance novels. Reading these two genres fostered Zhang Henshui's creative concept of "taking society as the warp and romance as the weft" [3].

By sorting out the novels he created after the 1930s, it is found that *The Flower of Warm Blood* (1932) tells a story of 'a pair of mandarin ducks separated', where one joins the volunteer army and the other lets She Heming, a clown in the enemy leader's theater, 'seduce her' to complete her detective mission. *Enemy Husband and Wife* (1932) also tells the romance of 'a couple' in the same way." [2] *Hardships on the Road to Sichuan* (1939)¹ tells that Bai Yuzhen deceives her suitor Feng Zi'an to get a ticket to Sichuan; *The Great River Flows East* (1940) (Chapters 13-16 directly depict the Nanjing Massacre) devotes a lot of space to the story of soldier Sun Zhijian asking his friend Jiang Hong to escort his wife to the rear areas, only for his wife to fall in love with Jiang Hong; *Flowers Defying Frost* (1943) tells the story of Hua Aoshuang, who originally adhered to "celibacy", pursuing love in her poor life in the rear areas. This composite narrative of "society plus romance/Anti-Japanese War plus romance" is similar in mode to revolutionary/Anti-Japanese War narratives. "Revolutionary/Anti-Japanese War narratives often use elements of traditional popular novels, such as 'love triangles', 'heroes/children/gods and ghosts'." [5] This writing form can be traced back to Lin Shu's translation of *The Lady of the Camellias* in 1899. This novel "reshaped the terminology and logic of emotional discourse, and promoted profound changes in concepts such as human nature, gender identity and sociality. Most importantly, this translated novel laid a model for novels and a model for life". The depression of the era among the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly writers read by Zhang Henshui was expressed through "love" [6].

Many great writers of new literature also grew up under the influence of classical resources. For example, Ba Jin was familiar with *A Dream of Red Mansions* from an early age. Obviously, Ba Jin

¹Given the nature of Zhang Henshui's novels being serialized in newspapers and periodicals, the creation time of the novels is calculated based on newspaper serialization rather than publication time.

and Zhang Henshui transformed *A Dream of Red Mansions* in very different ways. Reading resources are fair to readers. While sorting out the reading resources in the formation of Zhang Henshui's view of love is important, what is more crucial is that "reading content reflects the subjective choices of readers. Reading mentality and habits reflect the initiative of readers" [7]. How to choose reading content, how to engage with it, and how to process it all reflect different reading attitudes, which in turn exert different influences on creation. Zhang Henshui took love as an important source of his writing for lyricism, which was related to his early life experience of lack of love and depression.

Life pressure has always been a difficult problem between Zhang Henshui and literature. His father's death cut off the family's financial source and blocked his path to receiving new education. However, his teacher's style of "not taking the imperial examination and not becoming an official" had taken root in the young Zhang Henshui's heart. This dilemma kept him in depression. In his recollections, he wrote about his reading mood many times: after the disbandment of the Reclamation School, he could not afford to take another school exam and stayed at home out of school, "sitting in the room reading thread-bound books all day"; coupled with the snobbish eyes of villagers, who even mocked the unsuccessful Zhang Henshui to his face, his only choice to relieve his boredom was the books in front of him. From childhood to youth, Zhang Henshui's reading always had the characteristics of "adolescent reading". Readers are often narcissistic when facing these works, observing themselves or the people they want to be in the books, and the reading objects are a projection of the self. Books built a "sentient" utopia for Zhang Henshui beyond the "ruthless reality". Later, it was to resist the criticism of villagers that Zhang Henshui chose to write romance novels. He said: "I was poisoned by the tales of gifted scholars and beautiful ladies, yet prided myself on being a revolutionary youth. I really could not bear the villagers' exhortations about seeking official positions and making money. However, I was alone and unable to resist everyone's criticism. So I took writing to relieve my boredom. On my desk, there were several manuscripts: one was a poetry collection, one was a ci poetry collection, and several others were my newly written full-length novel *Tears of a Blue Shirt*. From the title, one can tell what I wrote about. Written in the vernacular chapter style, this book, apart from depictions of depression and fantasy stories, contained many poems and essays. I simply imitated the pattern of *Traces of the Flower Moon*, inserting ci poems in each chapter." [3] This was Zhang Henshui's apprentice period, during which he successively wrote works such as *Tears of a Blue Shirt*, *Fiancée* and *Southern Love Song*, all about men's and women's love. Similar to *Traces of the Flower Moon*, *Tears of a Blue Shirt* talked about the depression of young people out of school and unemployed through love tragedies. The frustrated Zhang Henshui naturally inherited the Confucian emotional structure from his early reading, projecting his frustration at that time onto the talented scholars in ancient times who were unrecognized for their talents. His reading experience in adolescence and his depressed reading attitude made Zhang Henshui take writing as a utopia for sustenance of emotions, and always pay attention to the emotional state presented in his works.

