Study on Feminine Poetic Narration in *Frog* Written by Yan MO

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Abstract. The women in Yan MO’s novel *Frog* are unique in artistic charm. He embodies the existence of women in Gaomi, Northeastern County, reveals the absurd survival predicament the women facing under different backgrounds and shows his compassion for life. The text of this novel is featured by distinct feminine poetic narration. This paper studies the feminine poetic narration presented in this novel through intensive reading. This study is carried on through four aspects: the poetic imagination of great mother and life, the model of legendary narration, poetic presentation of female life stream, and the construction of female image world.

Introduction

In Yan MO’s novel, he embodies the unique existence of women in Gaomi Northeastern County. The female image created by him is unique in artistic charm. The *Frog* is a typical novel written by Yan MO focused on women lived in countryside, which reflects the poetic imagination of female life stream. He literarily presents his memory of the life of women lived in countryside through legendary narration, poetic imagination, and the narration of female life stream. The thinking on the relationships between women and life, women and divinity, women and power, women and politics, women and history, and between suffering and redemption reveals the absurd survival predicament faced by women under different backgrounds and shows Yan MO’s compassion for life. This study tries to explain the feminine poetic narration of the novel from four aspects: the poetic imagination of great mother and life, the model of legendary narration, poetic presentation of female life stream, and the construction of female image world.

Poetic Imagination of Great Mother and Life

Yan MO was born in countryside, and the Gaomi Northeastern County is his “blood land.” “The countryside to me is the fish to water, and the land to seedlings [1].” Besides, the countryside is the spirit and literature home to him. This novel reflects the unique life of people lived in Gaomi Northeastern County. The spirits of wildness, passion, freedom and unyieldingness in suffering are vividly presented. Especially the women lived in countryside, wild and unrestrained, are the history creators and guardians of Gaomi Northeastern County.

The “grandma” in *Frog* is a traditional midwife of the older generation in the countryside, who brings the new life to the world. It is said in the novel: “The experienced traditional midwife who has realized the secrets of woman's body by own experience must exist [2].” Based on own experience, the midwife gives every pregnant woman the confidence and brings new life to the world, as well as joy to every family. “My aunt” Xin WAN in the novel was also a midwife at very first. She totally delivered more than ten thousand babies, and she trained seven apprentices. She defeated the traditional midwife by new delivery method, brought the blessedness to pregnant woman and saved both the life of the pregnant woman and the baby. In the countryside, she is compared to the God. “Although it is her first time to deliver, she is calm. She always can give extraordinary performance. She is a talented obstetrician. The women ever seen her delivery or the women whose baby were delivered by her are all admire her.” “As long as her hand touches the patient, the patient will feel ease. She is almost deified by the women in countryside.” She is born to welcome new life to the world. She regards this work as a very sacred job. As the novel says, “The
moment she pulls the baby out of the birth canal, she will forget the class and class struggle. The joy she felt is a kind of pure human joy [2].” Xin WAN is full of love, worship and awe of life. She is the holy great mother. Therefore, even the dystocia cow cries and kneels when saw her. It is her sacred duty to deliver new life to the world, as well as her pursuit in first half of her life. Though later she loses herself due to political issues, destroys many lives and becomes the life destroyer, the consciousness of great mother deeply rooted in her soul awakes her guilty and original sin. That’s why she starts her way of redemption and takes a series of acts. She kneads various “moon babies” to mourn the babies destroyed by her. Besides, she encourages her nephew to raise more babies. At that time, the deep maternal love of Xin WAN is reflected.

Yan MO not only shapes the guardian of life, but also the earth-mother-like life creator. The carnivalism is used to vividly and meticulously describe the suffering of women caused by birth-giving. In the novel, to protect own child, Quan ZHANG’s wife, Xiulian GENG, jumped into the torrential river with five months of pregnancy, and tried her best, but finally died. Renmei WANG, hid everywhere to protect her baby, but had to take abortion at last; she asked Xin WAN to remove her uterus to express her anger and helplessness. The petite Dan WANG lost her life for her child, while the Little Lion adopted Mei CHEN, the young child who lost her mother, and became her guardian. These great and miserable mothers nourish the descendants of Gaomi Northeastern County with their own lives. They suffer a lot, but also create the life. They are the great mother of Gaomi Northeastern County.

