

Natural Plague, Manmade Dilemmas: Satirical Art in *Disorder in Cholera*

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Abstract: More than two decades after the publication of *Disorder in Cholera* by Chi Li, a sudden pandemic has brought this satirical work to the attention of literary enthusiasts. Deriving from the past experience of Chi Li as an epidemiologist, this novella recounts fragments of the lives and experiences of members of a small epidemic prevention station during a cholera epidemic, and reveals the multiple pitfalls of epidemic prevention and governance systems in China. This study tries to look into the satirical art from the perspective of Wen Da, interpret the multiple manmade dilemmas during the natural epidemic, and finally, offer insights for modern epidemic prevention and control.

Keywords: *Disorder in Cholera*, Plague, Dilemma, Satirical art.

1. Introduction

Chi Li is a renowned Chinese female writer known for her insightful portrayals of contemporary society and her ability to tackle relevant social issues. Through the sharp lens of satire, *Disorder in Cholera* [1] unleashes a torrent of wit and social criticism, weaving a tapestry of introspection that exposes the intricate interplay between a natural plague and the manmade dilemmas of a society in turmoil.

1.1 Chi Li and Her Novel

Chi Li was born in Hubei Province, China in 1957. After graduating from a high school, she was sent to the countryside as an educated youth for rehabilitation. In 1976, she was enrolled in Metallurgy Medical School for further study, and graduated in 1979, when she became a doctor at the Epidemic Prevention Center. In fact, the narrator of the *Disorder in Cholera* shares the much similar doctor experience with the author, and which leads to a much real description of some medical situations. Three years later, in 1983, she was enrolled in Wuhan University majoring in Chinese Literature, and worked as a literary editor in 1987. In 1990, she finally became a professional writer, since which, she has created much influence in Chinese literary circle. She has created works ranging from novels, novellas, proses, and poetry, including *Cold or Hot, It's Good to Live* (1990), *Good Morning, Lady* (1999), *Life Show* (2002), *Don't Talk about Love* (2007), *Comes and Goes* (2011), etc. Some of her novellas like *Life Show* has been adapted for film and won much applause from audience.

1.2 *Disorder in Cholera*

Disorder in Cholera is a notable novella written by Chi Li in 1997, which however, received widespread acclaim and gained recognition for its satirical depiction of a small epidemic prevention station grappling with the challenges of a natural plague twenty five years later right in an outbreak of another plague in 2019.

Set in a small epidemic prevention station in a small city of Wuhan, *Disorder in Cholera* unfolds against the backdrop of a devastating cholera outbreak that brings not only physical

mayhem but also exposes the deep-rooted social and moral dysfunctions within a society. With a keen eye for detail and a razor-sharp wit, Chi Li employs satire as a literary weapon to critique the societal norms, political corruption, and power dynamics that perpetuate the chaos amidst the epidemic. Various reactions of epidemic station staff, government officials, and ordinary citizens in the face of a cholera epidemic are presented in this novella. Various types of main characters are portrayed in wiping out this cholera epidemic. Wen Da is the director of the epidemiology department of the epidemic station. He is over 50 years old, experienced, but a little cowardly. He is a well-learned epidemic researcher, but also a hen-pecked husband. In the face of the epidemic, he bravely assumed leadership responsibilities and led the epidemic station staff to fight the epidemic. Qin Jing and Zhao Wuzhuang are the other two doctors in the epidemiology department of the epidemic station. Qin Jing is young and beautiful, responsible, but stubborn. In the face of the epidemic, she bravely rushed forward without fear of sacrifice. She resigned from the epidemic station shortly after this cholera epidemic. Zhao Wuzhuang has low education, but he works hard and is responsible. In the face of the epidemic, he actively cooperates with Wen Da and Qin Jing's work.

Disorder in Cholera has sparked numerous discussions and debates among readers and scholars alike, igniting conversations about the traditional view on epidemic diseases as well as the research and prevention of them. Moreover, it urged people to reassess the role of literature in addressing social upheavals and the power of satire in exposing societal injustices. By presenting a layered and multifaceted portrayal of characters, institutions, and social dynamics, this novella invites readers to critically examine their own societal context and contemplate the potential for change.

Chi Li masterfully constructs a vivid narrative that acts as a mirror, reflecting the flaws and challenges of a society. Overall, this novella holds significant importance in contemporary Chinese literature due to its fearless exploration of taboo subjects, its thought-provoking social commentary, and its skillful blend of humor and biting satire.