Chunming Waishi (1924-1929) depicts his experiences and observations during his wandering in Beijing. Although the novel uses the third-person perspective, it pours out the personal emotions and feelings of "I". In terms of love belief, Zhang Henshui, obsessed with the dream of gifted scholars and beautiful ladies and suffering from an arranged marriage, artistically presented his two aborted love affairs in the emotional experiences between Yang Xingyuan and Li Yun, Li Dongqing, with a strong autobiographical color. At the age of 19, Zhang Henshui's mother arranged a marriage for him. This marriage without a foundation of love caused him great pain. The fantasy of a talented scholar and a beautiful lady in romance novels became an important comfort in his emotional world.

After coming to Beijing, he went to the Poor People's Skill Institute to "choose" his second wife. Although he taught Hu Qiuxia to read and write, trying to cultivate her into an ideal partner, and Hu Qiuxia embodied his initial fantasy of love, this utilitarian and shaping relationship was not true love based on equality and respect after all. This novel was his favorite work [8]. It can be seen that Zhang Henshui's early creation was transformed from personal experience, with an autobiographical color, interpreting the disillusioned life of an old-style literati as a gifted scholar and a beautiful lady, and venting his confused and sad personal emotions and the depression of the era.

3. Romantic love and Anti-Japanese passion: the interweaving and diversities of multiple emotional structures

This view of taking tragic love as a metaphor for the times, reality, life and mentality was obviously no longer applicable after the Anti-Japanese War. In 1940, Yang Gang sharply criticized the literary tendency in Hong Kong's literary circle of being divorced from the reality of the Anti-Japanese War and indulging in personal lyricism. He wrote in *Against the New Style of Sentimentality*: "The emotions of writers are mostly dominated by the word 'I', emitting various tones. Most people are suffering from nostalgia, thinking of their hometowns." [9] The sharpness of this criticism lies in the discovery that the emotional tone of personal sentiment did not meet the realistic demands of active resistance in the Anti-Japanese War mobilization. At the same time, the criticism also reflects that the sentimental emotions of literary and art workers in exile and migration during the war did not find a reasonable outlet, and needed to find an expression way integrating epochal emotions in literary expression. Of course, the argument of "banishing lyricism" separated the relationship between literature and the times. What writers should do is to transform personal emotions into epochal emotions. With the enrichment of personal life experience and social experience, Zhang Henshui's romantic narration at this time got rid of tragic love and no longer indulged in personal depression. Through the transformation of Zhang Henshui's romantic narration and view of love, we can explore how he embedded personal emotions into the undercurrent of the times during the war and how he responded to his previous emotional experience.

