



A Study of the Commonalities of Online Novels with “Big Heroine”

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Abstract. Since the 1990s, as literature “touched the net”, women’s online literature has taken on a prairie trend, occupying half of online literature, and there is no doubt that the online literature has ushered in the “her” era, and among them, “big heroine” [1] novels abound. This article uses examples and textual analysis to summarise the characteristics of online novels with “big heroines”. The first is the “daydream” mentality, which satisfies women’s fantasies about love and career. The transformation of the image of men in “big heroine” novels, and so on, are expected to provide a more in-depth interpretation of the “big heroine” online novels that are currently active on the Internet, film and television adaptations, and even gaming platforms.

Keywords: “big heroine” · “daydream” · aesthetic deformity

1 Introduction

Women’s online literature is “original online literature written by women authors, published through women’s literary websites, expressing women’s lives, thoughts, and emotions, and aimed at the general female readers” [2].

As of May 31, 2018, the number of web pages related to “women’s literature websites” searched through the Baidu search engine has reached 23.9 million [3]. Most of the so-called “big heroine” novels focus on female characters and the growth of women and show the fate of women through their love, marriage, and career. There is no shortage of love/hate entanglements, no shortage of polyamory, and no shortage of fantasy opportunities for fairies, demons, and ghosts, but the only constant is the modern awareness of the heroine’s character. These female protagonists, who are either at the bottom of the biological chain from the very beginning, go through all sorts of hardships and eventually become immortal or win a handsome man and become the top of the food chain. These heroines, instead of the silly and sweet personas of the past, are no longer innocent and simple girls who are bullied and must be rescued by a male hero to escape their misfortune. The men behind these women are the icing on the cake, rather than the “heroes” of the old “heroes saving women”.

2 “The Ugly Duckling Becomes the White Swan” - The “Daydream” Mentality of “Lying Down and Winning”

Freud said: “Adults’ fantasies replace play, they build the sky, and every fantasy is the fulfilment of a wish. Every daydream and every novel have the same protagonist, a ‘sole ego’” [4]. Online novels, moreover, magnify and exaggerate this fantasy, enabling not only the daydreams of online writers to come true but also the readers and the majority of female viewers in front of the screen, to fulfil their respective wishes in their daydreams.

2.1 First Wish: To Marry Mr. Right

The online novels on the major networks have inherited the model of the “talented and beauty” novels, which do not carry the historical responsibility of “carrying the message for the people”, nor do they have the requirement of “enlightening the mind” of the times. The cathartic and entertaining functions of literature have been exploited to the fullest. The “big heroine” online literature is very notable for the fact that there is one woman loved by many men, who are the different kinds of men. Some of them are soft and cute “puppies”, some are unruly rich kids, some are “ascetic”, “domineering presidents”, but only fall in love with the heroine, at first sight, second-time infatuation. This allows ordinary women who have had all kinds of bad luck in their real relationships to greatly satisfy their beautiful fantasies of love. The men are all highly talented (in terms of wealth and power) and infatuated. Ruo Xi in BU BU JING XIN is faced with the deep love of the darker 8th prince, the passion of the ascetic 4th prince, the righteousness of the 13th and 14th prince, and the playfulness of the 10th brother, each of whom favors Ruo Xi. In ZHEN HUAN ZHUAN, the heroine has a domineering love for the Emperor, an introverted and affectionate prince Guo, and the silent guardianship of Dr. Wen.

2.2 Second Wish: Women Have the Right to Choose in Gender Relationships

Take SAN SHENG SAN SHI, SHI LI TAO HUA as an example. Bai Qian is a maverick from Si Yin’s life, dressing up as a boy to study under a master, drinking, fighting, and causing trouble, not the traditional image of a young girl. She is quite a chivalrous woman, and even when she loses her love, she bids farewell to the harm of her scum with drunkenness and gratitude to her master. In Su su’s life, Su su is the one who saves, not the one who is saved. Even if she fell in love with Ye Hua and was deluded, she would boldly give up her loveless marriage and leave the deeply loving but deeply hidden “scum” - Ye Hua. In her third life, Bai Qian unwittingly discovered that her fiancé, who had a marriage contract, was the same Ye Hua who had hurt her (Su su) in her previous life, so she wanted to break off the marriage contract and take her revenge. Without the subsequent devotion of Night Hua, she would not have been able to settle for the Prince of Heaven. In such a three-life love affair, the heroine’s “love brain” is quickly defeated by the reality that there is no “bottomless” giving and sacrifice. But the ultimate choice is made in her interest, not to climb on the other side because they are powerful, not to despise themselves because they abandon them, and not to forgive easily because they repent. Everything is a choice for the heroine, to give up or to continue.

