

## The Image of Hats in “Tickets, Please”

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“Ticket, please” is one of D.H. Lawrence’s early short stories. The background of the story is set during World War I, when the male protagonist Joseph stays at the station to work due to leg disease. His love and hate relationship with the female protagonist Annie and other female ticket sellers unfolds from then on. After experiencing Joseph’s abandonment, Annie joined forces with other female ticket sellers who had the same experience with her to seek revenge against Joseph. The image of “hat” runs through the entire text of “Tickets, please” and appears 12 times, forming a hidden thread in the story. This article will start from two aspects: the portrayal of the personalities of the main characters Annie and Joseph by the “hat” and impact of hats on characters’ emotional development, revealing the different views on sex and love between the genders in the context of industrial civilization.

*Keywords:* hats, image, gender perspective

### Hats and Description of Characters’ Traits

The repeated appearance of the hat in the novel vividly reflects the multiple personalities of the female protagonist Annie Stone and the male protagonist John Joseph. The novel is set in a small mining town during World War I. “The drivers are often men unfit for active service: cripples and hunchbacks”, while the ticket sellers are wild girls who are “fearless young hussies” (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 1). “In their ugly blue uniforms, skirts up to their knees, shapeless old peaked caps on their heads” (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 1). In this description, the hat first appears, and the female protagonist Annie, who wears the hat, performs professionally and bravely in her workplace, without any traditional female cowardice, and even has male characteristics. “They fear nobody—and everybody fears them” (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 1). Faced with malicious teasing from some male passengers, Annie was able to handle it calmly. Anne initially kept a distance from the handsome and enthusiastic ticket inspector Joseph, as she was aware of Joseph’s scandals and “watched him vanquish one girl, then another” (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 2). “She could tell by the movement of his mouth and eyes, when he flirted with her in the morning, that he had been walking out with this lass, or the other the night before” (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 2). “She could sum him up pretty well” (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 2). It can be seen that Annie is clever and witty, and she was clear-headed and self-controlled at the beginning.

As soon as the male protagonist Joseph appears in the novel, “he peaked cap well down over his eyes, waiting to board a car” (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 2). He is handsome, kind, and treats people with care and consideration. But in reality, his private life is extremely promiscuous. “He flirts with the girl-conductors in the morning, and walks out with them in the dark night when they leave their tramcar at the depot” (Lawrence & Black,

1975, p. 2). Of course, this constantly leads to some girls leaving. So "he flirts and walks out with a newcomer" (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 2). And he didn't care about these things at all, with a shameless energy in his smile. It is evident that Joseph lacks responsibility and is not loyal. Even though Annie saw through some of Joseph's bad behavior, she did not always maintain a rational emotional state. Although she already had a boyfriend at that time, she found it difficult to control her feelings for Joseph. "In this subtle antagonism, they knew each other like old friends; they were as shrewd with one another almost as man and wife" (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 2).

The male and female protagonists wear hats when they first appear, especially in the workplace. They are dignified and show off a better side of their personality, but the hats conceal the bad side. Therefore, a hat is a disguise, a mask for modern people.

### **Hat and the Process of Emotional Advancement**

The wearing or not of the hat implies the emotional development process of the characters in the novel. The window paper on Annie and Joseph's relationship was punctured at the Statutes Fair. Annie went to the amusement park alone and met her crush Joseph. "He had a black overcoat buttoned up to his chin, and a tweed cap pulled down over his brows" (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 3). Unlike the peaked cap he wore at work, the material of the woolen hat was softer, implying that Joseph's emotions would be more revealed in this scene than in the workplace. While riding the Trojan horse, Joseph was in high spirits. "And round he swung on his wooden steed, flinging one leg across her mount, and perilously tipping up and down, across the space, half-lying back, laughing at her" (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 3). On the other hand, Annie, although also very excited in her heart, still had a sense of caution because "she was afraid her hat was on one side" (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 3).