In 1935, Zhang Henshui reflected on his previous view of love by commenting on *Jiang Xingge Reunites with the Pearl Shirt*: "The true meaning of love lies in mutual understanding of each other's personality. The oil vendor waits at the gate of the brothel every day, never exchanging a word with the flower queen, never admiring anything about her, never knowing her talent, life experience or anything else, only being fascinated by her beauty like a heavenly being. This is no different from ordinary people on the street today who are attracted by the gorgeous prostitutes passing by, staring at them with longing—there is no talk of mutual understanding at all." [3] At this time, after experiencing an arranged marriage by his mother and a self-chosen marriage, Zhang Henshui finally married his third wife through free love and gained a deeper understanding of love. At the time of national crisis, the intellectual circle in the 1930s ultimately stood against the trend of free love of the May Fourth Movement. Leo Ou-fan Lee, in an almost elegiac tone marking Xu Zhimo's death, defined 1931 as the end of China's modern "emotional journey". It was in this year that Zhang Henshui just learned how to love. Deeply influenced by classical romance novels in his early years, he truly understood free love after the 1930s, but at this time the national Anti-Japanese War was urgent. There was always a certain time lag between Zhang Henshui's view of emotion and the times, and his creation was mixed with the integration and game of three emotional structures at this time. Sorting out the romantic narration in his Anti-Japanese War novels can not only show his contradictions and dilemmas in the transformation in the 1930s, but also trace the undercurrent of May Fourth love covered under Anti-Japanese War nationalism by taking him as a case.

Zhang Henshui talked about the transformation of his novel creation after the national crisis: "Along this direction, I wanted to incorporate a sense of resisting foreign humiliation into any novel I wrote." [3] Zhang Henshui's later creation focused on reflecting wartime life and the frontline battlefield. The academic circle has both criticized his stubbornness in Anti-Japanese War romance and recognized the promotion of patriotism in his works. Examining this transformation with emotional structure as the clue, it can be found that on the one hand, Zhang Henshui inherited the model of children and heroes in the Confucian emotional structure and began to lean towards revolutionary emotion; on the other hand, under nationalism as the supreme moral order of society, modern views of love constantly overflowed. Raymond Williams pointed out that emotional structure, as a "social experience in dissolved flow", is itself not yet precipitated and solidified, but in a state of formation [10].

Wen Kang's *The Story of Heroes and Sons and Daughters* combined the two genres of chivalry and romance for the first time, integrating orthodox ethics and the ethic of emotion. Popular writers inherited the variant of the model of children and heroes, freeing emotion and righteousness from the shackles of filial piety and turning to nationalist narration. Xu Zhenya's *Jade Pear Spirit* is a representative of this. While inheriting this tradition, Zhang Henshui's Anti-Japanese War novels in the 1930s showed absorption and reference to the revolutionary emotional model against the background of the Anti-Japanese War. In the narrative logic of "children and heroes", love and the nation are placed in a unified value dimension, and revolution and the Anti-Japanese War shaped a new modern image of children and heroes. However, this image always faced an inherent paradox: on the one hand, it deliberately strengthened the opposition between love and revolution, and on the other hand, it had to prove the unity of the two. As Jiang Guangci said: "All revolutionaries are romantics. Without romance, who would revolutionize? Having ideals, passion, being dissatisfied with the status quo and trying to create something better—this spirit is romanticism." [11] An individual must have emotional fluctuations to love and to revolutionize.

Specifically, the emotional connection between romantic love and Anti-Japanese passion is reflected in novels such as *The Flower of Warm Blood* and *The Great River Flows East*. The characters in *The Flower of Warm Blood* have a strong romance complex. Shu Jianhua loves her country, encourages her fiancé Guo Xiong to join the army to serve the country, and has to alienate her fiancé Guo Xiong to get close to the spy She Heming while working as a spy herself. Jianhua loves Guo Xiong, but has to give up love for the sake of national righteousness, which is a revolutionary emotional model different from *Jade Pear Spirit*. At the same time, Zhang Henshui took emotion as a method when dealing with the enemy. As an invader, She Heming, after being attracted by Shu Jianhua, transformed his feelings for her into thinking about his own actions. In the author's view, the ideal emotional state in the Anti-Japanese War environment is to have "romantic feelings but not show the slightest romantic gesture" [12]. Love and patriotism are unified in one emotional framework, but love exists as something to be used and sacrificed in it. Anyone who steps out of the framework will be judged by the moral order. Take *The Great River Flows East* as an example. After the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War, Sun Zhijian was ordered to participate in frontline defense. Before leaving, he entrusted his wife to his friend Jiang Hong, also a soldier, asking him to escort his wife to Wuhan. In the first chapter, Sun Zhijian said with a little guilt: "My life has been dedicated to the motherland", and there were only two things he could not rest assured about—one was that his wife "married a soldier who dedicated his life to the country". His wife Xue Bingru comforted him: "Didn't I marry you because you are a soldier? It is an honor to marry a man who dedicates his life to the country." [12] The love between Sun Zhijian and Xue Bingru was reasonable on the premise of loving the motherland. If the story proceeded according to such a