1.3 Satirical Art

Satirical art is a genre of artistic expression that combines humor, irony, wit, and social criticism to comment on various aspects of society, politics, culture, or human nature [2]. It serves as a powerful tool to challenge prevailing norms, expose societal problems, critique authority, and provoke critical thinking. It often employs exaggerated or distorted imagery, juxtaposition, symbolism, metaphor, and satire-specific techniques to convey its social critique in a witty and thought-provoking manner. Satire has a long history dating back to ancient civilizations, where it was employed as a form of social and political commentary [3]. As societies evolved, satirical art became prevalent during periods of cultural and political upheaval. Artists relied on humor and satire to challenge oppressive regimes, social injustices, hypocrisy, and other prevailing issues. Satirical art continues to evolve and adapt to the changing socio-political landscape, providing artists with a platform to challenge and stimulate discussions on important issues facing society. By pushing the boundaries of artistic expression, satirical art remains an essential component of cultural commentary, fostering introspection and contributing to the ongoing dialogue on social change and societal transformation [4].

2. Natural Plague

Cholera, a formidable and devastating diarrheal disease, has plagued humanity for centuries, posing significant threats to public health worldwide [5]. Understanding the natural features of this infectious disease is vital for effective prevention and management. The naturalness of cholera actually has formed a striking contrast with the manmade outbreak of it, especially in the stories of this study.

Cholera is primarily caused by consuming food or water contaminated with the *Vibrio cholerae* bacterium [6]. It is commonly found in environments with poor sanitation, inadequate access to clean water, and improper waste management. It can manifest in various ways, but it is characterized primarily by profuse watery diarrhea. This rapid and voluminous loss of fluids can lead to severe dehydration, electrolyte imbalances, muscle cramps, and even organ failure. Other symptoms include vomiting, nausea, rapid heart rate, low blood pressure, and, in severe cases, can result in shock and death if not treated promptly.

Cholera has left indelible imprints on history, particularly during the 19th century. The first cholera pandemic, originating in India, spread across continents, causing immense suffering and mortality. It catalyzed significant advancements in public health practices, including the establishment of sanitation systems, improved hygiene measures, and the development of the understanding of infectious diseases. Throughout history, numerous cholera outbreaks have occurred, each with its own magnitude and consequences. For example, the 1854 Broad Street cholera outbreak in London, as studied by Dr. John Snow, played a pivotal role in identifying contaminated water as the source of transmission [7]. The first documented outbreak of cholera in China can be traced back to 1820, which marked the beginning of cholera's presence in the country. It is believed to have spread from India, where cholera was prevalent at the time, through maritime trade routes. The disease subsequently reemerged in multiple waves and led to devastating epidemics

in various regions of China throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. These outbreaks prompted significant public health responses and shaped the understanding and management of cholera in the country in those periods of time, and those epidemic prevention institutions and departments have developed relevant methods to avoid an uncontrolled cholera chaos.

3. Manmade Dilemmas

Disorder in Cholera is ostensibly about a sudden cholera epidemic, but in fact it is about the serious concerns of the epidemic prevention system, and the governance system under formalism and bureaucracy, which reveals the dilemmas for the survival of human beings at a deeper level [8]. Three dilemmas that little information accessible, few experts available, and no future attainable for the small epidemic prevention station, or in other words, the society at that time, is discussed here from the perspective of Wen Da, the director of the epidemiology department of the epidemic station.

3.1 Little Information Accessible

Wen Da has been described in the novella as one of the first generation of Chinese epidemiologists returned from Malaysia in the early years of New China. He has received professional training for epidemic research and prevention and participated in the annual sessions of the World Health Organization of the United Nations. Though rare information has been provided in the novella which university Wen Da was enrolled in, but it is rarely untrue that he has had an access to any materials about epidemic prevention. However, at the very beginning of the novella, epidemic textbooks used to teach students at medical colleges turned out to be something printed in some unauthoritative workshops. There is only a writing note but no copyright page in them. In contrast with something that can be left out and deleted, something else must be broadcast and made widely known. And those are words in praise of the achievements in fighting against natural plagues. Here is a satire of the epidemic textbooks for confusing the primary with the secondary.

