



A Tibetan Writer Yong Cuo's "Wacun Village": Ecocriticism Perspective

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Abstract. Yong Cuo's "Wacun Village" is an ecological prose, which shows the harmonious relationship between human and nature. Yong Cuo describes the life-like natural environment of the mountains and valleys, glaciers and rivers, plants and animals in the upper streams of Dadu River, expressing the unique ideas of animism and land ethics. Yong Cuo connects the scattered nature and all animate things into an ecological whole in which heaven, earth, God and man harmoniously co-exist together so as to promote the construction of ecological holism. Ecocritical analysis of prose "Wacun Village" can provide a profound enlightenment for the reconstruction of the harmonious coexistence between man and nature.

Keywords: Animism · Land ethics · Ecological thought · "Wacun Village"

1 Introduction

Yong Cuo, a Tibetan female writer, has long engaged in writing prose works. Her works are scattered in publications such as "National Literature", "Stars", "Tibetan Literature", "Sichuan Literature" and "Gongga Mountain Magazine", etc. Yong Cuo was born and grew up in the rural areas on the Tibet Plateau. Since she was a child, the river, mountains, earth, rain and sunshine have accompanied her, she has established "close" relationship with the earth. Naturally, the regional writing of the mountains and valleys in the upper reaches of the Dadu River constitutes her writing content. In Yong Cuo's works, she depicts the biological patterns of mountains and valleys, glacial rivers, plants and animals in the upper reaches of Dadu River with full, delicate, clear and warm languages, expressing the ecological equality of all living beings. Through the construction of the land ethics and the way that all living beings have spirit, Yong Cuo connects the scattered natural things into an ecological whole in which heaven, earth, God and man coexist, reflecting the distinct ecological thought, providing a profound enlightenment for promoting the construction of ecological holism and reconstructing the ecological ideal of harmonious coexistence between man and nature.

2 Ecocriticism

Ecological criticism aims to "study the relationship between human beings, animals, plants and other organisms, and explores the negative impact of human activities on the natural environment" [1]. American historian Lynn White directly pointed the basic reasons causing ecological crisis are the anthropocentrism of Judaism and Christianity. He believed that: "Anthropocentrism is the historical and cultural root of serious ecological crisis. It forms the cornerstone of all human beliefs and values, leads the development of human advanced science and technology, and encourages human beings to treat nature as rulers" [2]. In China, the rising and development of ecological criticism is more than 20 years later than that in foreign countries. In the mid-1990s, famous domestic scholars and ecological critics began to explore it, the representatives are Lu Shuyuan, Zeng Fanren and Wang Nuo etc. They have made great achievements in domestic ecological critical study. The publication of Lu Shuyuan's "Space for Ecocriticism" in 2006 is a milestone for the construction of Chinese ecological criticism theory. Different from foreign research ideas, Lu Shuyuan divides ecological criticism into three different latitudes: "one is the natural ecology with nature as the research object, the other is the social ecology with human social life as the research object, and the third is the spiritual ecology with human internal spiritual activities as the research object" [3]. The publication of the book provides a theoretical basis and reference for future generations to study ecological criticism. Many masters, doctors and scientific researchers use this theoretical framework of this trichotomy method to guide the paper writing. The publication of Wang Nuo's "European and American Ecological Criticism - Summary of Ecological Literature Research" in 2008 systematically has sorted out the research and current situation of European and American ecological literature for Chinese people, and provided a solid theoretical support for ecological research. This paper intends to apply ecological criticism to interpret the ecological thoughts of the prose work "Wacun Village"¹, and eco-critical analysis of prose "Wacun Village" can provide a profound enlightenment for the reconstruction of the harmonious coexistence between man and nature.

3 Embodiment of Land Ethics

Leopold, a famous American ecologist, put forward the viewpoint of land ethics in the classic book "A Sand County Almanac". He believes that "land does not only refer to soil, but includes water, animals, plants and, of course, human beings. The sum of these factors constitutes the land community" [4]. In this community, every member is in common and dependent on each other. Every member is qualified to occupy his own position in the sun. He opposes the human centered ethical view. He pointed out that human beings should not view nature as conquered, but coexist harmoniously with nature as an integral part of nature. Leopold regards the relationship between man and land as a two-way interaction. He believes that human beings must first love and respect land emotionally, and change the attitude of human being as a conqueror above nature

¹ Wacun Village is a Tibetan village that is located long the upper reaches of Dadu River in western Sichuan plateau.

into an equal member in this community. Land ethics requires people to respect the life of the land, understand the value of the land and recognize the right of the land, so as to protect the beauty, harmony and stability of the land community.