Model of Legendary Narration

When shaping the image of women lived in Gaomi Northeastern County, Yan MO adopts the model of legendary narration to present the survival predicament of women facing political reform and their destiny. The legendary, secret and wild female history of Gaomi Northeastern County is created through detailed daily life, the legendary and absurd historical vortex and the original folk.

Through poetic imagination, Yan MO brings the legend and romance to the novel, and carefully constructs the legendary story of women lived in Gaomi Northeastern County through both the official history and the folk. The narration of this novel not only presents a deep sense of history, but also contains the attractiveness of the folk. The plot presents the dual discourse of both the official history and the folk, which enhances the artistic tension of the text. This novel tells a legendary life story of Xin WAN, a rural female cadre for family planning through the perspective of her nephew Xiaopao WAN, a modern playwright. In the first part of the novel, Yan MO uses a sincere and adoring tone to describe the legendary birth origin of Xin WAN. Xin WAN is the daughter of Liufu WAN, the elder brother of Xiaopao WAN’s grandfather. Liufu WAN is a military doctor of the Eighth Route Army. He has excellent medical skills as if Hua Tuo is alive. Liufu WAN learns from Bethune, and he is the founder of the Xihai Underground Hospital, the Eighth Route Army. He ever removed the shrapnel in the shoulder for Commander Xu and successfully delivered the dying lover of the political commissar Li; thus, he is famous. Even the Japanese Commander Sugitani in Pingdu City praised his excellent medical skills, because he healed Commander Sugitani’s horse hurt in bombing. The Commander Sugitani thinks that Liufu WAN is a miracle-working doctor. In order to get this talent, Commander Sugitani kidnapes his mother, wife and daughter to force him to submit. As a result, Commander Xu and political commissar Li are furious: they gather all the troops to attack Pingdu City. Combining the folk view and official history, Yan MO uses exaggerated language to construct the legendary of Liufu WAN. This fabulous family background with a romantic legend also forms a part of the legend of Xin WAN’s life. In folk discourse, the legend of a family often provides an evidence for his/her legend. Xin WAN also achieves her own legend through her father's. She has seen the world, she is brave, and she even flighted with the Japanese commander Sugitani at a very young age. Meanwhile, she is a talented doctor. She starts to practice medicine at 16 and becomes a maternity doctor. She has totally delivered more than ten thousand babies. She is the songziavalokitesvara in people’s eyes. “As long as her hand touches the patient, the patient will feel ease. She is almost deified by the women in countryside [2].” Under the new social background, she bravely promotes the new birthing method
and creates the first legend that belongs to her life. The second legend of her life is her love legend, which is passionate and full of humiliating. Her love legend presents both the revolutionary discourse and the folk discourse. Although she is 22 years old, she is not in a hurry to marry. For normal women at this age, there should be two children at least. In the eyes of other women, she is destined to marry a great man like emperor or president. It turns out that she is different from other women lived in countryside. Her boyfriend Xiaoti WANG is a pilot. This makes her envied by other women in Gaomi Northeastern County. However, Xiaoti WANG’s betray has deconstructed this legend. Under the dual strangulation of politics and folk discourse, the legendary destiny of Xin WAN has been ridiculously reversed. So, the legend of gifted scholar and beautiful lady in folk discourse ends. The third legend of Xin WAN is achieved in the political discourse. She is the hero in the official history of family planning. Nevertheless, she becomes the life destroyer in the folk discourse. She is empowered to grant life or death of fetus. This power has changed her. The folk discourse, through irony, successfully dispels Xin WAN’s aura of hero in political discourse.

Through legendary narration of this story, Yan MO successfully achieves legendary construction and deconstruction of the text story, forming a polyphonic narration. The story is both humorous in the sense of folk discourse and dignity in the sense of official historical discourse.