narrative, it would not deviate from the revolutionary emotional model. Zhang Henshui devoted several chapters to directly describing Sun Zhijian's deeds during the Nanjing Defense War, but the main thread of the story is the escape history of Xue Bingru and Jiang Hong, which provided a living soil for romantic love between men and women.

Zhang Henshui's understanding of emotion had a "time lag", and the "remnants" of May Fourth enlightenment love always overflowed in the text, impacting the nationalist narrative. This slightly "untimely" narration appeared in his Anti-Japanese War novels. Zhang Henshui faced the dilemma of emotional transformation, or more precisely, he tried to respond to the complexity and delay of modern emotional transformation in a posture of presentation and questioning.

As a typical text, *The Great River Flows East* represents the conflict and integration of three different emotional structures—revolutionary, enlightenment and Confucian—through Sun Zhijian, Xue Bingru and Jiang Hong respectively. When leaving Nanjing, Bingru risked her life to return to Nanjing to retrieve the sword left by her husband, showing a strong trace of love. However, in the days of wandering, with no news from her husband on the frontline, she was depressed all day, and Jiang Hong comforted her by her side. From the details of the text, Xue Bingru is a modern woman educated with new ideas. When she first met Jiang Hong, she took the initiative to shake hands with him and explained: "In China, women who can reach out to shake hands with friends are already knowledgeable and civilized people." [12] She also paired coffee and candy when chatting with her husband. Bingru was deeply influenced by the romantic love of the May Fourth Movement, and her way of treating love was vastly different from that of Jiang Hong and Sun Zhijian. When Xue Bingru resolutely divorced her husband and longed to marry Jiang Hong, Jiang Hong refused for two reasons: first, considering the country and his friend—she was the wife of a soldier and his friend; second, considering family ethics—his family advocated old ethics. Faced with Wang Yu, who was also divorced, Jiang Hong was willing to associate with her, but refused Bingru, who abandoned everything to marry him. The reason was that his relationship with Wang Yu did not need to face the challenges of pre-modern marriage, while Xue Bingru associated with Jiang Hong for the purpose of marriage. Essentially, his emotion did not deviate from the Confucian category, and "emotion" was only allowed to be pursued outside marriage. Xue Bingru's romantic love was enlightenment-style. As Li Haiyan pointed out, the free love of the May Fourth Movement pursued a complete break with tradition and family, "they secretly worked together to build a national community, requiring individual identity to override all particular constraints" [6]. This conceptual rift was particularly prominently reflected in wartime life.

4. Life enlightenment: how to love during the Anti-Japanese War

The overflow of romantic love in the text was rooted in the author's recalibration of emotional values through wartime life experience. For writers, the Anti-Japanese War was not only a grand national war; "how to maintain 'life' itself during war exile and how to understand and grasp 'wartime life'" became a concern of the literary and art circle [13]. When we discuss the Anti-Japanese War, we always discuss ideas and politics, but ignore the significance of "emotional motivation". Wartime displacement and life undoubtedly constituted an important perspective in Zhang Henshui's emotional experience and practice, as well as a method for his literary imagination.