On the first page of the general introduction, this textbook tells our students: "Under the guidance of Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary sanitary line, the hundreds of millions of people of our country have vigorously carried out mass campaigns to eliminate pests and diseases and to prevent and control infectious diseases, and have made great achievements. Soon after liberation, smallpox, cholera and plague were brought under control and eradicated. In less than 10 years, black fever, lice fever and typhus were basically eliminated. The incidence of many other infectious and endemic diseases has also declined significantly." (P.430)

Just like what is said in the excerpt from the novella, history of epidemic prevention in our country is deleted. For the general peace of public mind on epidemic, content displayed in textbooks should be favorable to the social and economic development. Plagues are also closely related to politics in the country and all over the world, each government should be careful about them [9]. It sounds satirical, but is a fact that can

be found in all countries across the globe.

Since all textbooks concluded that cholera has been eradicated from our country, the subsequent discussion is clearly a matter of fact, and the epidemiology and spread of the plagues are all about other countries. (PP.441-442)

Having received professional training for epidemic prevention in colleges and other medical institutions, Wen Da must have learnt what the education situation like at that time. He knows that medical students do not receive any practical knowledge about epidemic history, research, and prevention. He knows that medical professors cannot tell in details about the cholera, the smallpox and something alike to any students. He knows that semester tests without any questions about epidemic content could be a must thing. He knows everything, but he must not do anything.

At five minutes to five o'clock, everyone in the department has basically gone home, leaving only the director of the department, Wen Da. He was in a small suite in the main office, working on his never-ending epidemiologic investigation report. He has been tracking influenza for twenty years, and is constantly adding to his tracking research projects, such as schistosomiasis, leptospirosis, and so on. In short, he has a great interest and passion for all epidemics. His workload is so heavy that he leaves work about an hour late every day. (P.432)

Wen Da has been working on epidemic research since many years ago. Qin Jing and other young staffs of the epidemiology department of the epidemic station has worked together with him for three years. In fact, he could have told or taught Qin Jing et al about how the epidemic prevention went on in past time in our country. However, he did not. Though little information has made accessible to these young epidemic doctors, nothing can be done to improve such a bad situation. As to the reasons for why nothing can be done, Chi Li say nothing either. Once in a talk about writing novels, Chi Li said that as long as the writer touches on the subject and draws the reader into the imagination, that's all that matters. There's no need to write too much and risk messing up many lives, including your own [10].

Compared with Qin Jing and other young doctors in the epidemic prevention station, Wen Da has more access to the latest information about plagues or epidemics for his current position as a director. However, under the serious and strict management in that background, he actually got little cutting-edge information too. Otherwise, it is much possible for him to leave that small station and got a promotion to downtown hospitals. For a long time since he came to this epidemic prevention station, he has thrown himself into the research of epidemic prevention and kept his ambition in the cause of epidemic elimination. That is why he warns them of being clear that natural plagues are more powerful than human beings, and more attention should be paid to them. Though little information is accessible for both Wen Da and others, he still cannot give up his will to keep these youngsters vigilant about epidemic outbreak some day in the future. This kind of contradiction of Wen Da is also a satire for such a helpless situation with little access to epidemic prevention information.

Wen Da said, "Again, you are always doing like that! Why do you have to go at the same time? What is the purpose of having you two on duty? It is to ensure that there is at least one doctor in the epidemiology unit 24 hours a day to monitor epidemics. How many times have I told you? You still don't take it seriously and still want to slack off." Wen Da took off his glasses, gestured his hands dramatically, and tried to teach us something with his sputters everywhere, "Young people! Don't be arrogant! Epidemics are not subject to human subjective will; bacteria, viruses, and all other microorganisms are all over our living space; they are reproducing themselves every moment, spreading through various mediums, such as air, water, animals, and insects, and so on, endlessly spreading, endlessly spreading." (P.435)

Here is another warn from Wen Da based on current situation. As little information has been revealed and known by people about any development of plagues or epidemics, so it is satirical to have everyone alert and prepared for them. Here Wen Da leaves an implicit message to these young epidemic doctors that there will be a return of plagues based on his long-term research and experience, and insights of the environment situation in the country.