In the world of “Wacun Village”, Yong Cuo describes the Wacun villagers and the land that raises villagers in affectionate words. Here, land is not a simple natural existence, but an existence that is directly related to people, controls people’s destiny and ultimately determines people’s destination. In the article “mother’s land”, father died early, leaving her mother alone to bear the burden of supporting the family. Mother waters the land with emotion, and maintains the livelihood of the family by relying on the vegetable moss and fruit trees growing in the land. Mother always takes care of the land wholeheartedly, and the land is silently rewarded. As mother said, “the land has a warm heart. If you are good to it, it will be good to you” [5]. Mother’s love not only raises children, but also moistens the land. The land philosophy that mother has always believed in and followed delicately reflects Leopold’s land ethics. “The most ideal relationship between man and land is that man lives and lives with him by virtue of land, not just by land” [4]. Indeed, the mother’s life is the life of living with the land, as Yong Cuo described: “Life is a piece of paper. Everyone outlines his life on this paper, indirectly from morning to night. I can imagine that the life outlined by my mother is just a simple and stable wave line. The start and end of the wave line are related to the land beside her” [5]. It can be seen that the land constitutes the whole of the mother’s life, when the daughter has left home to other places to make living, and the mother is at home alone.

Mother loves land, respects land and treats land in a humble and kind way. Naturally, land is also returned to mankind in a rich and full way, thus forming a positive, healthy and sustainable development circle. In the article of mother’s land, Yong Cuo describes the loneliness and helplessness that the mother felt after leaving the land she loves deeply. After her daughter gets a job in other place, for some time, the mother goes with her daughter to live in another county far away from her hometown. However, the mother’s heart is always concerned about the land. The mother stubbornly misses the village, the land full of cherry trees, the fragrance of the soil, and so on. The barren land in the hometown also slowly desolates my mother’s heart, because missing is a disease, and mother is ill. It can be seen that land to mother is equivalent to mother to children, and living water to swimming fish. Land not only raises mankind, but also is the root of human spirit and the source of life. Leaving the land is equivalent to pulling out the root of plants.

4 Animism

British anthropologist Edward Taylor was the first person who put forward the idea of animism and he believed that “no matter the sun, the moon, the stars, birds and animals, they all have the same emotion and perception as human beings. Outside human beings, nature has the same soul as human beings” [6]. Primitive tribes and totems are the mysterious unity of man and nature through the way that all things have spirits. The reverence and awe for nature is the concrete manifestation of all things having spirit, which is also the core idea of ecological criticism. The idea of all things with spirit is

vividly reflected in the world of Wacun village. Like human being, every river, every mountain, every animal and every plant is able to breath, which has the same awareness and emotion as people, and can communicate and interact with people.

4.1 Natural Phenomenon with Spirituality

Yong Cuo does not hesitate to describe and praise natural phenomena in the process of writing, and wind, forst, rain and snow are Yong Cuo's eternal writing objects. The first is the "wind" with spirituality. Yong Cuo uses a lot of anthropomorphic techniques to describe "wind". In Yong Cuo's works, "wind" is not only a phenomenon of air flowing in meteorology, but also a flexible, positive and magical living being. Like people, the wind in the village will show emotions of joy, anger and sorrow at any time. The stones in the village can jump around, and the weeds in the village can catch small stones like people. Through the anthropomorphic technique, Yong Cuo depicts the jumping and flexibility of the natural objects in Wacun village, which brings people lively and upward reading emotion. The wind in Wacun village can naturally send messages, which is obviously represented by character of Zhang Liuzi. Zhang Liuzi is the famous roaring elder brother of Wacun village. In the era of no microphone, when organizing weddings and funerals in rural areas, people can only plan the banquet with a bright voice. The reason why Zhang Liuzi can beat others is that the louder he roars, the brighter his voice is because he is a person who can spread messages through the wind. "He knows where a word is taken by the wind, it will turn around, and he will drag it long; where a word is taken by the wind, it will rush into the grape forest, and he will roar thicker" [5]. The wind in Wacun village supports him and his family to make living.