In December 1937, Zhang Henshui left his hometown Qianshan, bid farewell to his wife, daughters, relatives and friends, traveled overland to Wuchang, and then arrived in Chongqing by boat. Zhang Henshui talked about his life in Chongqing many times around economic life. "However, the grain price in the rear areas kept rising too sharply. When we demanded one dou of rice per thousand characters, the rice in Chongqing had exceeded 100 yuan per dou. But the Sichuan

dou was different from the ordinary market dou—it was about 23 to 32 jin per dou, one dou equaling a little more than two market dou. Converted, one market dou of rice still cost 60 to 70 yuan. What about the manuscript fee? The highest manuscript fee did not exceed 10 yuan." "The rice price became more and more expensive, and the movement of one dou of rice per thousand characters finally failed. At that time, I gave up the idea of making a living by writing. Apart from writing fixed articles for Xinmin Daily, I spent my spare time reading the remaining tattered books on the shelf, learning English 'self-taught', or painting 'self-taught'. In my remaining time, I chatted with my neighbors." [3] Two pieces of information can be unlocked from Zhang Henshui's feelings about life in Chongqing: first, writers who did not engage in production and took writing as hard labor were severely hit by inflation in the rear areas. Rising prices left most writers without security. Second, the silence of the publishing industry directly led to the failure of the literary and art production mechanism to operate normally. In 1938, Zhou Yang said: "Affected by the war, the publishing industry fell into a bleak state, and the printing of not only literary and art books but also general books became extremely difficult." [14] From Zhang Henshui's personal perspective, the stagnation of news and publishing work made him experience the depression of being unsuccessful in his youth again, and dramatically turned him to books and literary creation once more. It can be seen that he perceived his own and the public's wartime life in a perceptual way. The emotional waves aroused by life gave him a deeper understanding of creation. He not only took novels as a sustenance for emotions, but more importantly, rooted them in modern life experience. The depictions of escape in *The Great River Flows East and Hardships on the Road to Sichuan*, and the attention to wartime economic life in *Flowers Defying Frost*, *Eighty-One Dreams* and *Life as Cattle and Horses* all contain Zhang Henshui's own wartime life experience. The inflationary environment created a strong sense of deprivation among the literati group. On the one hand, it pulled Zhang Henshui, who was immersed in the cultural function of the Anti-Japanese War, back to "personal life"; on the other hand, it impacted the revolutionary emotional structure, making heterogeneous narration possible.

In Beijing, he was busy with news editing all day, but now he needed to spend more time facing daily life. It can be said that wartime life gave him a chance to break away from bookish imagination of emotion and face love in real life directly. In traditional China, pre-modern "marriage" was for "economic survival", while Eva Louis argued that the main mission of modern marriage is "emotional survival"—only maintaining emotion in long and repeated daily life can be called marriage [6]. Zhang Henshui's mixed and contradictory romantic narration after the Anti-Japanese War was actually an attempt to respond to the previous pre-modern marriage concept under the experience of modern marriage view.

Ellen Key believed that "when love fades or one falls in love with another, a couple who freely united for love should be allowed to regain their freedom" [15]. Xue Bingru's transference of affection was not a whim, but was closely related to her escape journey along the way. The journey was hit by air raids at the very beginning, and more importantly, there was no news of her husband, alive or dead. Jiang Hong stayed by her side to accompany her during those anxious days. Women's innate emotional sensitivity and relatively vulnerable living status made them the core carrier for Zhang Henshui to explore the proposition of "how to love during the Anti-Japanese War". Shortly after Zhang Henshui settled down in Chongqing, to his surprise, Zhou Nan also followed him to Chongqing. "This concubine in her twenties showed amazing perseverance of Chinese women. Amidst the chaos of war, she traveled all the way to Chongqing, bringing their youngest sons Zhang Quan and Zhang Wu." [1] The experience of rebuilding a small family in Chongqing allowed him to

understand the essence of emotion from the perspective of daily life, integrating the consideration of family livelihood and empathy for his wife's hard journey into his novel creation.