Wen Da continued, "Yes, it is true that maybe after eight or ten years, there will be no pandemic. But maybe, all of a sudden, it will pop up. No epidemic is a good thing, and it means that the health of the people of our country is improving. But this must not be an excuse for us to slack off and be lazy. As the saying goes, it takes a thousand days to raise an army. We have to work in a fighting stance every day." (P.435)

All above has proved the manmade dilemma of little information accessible. Nayahangan et al. [11] made a systematic review about the importance of training and education of epidemic prevention, and concluded that there remains an urgent need for best practices on development and implementation of training programs. That little information is made accessible to medical students, to researchers, and to the public can be seen more clearly from the perspective of Wen Da, a professional director of the epidemiology department. And the plain life shown in words and sentences of Chi Li is also made to be a more clearly satirical art in the dark.

3.2 Few Experts Available

Another dilemma revealed in the small epidemic prevention station is few experts available for fighting the epidemic. Before the first cholera case, the weather outside the epidemic prevention station is described by Chi Li in the novella. It acts like a prelude to the outbreak of cholera this time. In the rainstorm, everyone are scattered in all directions with nobody leading them which way to go and what to do against the rains and winds. Experts tend to act as a leader role in fighting against sudden outbreak of plagues, just like a leader in a rainstorm guiding the public to go. Santa-Olalla et al. [12] highlight the importance of a team of epidemic experts in an alert and response system in Haiti during the early stage of the response to the cholera epidemic. However, in the cholera case faced with the small epidemic prevention station, Wen Da is the only expert.

Cars on the streets turn on their headlights and honk their horns. Lightning like a swimming snake runs between the glass windows of the buildings, thunders suddenly burst in the ears, large and sparse rains hit the ground, and pedestrians are scattered in all directions screaming in the air. Heavy rains suddenly sweep across the city from the distance in a dark and dense manner. (P.440)

It is extremely necessary to have some experts to guide the implementation of preventing the spread of cholera. However, the following situation in the excerpts unfold a funny picture of the senior officials of the small epidemic prevention station. The top two seniors had no ideas about what is going on but who to consult. The one they can only consult is a department director with no right to use a home telephone. In this part, no ironic words are used, however, nobody cannot feel the satirical humor in reading these sentences. Wen Da again becomes the center of a discussion. He is a hen-pecked husband and quiet epidemic researcher in common life. What can be imagined under such a circumstance about Wen Da could be his dumb face. He would feel surprised for senior officials' appreciation. He would feel proud for his rich knowledge about epidemic prevention. He would at a time think about his hopeless past and promising future. He would think a lot. All these thoughts form the funny and satirical picture.

I called up our station's secretary Zhang and station manager Qi through fixed-line telephone at home one after another and reported the cholera outbreak to them. They were both shocked and said they would come to the station immediately, and both asked if Wen Da knew about it. I reminded them that Wen Da was not qualified to install a telephone at his home and so that there was no way to inform him of the outbreak. Secretary Zhang said under his breath, "You quickly go to the hospital garage with a car and bring director Wen to the station immediately." (P.443)

After a quick flashback of his own suffering experience, Wen Da comes back to the real life. He feels so good and proud about himself, about his being kindly treated by the station secretary. So much excitement can be felt between his words that no complaints showed for being unfairly neglected in the past. Complaints pass away, and pride come up. Wen Da is an example of those small leaders driven by seniors in a bureaucratic society. It is also a reflection of the author's satire for social bureaucratic norms. Wen Da is a director of a department, but also a small role in a society.

Wen Da was mopping the floor at home. As he listened to my breathless report, his sad face gradually turned bright. He said to his wife, "Did you hear that? Cholera! The secretary has sent an ambulance to pick me up!" (P.444)

It is his embarrassing position in the small epidemic prevention station that makes him look outstanding among some others. Wen Da is the only one that has grasped some epidemic prevention knowledge, while others know nothing but to consult him. And such a situation with few experts of epidemic prevention has been created due to the arrogant awareness of any plagues. The senior officials followed their ignorant mind about natural bacteria and plague to celebrate the temporary success in fighting against plagues like the

cholera outbreak last time in last century. They thus made decisions to delete any information about epidemic outbreak and prevention in our country, to decrease the number of epidemic researchers in epidemic prevention station, and to pay no attention to another possible outbreak of almost killed plagues in the past. That few experts are available for this occurrence of cholera case is in fact a result of improper leadership and guidance. However, as Wen Da showed a leader-like performance in this case, other officials actually lost nothing. They were still senior officials, they had their rights in leading the development of this fighting against cholera, and they would be thanked a lot for awarding or appreciating the effort being made by each personnel of the small epidemic prevention station. Just like Chi Li said in a review of writing novels that if an official does not rule with the people, he might as well go home and sell sweet potatoes [10]. In this novella, Wen Da is described as a leader, though just during the fighting against cholera. It is also a satire for the bureaucratic atmosphere in the country. And the more exaggerate things Wen Da did, the more satirical expression for the ridiculous official norms.