ZHI FOU, ZHI FOU? YING SHI LV FEI HONG SHOU. Even though Shen Minglan fought for herself. Her first love quickly disappeared in the face of reality. The abandonment of the affordable man - He Hongwen - is of course a direct rebuke to the three wives and four concubines, a rational rejection of moral abduction. Unwilling to sacrifice his own interests to win a so-called false name, unwilling to share his husband, and the only place in his husband's heart, with others. For Gu Tingye's choice, it is the other's heartfelt pursuit that impresses the heroine.

The most important feature of a "big heroine" novel is that the heroine has the right to choose her love. No matter how good the male is, the female protagonist is the ultimate decider of her feelings, not a victim of her family's interests, and not a captive of love, not a "guardian" of her family. This is the "big" meaning of its "big heroine". In contrast to the traditional femininity of softness, giving, and sacrifice, the love, feelings and interests of women are given first consideration.

2.3 Third Wish: A Successful Career

There are many traces of "crossing over" in many "big heroine" online novels. It is only by traveling back in time that the modern soul can give the women of the three rules an independent mind and a different way of dealing with people from that time, giving them an independent mind and a unique charm that can win the favours of men and make them successful. They did not take their three wives and four concubines for granted, and were not willing to play the role of a vague-faced sidekick or accessory to a large family, but rather became "heroines" and "goddesses" who influenced the dynasty and took responsibility for saving the world...

In many of these stories, the heroine is not necessarily a fairy, even if she is a demon or an ordinary concubine, she still has an unyielding spirit and rebelliousness. Even if they are women, they are willing to endure more hardships and trials because they are women. In the end, they can rely on themselves to achieve a social status that cannot be despised.

The many strong female protagonists, despite all the initial setbacks and valleys, must be of noble and extraordinary birth or lineage. As SAN SHENG SAN SHI, Bai Qian's father is a fox emperor who can take on the heavenly emperor of the Heavenly Palace; her husband is a prince who will succeed the heavenly emperor; she is the empress of Qingqiu; her son is also the future heavenly emperor of the Heavenly Palace; and her master is Mo Yuan, the god of war. Her various misfortunes are merely her descent into the mortal world, where she will eventually become an admired goddess of the four seas and eight deserts.

Even if ZHI FOU, ZHI FOU? She was born as a concubine daughter of the Sheng family and lost her mother at a young age, but the author injected her with the soul of a modern educated, modern-minded adult, which allowed her to quickly adapt to the Ming Dynasty perception that her husband was her boss and that pleasing her husband was pleasing her boss. This is the first level of meaning.

But when you reflect on this characterization of the 'big heroine' with an inherent advantage, you start with a lack of confidence in the success of 'women'. It is difficult for the characters to change the traditional fate of women by relying solely on their struggle, and only the nobility of their blood can change their tragic fate. These are the

daydreams of the modern working woman who wants to change but cannot. The common fantasy of both creators and audiences is that through modern thinking, education, and skills, they can travel back to ancient times, or to a specific time and place, and easily achieve success through “unfair competition”. This is an escape from the unfairness of reality, but also a deep-seated recognition that people are born unequal. This is why “big heroine” online literature is highly praised, adapted into film and television dramas will be successful, the surface is female consciousness, and female independence, but the deep level is still the unchangeable escape from reality and social inequality of default, and even internalized as their standards of judgment without knowing.

The word “retrogressive” is about cutting through adversity to achieve a change in the trajectory of one’s destiny, to transform from a situation of being bullied and trampled on to one of being “superior” and admired. The “backlash” is the fantasy that women in the workplace are unable to change reality and can then change their destiny.

The American psychoanalyst Karen Horner points out: “To compensate for feelings of weakness, deficiency, and worthlessness, the unhappy person often creates an idealized self on the wings of his imagination, believing that he has great talent and unlimited power. This idealized self is more real than his real self, not primarily because he is attractive, but because he satisfies all his pressing needs. The idealized self becomes the lens through which he sees himself, the yardstick by which he measures himself [5].