Poetic Presentation of Female Life Stream

Yan MO's novel Frog carries out a poetic imagination on the female living space, which is embodied in the poetic description of actual female life stream. Through the poetic presentation of the female life stream, the purpose of touching the real life of women is achieved. Yan MO tirelessly describes the women's daily life, which reflects the fate of women in the grand historical revolutionary discourse. It shows his thoughts on women's motherhood, divinity, alienation and other issues. Besides, the women's poetic features different from men are presented.

Yan MO’s poetic imagination of women lived in countryside comes from his rural life experience. The Gaomi Northeastern County is the fertile land for wild growth of all living beings. The women here are more worshiped because they are full of vitality and brave enough. Xin WAN is one of the women representatives. Her life is like the volcanic magma that spews out and the fireworks that blooms high above the night sky. Yan MO expresses the sorrow and ultimate spiritual redemption of Xin WAN after the alienation caused by political right discourse through the flow of daily life, and presents the theme of women’s soul salvation to the readers. Xin WAN is an ordinary woman lived in the countryside. She wants career and love, but she loses her initial heart in the vortex of history. She is helpless and painful as other women. As a woman, she is willing to be the guardian of life. However, facing the reality, she becomes the destroyer of life. In her work, “she is heaven-daring, and there is no such thing in the world that she is afraid of [2].” She listens to the words of the Party like a warrior. In the process of family planning work, she is selfless and even cold-blooded. The depravity of humanity is reflected when Xiulian GENG who is pregnant for five months is pushed to death. In this part, Yan MO spares no effort to mobilize all kinds of senses and describes the life scene of Xiulian GENG, which reflects the female life stream. The repentance and redemption of XinWAN are integrated in the trivial things of the daily life. Her recovery of maternity is also completed in the life stream [2].

The life of female is right composed of such specific daily life. The lives of women bloom in the details of specific sensible daily life stream. Through such grotesque, mythological legend, Yan MO recalls the divinity of Xin WAN.

Construction of Female Image World

“The highest goal of an artist is to express his sense of the universe, discover the most touching things, and construct his image world [3].” “The task of a novelist is to construct an image world [3].” Yan MO constructs the feminine image world in this novel.

There are two important images in Frog: the frog and tadpole. In the ancient Chinese mythology, human beings are created by Nv Wa. The frog has strong ability to reproduce, and the tadpole is
like human sperm. Yan MO uses the epic style to write Xin WAN’s life story, and reveals the pain and misfortune of women in the process of birth caused by the family planning policy. From the perspective of mythological archetype, it reflects the reproductive worship at early stage, and shows the praise and worship of female fertility and the worship of the great mother. “My original purpose to use it as the title is to eulogize the mother, or you can say the women, and to praise reproduction and rearing [4].” On the one hand, it expresses Yan MO’s praise and awe of life; on the other hand, it shows the grief and original sin consciousness of human life destruction. In the novel, Xin WAN’s whole life is related to the birth of life. Women’s birth, delivery, and sterilization are all related to the frog. Even the infant name she given to Xiaopao WAN is “tadpole”. She believes that tadpole is like the sperm. She hopes that Xiaopao WAN can have many children. In addition, the frog’s revenge pushes Xin WAN’s guilty to a climax. After the frog’s revenge, Xin WAN starts the spiritual redemption. In the second half part of the novel, Yuan Sai, who only knows economic interest, establishes a bullfrog farm. His real purpose is to provide surrogate women for others. These women must have a strong ability of reproduction like the frog. Ironically, reproduction becomes the means of profiteering. Women sacrifice their fertility. There is no aura of great mother anymore, but only the reproduction instinct like the frog. The frog and the tadpole become the main images of the novel, which constitute the symbolic text of the novel, and reflect the unique narrative strategy of Yan MO in the feminine poetic narration.

Summary

In conclusion, Yan MO’s novel is the “history narration of a kingdom, obeyed the principle of beautifying [5].” “Behind the carnival text, his feelings are very delicate and poetic [6].” Therefore, this novel is featured by feminine poetic narration: the poetic imagination of great mother and life, the model of legendary narration, poetic presentation of female life stream, and the construction of female image world. The creation of female characters, the narrative strategy and the construction of the image space of the text have reached a certain height, which is worthy of our research and exploration.

References