Wen Da said, "Our two young doctors received the epidemic report from Dr. Hong under circumstances of which they had not been taught in textbooks, had not encountered in practice, and could not even have dreamed of. They didn't panic, they didn't shirk their responsibilities, and they handled the situation quickly and correctly. Why? This is because they usually love epidemic prevention work, love to learn, and it is the result of self-learning. They are the pride of our cause. It is worthwhile to learn from them. It is to ask for merit recognition and salary increases. If you are calm and collected, all actions follow the command, with the fastest speed to extinguish the epidemic, the motherland and the people will thank you, history will remember you, I will definitely ask for credit for you!" (PP.445-446)

Wen Da thought of himself being given absolute authority, and acted like a real leader in organizing the cholera battle. There were so few experts available that the only one with professional epidemic prevention experience became the absolute authority. Once there were the other one like Wen Da, Wen Da would not be easily granted with so-called absolute authority in organizing and leading the battle against the sudden cholera outbreak, even in such a small place. Here in this excerpt, Chi Li unfold the bureaucratic atmosphere in primary-level institution through the description of a small leader in a small department. It reveals more sense of satire to readers in this small character.

Wen Da said: "You little girl, again come to embarrass me, thinking that I am still so weak? No! Now I have absolute authority. You guys go without worry. I will let them do it right away." (P.449)

The conversation in following excerpt comes after one of the epidemic fighting team members being refused to have a dinner by someone of the station canteen. In such a situation, Wen Da again showed his authority, thinking confidently that he can deal with such a small issue. To "give them a hard lesson" well expresses a sense of satire for the bureaucratic change of a plain director of a department. Only one expert among others has given Wen Da the illusion of being a real

leader.

Wen Da said: "What? From now on, all of us at the station will be on duty 24 hours a day, so will we all have to go hungry. How dare they! I have to give them a hard lesson today!" (P.451)

Throughout the novella, there are more words implying the dilemma with few experts available. Faced with natural plagues, few experts can be consulted in an epidemic prevention station or even the city. From the perspective of Wen Da, the author has done a good job in delivering a satirical viewpoint blaming the manmade dilemmas in a humorous but irony way. The repressive education is one of the factors leading to a manmade plague, which means self-deception and shooting oneself in the foot [13].

3.3 No Future Attainable

With little information accessible and few experts available for possible epidemic outbreak, the novella reveals too much satire through each character in it. Wen Da is the most promising epidemic researcher in the small station for his richest epidemic prevention knowledge and experience, however, a bright future of even him cannot be seen clearly till the end of the epidemic battle this time. From the perspective of Wen Da, the dilemma of no future attainable for this small epidemic prevention station is satirically unfolded throughout the novella.

Following sentences include a description of the weather of the late afternoon when Wen Da went to search for the village with the first cholera case. The late afternoon sun was red against the vehicle windows and made Wen Da and others feel the illusion of having a bright day tomorrow. This time, the author does not imply something but directly express the satire of the society. Wen Da, at that moment, jumped, but not got into the vehicle to the village. It is clear to us readers that he was active in this battle against epidemic, and possibly with a purpose to spare no efforts into making contribution to final success in wiping out the cholera. Therefore, it is more satirical when it comes to the ending of the novella.

At six forty, Wen Da jumped into the first command vehicle. Our huge convoy was finally on its way. As we travelled west, the late afternoon sun was setting, red against our windows, giving us the illusion that we were heading towards the sunrise. But the illusion was just as inspiring. (P.466)

That no future is attainable for the staff of the small epidemic prevention station is also revealed in following paragraph. Apart from the anti-epidemic team of Wen Da and others from the epidemic prevention station, a team led by the Publicity Department of the CPC Municipal Committee is actually the leader of all teams, in which there are news media workers that are responsible for the communication of the whole process of fighting against cholera outbreak. Here the author tells readers that in a bureaucratic society, the rights to speak always belong to those senior leaders. This is also a satire for the dark future of Wen Da and the small epidemic prevention station. No efforts spared, Wen Da will not be endowed with a bright future, neither will other doctors and the station.