The skewness and detachment of the hat symbolize the psychological changes of the characters. While they were watching the movie, Joseph hugged and attempted to kiss Annie in the darkness, when Annie's hat was clearly tilted. "But the light sprang up, she also started electrically, and put her hat straight" (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 3). But in the end, as the movie ended, Annie still couldn't resist Joseph's plea for love and they had a relationship. At this point, Annie's hat had undoubtedly been taken off. Hats are the tacit concealment and disguise of adults, but when emotions are revealed, both parties should be honest and sincere with each other after taking off their hats. But Joseph didn't want Annie to really take off the hat. During Joseph's courtship, the author did not mention whether his hat was loose, but at the amusement park, when Annie's hat was loose, Joseph "threw quoits on a table, and won her two large, pale-blue hatpins" (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 3).

Although both the male and female protagonists have taken off their hats, the things they pursue in their relationships are completely different. Although Annie and Joseph seemly like each other, "Annie wanted to consider him a person, a man; she did not want a mere nocturnal presence" (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 4). Joseph intends to maintain only this relationship and "had no idea of becoming an all-round individual to her" (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 4). When Annie wanted to further explore Joseph's spiritual world and "wanted to take an intelligent interest in him" (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 4). Joseph hated it and left Annie.

### **Hat and the Opposite Perspectives on Sex and Love**

The different attitudes towards hats reveal the opposition of gender perspectives. The plot of Annie planning and inciting a group of female ticket sellers to beat Joseph after being abandoned is the climax of "Ticket, please".

Annie teamed up with women who had the same experiences as her, intending to expose Joseph's disguise and make him repent of his actions. In this plot of assault, the image of the hat also appeared multiple times, mainly referring to Joseph's hat. "And suddenly, with a movement like a swift cat, Annie went forward and fetched him a box on the side of the head that sent his cap flying. He started round" (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 6). These girls, in order to make fun of Joseph and force him to make a choice, decided to choose one of the many girls to take home. After Joseph lost his "hat", Annie thought he would realize his mistake and apologize to everyone. Unexpectedly, under pressure, he said, "I choose Annie." His cold voice was filled with hatred. Joseph understood that Annie was the initiator, and he wanted Annie to become a public enemy among the girls. Therefore, after obtaining this answer, these girls were not satisfied. At this moment, Annie "got up, pushing him away from her with a strange disgust" (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 8). She realized that Joseph, who had lost his hat, did not let go of his disguise and did not show his honesty and sincerity.

Male also have deeper hats. This grand retaliation campaign seemed to have punished Joseph for his irresponsible behavior, but Annie and even the other women in the event did not feel pleasure of revenge. After being beaten up with scars and struggling to walk, at the end of the article, "He espied his cap in a corner, and went and picked it up. He put it on his head" (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 8). Joseph always chose to wear his own "hat" in the end, which means he always finds it difficult to open up to a relationship. He only pursues pleasure in desire in his emotions. At this moment, Annie realized that men's disguise may not only be the hats on their heads, but also something deeper, so she still felt painful and depressed finally. "The girls were all anxious to be off. They were tidying themselves hurriedly, with mute, stupefied faces" (Lawrence & Black, 1975, p. 8). The frenzy of beating contrasts sharply with the emptiness at the end. Women are still victims. This retaliation seems meaningless.

## Conclusion

Lawrence uses his advocacy in the novel that "the silence of art contains all great secrets" and employs a multitude of symbolic techniques. The hat, as an important clothing accessories for the male and female protagonists, has appeared multiple times in "Tickets, please", playing a suggestive and driving role in the personality and story development of the characters in the novel. Besides, gender relations are also an important research perspective in Lawrence's works, and the different attitudes towards "hats" reflect Annie and Joseph's different views on sex and love. The fact that men still have a hypocritical appearance after taking off their hats reflects the complexity of human nature, which is also the result of the imbalanced development of industrial civilization.

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