In the autumn harvest season, the wind is of great significance to the people of Wacun village. The wind not only ripens the crops, but also helps the people of Wacun harvest the wheat. In the eyes of the villagers, the wind can do things that cattle can't do. The wind is a person who doesn't speak. Accompanied by the wind, the people of Wacun village obtain the food they need to survive. With the help of the wind, the people of Wacun village complete the farm work in the field easily and freely. In book "Dialectics of Nature", Engels focused on the relationship between man and nature, put forward the theory of following the laws of nature and stressed that in the process of dominating and utilizing nature, human beings must abide by an essential premise, that is, human beings must recognize the laws of nature and correctly abide by the laws of nature [7]. The people of Wacun village, represented by Zhang Liuzi, live a simple and poetic life in the world of Wacun under the condition of following and correctly applying the laws of nature. In addition to the description of the highly spiritual wind, Yong Cuo also presents a unique natural beauty of the Tibet plateau. Here, the spring rain like dew moistens the earth, the white snow like jade spreads the earth, the blue sky like a clear sky sets off the earth, and the warm and bright sun shines on the earth. In this beautiful rural world, spring rain, dew, warm sun, blue sky and white clouds are all so beautiful and natural, while Tibetan work at sunrise and rest at sunset to build a relationship of harmonious coexistence and coordinated development with nature.

4.2 Creatures with Spirituality

In the prose collection “Wacun Village”, Yong Cuo spends a lot of time and energy on the description of animals, plants and other creatures. Yong Cuo not only depicts animals represented by cattle, pigs, horses, dogs, snakes, rats and chickens, but also vividly describes various kinds of trees, flowers and plants. She meticulously depicts the spiritual natural world in Wacun Village and describes all creatures as human being’s partners, which not only live happily in their own world, but also have the same status as human beings. Firstly, the description of cattle, the prose focuses on the description of cattle, it vividly describes the “love story” between black farm cattle and old yellow cattle. Black farm cattle are naughty and cunning bulls, old yellow cattle are cows, warm, soft and pitiful, and the love between bulls and cows is described as humans’. In particular, in order to protect the old yellow cattle from injustice, the owner’s dialogue with the black farming cattle is described vividly and deeply: “... When I was about to get angry with her, she threw herself on me, put her mouth to my mouth, kiss here and smell there. Although I usually have high requirements and not everyone can meet it, she made me hot that day... The black farm cow smiled strangely...” [5] This dialogue between people and cattle fully reflects the equal social relationship between cattle and people in the world of Wacun Village, and the ecological concept of harmonious coexistence between animals and human beings. Yong Cuo describes the deep feelings between people and cattle with gentle and delicate words. The owner strokes the old cattle’s body with his hand, and it rubs the owner’s hands with his mouth in response. The owner gently wipes the tearful corners of the old cattle’s eyes with his hand, but it licks the owner’s little hand with his tongue. It can be seen that the interaction between people and cattle is full of warmth and care, and the old cattle and the owner get along so harmoniously and beautifully that they can’t help but bring people warmth of helping each other. No wonder Yong Cuo writes at the beginning that when owner loses the old cattle, his mind has been in a trance, like losing himself.

The second is the description of dogs. In Wacun village, Yong Cuo sets up a special article to describe the story between Tibetan mother and dogs. The black dog Guoguo was picked up by elder brother from the desolation. Under the careful care of the Tibetan mother, the dog grows into a big fat dog in less than half a year. From then on, it has been inseparable from the Tibetan mother. Once, in order to protect Tibetan mother in the mountains and forests, he tried his best to bite off the snake’s neck and successfully saved the Tibetan mother who fell asleep in the shade of trees. Usually Guoguo is the only partner of Tibetan mother, especially in the evening of Tomb Sweeping Day. Every year in the night of Tomb Sweeping Day, Guoguo has heard the sweet words from mother to the passed-away father. When mother recalls the best memories with father, mother cries, and Guoguo also cries. The dog guards the mother so closely, and the old lady is also taking good care of the dog. The old lady and the dog snuggle up to each other and live a plain and real life.

The third is the description of plants. In addition to the harmonious coexistence between human beings and animals, plants and humans also coexist in the world of Wacun village. Yong Cuo describes the master lying in the forest, the leaves are the bed, the branches and the blue sky are the quilt, and when the night comes, when the master is ready to leave the forest and return to the house, the grass stretches its long

neck to see him off. The interaction and blending between man, trees and grass show the perfect fit and interdependence between man and nature. This just confirms what the famous American Ecological critic Glotfelty put forward that all existence is worth recognizing and making a voice in the network of nature. Writers and critics should explore how people and non-human communicate in the landscape [8]. In the world of Wacun village, all beings are capable of communicating with people, and all creatures can live in harmony and interdependence with people.

5 Conclusion

Yong Cuo constructs a literary world in which all living beings have spirit and all creatures are equal with her tender and delicate description. The people of Wacun village put themselves in the equal position of all beings in nature and consider the nature as a whole, they have constructed the ecological holistic view of harmonious coexistence between man and nature, reflecting the distinctive ecological philosophy. Wacun village provides a useful reference for promoting the construction of ecological holism and reconstructing the harmonious coexistence between human and nature.

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