Several of our teams rendezvoused below the earthen embankment. In addition to our anti-epidemic team, there was a team organized by the street office to provide basic supplies, a team from the police station and the militia joint defence force, a team organized by the factories where the mixed-type households were located, and another team from the press. They were a little farther away from everyone, photographers and videographers with long hair and flowery shirts, and showy girls, all of them wearing sunglasses and various sun hats. They were not directed by Wen Da, but led by the Publicity Department of the CPC Municipal Committee. (P.468)

In addition to those leaders, there are always many henchmen around them. Wen Da, a director of the epidemiology department and a professional experienced epidemic prevention expert, can only do the most front-line work. In these henchmen's eyes, he is only a little employee for hard work. In contrast, these so-called leaders know little about how to avoid the spread of the cholera and how to cure those cholera patients. However, they will get most awards while Wen Da or other station staff can only be called being bookish and get nothing. In this novella, the author has reproduced too many scenes to satirize the bureaucratic society. Putting the bureaucratism in recent COVID 2019 outbreak, it has been widely recognized as the obstacle limiting coordination and effective mobilization [14].

The people around the deputy mayor hastened to stop him, and said, "You don't have to go. It is your job to make sure that you have a good command of the whole situation here. Wait and see, as long as Wen Da is not too bookish and has a little experience in mass work, this little conflict is not difficult to resolve." (P.472)

From the words of those villagers of all but the lowest classes, it appears to be more satirical to realize the very truth of calling three dilemmas manmade dilemmas. Cholera tends to occur and break out in untidy places without access to clean water. Smelly Pond B Village is such a place receiving little attention and care from the local government. Villagers there cannot have clean water, and nobody would like to care about their living environment until the cholera outbreak, which possibly causes their own health. Villagers there are plain people with little education and experience in modern society. Therefore, it sounds extremely ironical when they appreciate the help from the epidemic prevention station. Most importantly, Wen Da is also one of such a small epidemic prevention station.

They said: "We are most grateful to you all. It is you that bring the mayor, the public security bureau chief, the street office, and the leaders of the factories to notice Smelly Pond B Village, and pay attention to Smelly Pond B Village. We are now under the control of the government. Family Planning Committee found out about our children and fined us. We don't blame you for this, as all will be fined the same if they have too many children. In fact, we're not sick. It's just a little diarrhoea. Nobody doesn't have diarrhoea a few times in the summer. Xiao Zhiping went to see a doctor to get a sick note, but he didn't expect to attract you. No other doctors have ever been so kind as you. You've taken the initiative to go to such great lengths to help us with our minor ailments. It's really

hard on you!" (P.475)

From the excerpts below, we can easily find that Wen Da has actually become more like a bureaucratic person after too many years working in such a station and society. He cannot understand what the villagers expect from him, and would not like to communicate with them. Here Wen Da represents the group of educated people, who seems to be extremely aloof from mundane affairs but actually not. In this novella, Wen Da seems to be described as a well-educated man, and one having a high social status. However, most words by the author actually all tell us readers that he is truly not that like that, but on the contrary, he has been assimilated into a practical man bitterly struggling against the horrible social norms and bureaucracy. Wen Da, in fact, has implied here that there is no bright future attainable.

Wen Da's face grew hard as he felt that the villagers could not understand what we meant. He felt that the villagers could not understand our purpose, and that we could not tell them our purpose either. Wen Da waved his hand at the villagers and said, "Forget it. There's no need to talk about it. What's the point of going on endlessly?" (P.476)

Long excerpts below give a clear description of the future of the epidemic prevention station and staff of it. Nothing as expected by Wen Da and others was provided for them and their epidemic prevention station. Leaders never came back after the epidemic. Even the issues related to food supply arose when no senior officials cared about how was the small station went on. This part has listed in details about the satirical events in such a small epidemic prevention station, all of which tell the readers that it will be always the same until next epidemic outbreak occurs in the future. Everything is hard to change in such a bureaucratic society, and which is harder in smaller places. At the very end, Wen Da was even blamed for being arrogant, ambitious, and greedy by colleagues in the station. The author tries to tell us the readers that this is the truth hidden behind those bright and kind scenes of epidemic fighting.