"Life" and "emotion" are two key words Zhang Henshui frequently used to structure his Anti-Japanese War novels. "Life" incorporates a broader range of social daily routines into the narrative of his works, and "emotion", as a method, becomes a container for responding to social problems. *Flowers Defying Frost*, written by Zhang Henshui in 1943, is also known as *The Second Path*. As the title suggests, it tells the story of characters seeking a second way out in their difficult life in the rear areas. Some researchers classify it as a social satirical novel. Interestingly, the core story of the novel revolves around the love affair of Hua Aoshuang, a 30-year-old educator. Hua Aoshuang is a woman who received modern education, always maintaining an aloof temperament and adhering to her educational philosophy and belief in celibacy. But "in this transitional society of China, it is not easy for women to live independently. If you are too soft, you will be bullied everywhere." [16] Zhang Henshui keenly perceived that the loud calls for love in the May Fourth Movement did not disappear in the Anti-Japanese War narrative, but presented themselves in a way closer to life. If emotions such as "celibacy", "free love" and "marital autonomy" were avant-garde practices in the May Fourth Period, they became a survival issue in the dangerous wartime. Mao Dun, in his recollections of Chongqing, paid attention to the survival problem of single women in the rear areas:

"I have a husband!" the woman roared. "But it's none of your business. My husband went to fight, and there's been no news for two years. Who knows if he's dead or alive. I can't make a living. He wants me," the woman pointed at the driver, "and I'm willing to go with him. No one can control us." He sympathized with such women: "Their backgrounds are complicated: some escaped from the enemy's artillery fire and were driven to this path by the whip of life; others never went into exile, their husbands or brothers were bleeding on the front lines, but they had to sacrifice their bodies in the rear areas to beg for food and clothing from those lucky ones 'serving the Anti-Japanese War and construction'." [17] *Hardships on the Road to Sichuan* tells the story of young clerk Feng Zi'an who meets Bai Yuzhen and falls in love with her at first sight while taking refuge in Sichuan. When the ship arrives in Chongqing and Feng Zi'an wants to marry her, Bai Yuzhen suddenly disappears. The novel has the nature of modern urban "love games", but the ubiquitous escape narrative pulls the game back to daily life. In the novel, romantic love is reduced to a sexual resource that can be exploited due to the pressure of life.

Rather than saying that Zhang Henshui's novels have the romantic dilemma of mixed emotions, it is better to say that he is responding to the issue of personal life during the Anti-Japanese War. People were trapped in an era of rapid emotional change. The voice of enlightenment had not faded, and people had truly experienced the liberation of love, but wartime life and moral norms had to make love a tool for survival. This contradiction and struggle were the inevitable historical pain in the process of modern emotional transformation.

5. Conclusion

The emotional writing in Zhang Henshui's Anti-Japanese War novels was not a sudden artistic attempt during the war, but the result of long-term accumulation of multiple factors. His early reading history laid a profound lyrical foundation for him—the concept of "balance between emotion and ritual" in classical romance literature, the autobiographical lyrical paradigm and popular narrative skills of the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School jointly shaped his creative concept of "taking society as the warp and romance as the weft". His early personal depression and emotional lack made lyricism his core way of sustenance and response to reality. This accumulation

ran through his creative career and became the inherent background of emotional expression in his Anti-Japanese War novels.

The exile experience, financial hardship and daily life practice in the rear areas made Zhang Henshui break away from bookish imagination of emotion and deeply integrate his thinking on "love" with the reality of survival. In summary, Zhang Henshui's Anti-Japanese War novels take emotion as a clue, connecting multiple tensions between tradition and modernity, individual and era, popularity and seriousness. His emotional writing not only continues the lyrical tradition of modern novels initiated by the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School in the early Republic of China, but also endows it with realistic concern and ideological depth in the wartime context. It not only clearly shows the emotional transformation track of a transitional literati, but also becomes a vivid epitome of China's modern emotional transformation. It confirms that emotion, like politics and ideas, is an important dimension for understanding wartime society, national mentality and individual survival.

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