As it was a matter of strict confidentiality, there was nothing of the splendour that we had expected afterwards, not to mention the misunderstanding of the villagers of Smelly Pond B Village towards us. Even the leaders who appeared during the epidemic fighting never came to our station again. There were no lights of recognition and big awards. There was no news from any media. It was of course impossible to have Zhao's paper sent to the World Health Organization. As time passed, many of the equipment purchased during the epidemic became the subject of property disputes. For example, the station considered that the anti-epidemic vehicle should belong to the station and not to the epidemiology office; the storage tank should belong to the hospital supply room and not to the anti-epidemic station; a large number of disinfectants should be paid for by the anti-epidemic station, while the Bureau of Health at that time just paid it in advance for the station, and so on. Even the hospital cafeteria came to us every day to settle the bill and search for their lost tableware. Qin Jing and I certainly weren't honoured or given a raise in salary because the seniors thought we were doing our job. It is not that easy to raise wages. As a result, the public complained about the leaders. Secretary Zhang

complained about the stationmaster, and the stationmaster complained about Wen Da. All the talks were about the problems exposed in the cholera outbreak at our station. Some said that Wen Da was a bit too arrogant. Some said that Wen Da was too ambitious and greedy. (P.476)

There is no future attainable is well proved on Wen Da. He did not go forward after the end of the cholera outbreak, such as being promoted. On the contrary, he went back to the old days being the sluggish hen-pecked husband. His future is like his wrinkles and hair, becoming increasingly deep and gray. Like him, the future of the small epidemic prevention station and the epidemic prevention cause cannot go forward in manmade dilemmas.

Wen Da, however, went back to the old days. He again looked dejected. With his eyes dodging and distracting, he could not get on with anyone. He walked sluggishly again, and the soles of his shoes always sizzled on the ground. After work every day, Wen Da was still in the small suite to write an hour of epidemiological investigation report. His wife still thought he stayed at the office to avoid doing housework. If there's one thing that hasn't gone back, it's his wrinkles and grey hair. His wrinkles were deeper and his temples were all grey. (P.477)

This part talks about in most details the last manmade dilemma against the development of epidemic prevention and its research. Together with the other two dilemmas, little information accessible and few experts attainable, all three dilemmas has turned out to be manmade, which turns obvious from the perspective of Wen Da.

4. Conclusion

Disorder in Cholera by Chi Li serves as a powerful medium to explore the themes of epidemic prevention and bureaucratism. With a deep analysis of the satirical art employed by Chi Li and following the journey of Wen Da, valuable insights into the dilemmas of addressing and managing epidemics, the significance of fostering a well-informed society, and the need for proactive approaches in tackling such crises have been gained.

One of the primary insights is the significance of epidemic education. The transformative power of knowledge and education in combating epidemics is vividly shown through the journey of Wen Da from the outbreak to the end of the cholera, and the need for accessible and widespread education on health, hygiene, and epidemic prevention is deeply highlighted throughout, which actually enables individuals to make informed decisions and actively contribute to protecting themselves and their communities during times of crisis.

Furthermore, another key insight is the cultivation of experts in epidemic management. An evolution from a reluctant observer to an active participant of Wen Da in controlling the outbreak emphasizes the role of trained professionals in combating epidemics effectively. This novella sheds light on the need to invest in specialized training, research, and infrastructure to nurture a skilled workforce capable of responding swiftly and efficiently to public health emergencies. By recognizing the expertise and value of

healthcare workers and scientists, societies can build a resilient system that minimizes the impact of epidemics and ensures public safety.

Lastly, the most considerable insight is the importance of avoiding a bureaucratic atmosphere during times of crisis and all the other time. The red tape, hierarchical structures, and governmental inefficiencies that hinder effective decision-making and timely responses in satires are adeptly critiqued through Wen Da. The need for streamlined communication, swift coordination between different sectors, and the elimination of unnecessary bureaucracy is also satirically stressed. By fostering an environment that encourages open dialogue, collaboration, and accountability, societies can overcome challenges more efficiently and mitigate the negative consequences of epidemics.

As we apply these insights to real-world scenarios, we must prioritize investing in public health infrastructure, strengthening epidemic education, nurturing competent experts, and fostering a culture that values efficiency, collaboration, and transparency. These actions will help us navigate future epidemics more effectively and safeguard the well-being of our communities.

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