3 The “Mother” Image and the “Heroine” Image Can Not Coexist

Once a woman enters into marriage, the image of “motherhood” or “maternity” often becomes the focus of much literature. In traditional literature, whether it is Nu Wa creating a human being or Meng mother moving three times, the mother represents the reproduction and nurturing of children, and the mother is the one who sacrifices herself the family, and the husband and children. But whether it is SAN SHENG SAN SHI or ZHI FOU ZHI FOU the motherhood of the two female protagonists is very special. Firstly, in SAN SHENG SAN SHI, Su su gives birth to a son named “A-Li”. She had already made up her mind to leave her husband and child. Even as Bai Qian returned to A-Li’s side, it was already three hundred years later, and A-Li had already grown up, so we can say that the three or four years when the child was dependent on his mother had already passed. As a woman, pregnant with a child, the three or four years before the child goes to kindergarten is the time when all mothers are most wretched, most tired, and most tied to their families and children, and the author has Su su break away from this responsibility, and tie by jumping off the exorcism platform. Erasing the most realistic and difficult time for women in the family, in their role as mothers. By removing the traditional female component of the “big heroine”, which requires the most dedication and self-sacrifice, the female lead can be a “big heroine” and be invincible.

When Minglan married into the Gu family, she had the embarrassment of being a stepmother, but her stepchildren were already five or six years old. When she gave birth to her son, she was first set on fire and then assassinated, and was unable to protect her young son but had to use her own body. As a stepmother, Minglan could fight all kinds of powerful people outside and all kinds of sisters-in-law inside, even in the battle between her and her mother-in-law, but with a child, she was in danger several times. This is the

reason why in “big heroine” novels, children or motherhood is the inescapable reason why women are tied to their families. This is why many of these novels have little to no motherhood. Or, in online literature, there is only the good side of motherhood, without the hardships of working women who have to work and raise children at the same time. On the contrary, in the “big heroine” stories, children become a tool for the “big heroine”, such as Ying Zheng in “LEGEND OF THE MI YUE” and Chun in “The Concubine’s Daughter”.

In the recently released STARRY NIGHT, the mother-daughter relationship is cold and distant, making the role of the mother questionable as well. The mother of Cheng Shaoshang, Xiao Yuanyi, is a female general, but to follow her husband on his expedition, she leaves Cheng Shaoshang at home for more than ten years, and then comes back to be displeased and harsh to her daughter. The mother of a female general, Xiao Yuanyi, is unpleasant, and annoying. Therefore, the maternal character of the “big heroine” is lacking and needs to be weakened. The image of the “big heroine” and the image of the “mother” cannot coexist.

4 The Transformation of Male Roles - A Reflection of Women’s Aesthetic Needs

The theme of beauty loving heroes has never gone out of fashion. But the “hero” cannot be the “beast” of Beauty and the Beast, but a gentleman. Male characters are required to be masculine and handsome, but also gentle and considerate, and consistent. Some male characters even have to be so beautiful that they are indistinguishable from males. This is a huge change from women being the main consumer and men being the subject of consumption. This is a huge change from the past when women had to be “good wives and good mothers”, and “gentle and considerate” to satisfy men’s sense of achievement, and aesthetic values, women also have their aesthetic needs. For the object of aesthetics, it is also about being handsome and beautiful, emotionally loyal and unfaithful, and unjustifiably in love with the female protagonist. The image of the male is given to the “puppies”, the “licking dog”, the “domineering president” or the “ascetic”. They are the cold-faced gentlemen. They are the absolute elements of romance, the vehicles of love, marriage, jealousy, power and success in the story of the “big heroine”. The “heroine” cannot escape the happy ending. Either they end up with the male protagonist (SAN SHENG SAN SHI), or they get their peak of power (LEGEND OF THE MI YUE), or they become the wife of a marquis against all odds (ZHI FOU ZHI FOU) The role of the male in this is one of infatuation, guardianship, mentorship and support, a character who revolves around the female protagonist. The male role is becoming more and more schematic, with the “heroine” always surrounded by a warm and silent “backup”, a powerful (or wealthy) main character, and a unique peach blossom. This is a kind of “daydream”, isn’t it?

5 The Aesthetic Deformity of the “Big Heroine” Trope

Laura Mulvey has argued that no matter how the female characters are dressed, their appearance is for the sake of strong visual and erotic impact that they bear watching, pandering, and referring to male desires [6].

The growth of the “big heroine” cannot be achieved without the aid and obsessive preference of men. This makes the “big heroine” deeply imprinted with the “Mary Sue”; whether it is a “Qing Dynasty” or a “rebirth “Even if they are not beautiful, they will eventually become beautiful and get all kinds of preferences because of their beauty. This perverse aesthetic of “white, thin and young” is readily accepted by writers, and readers of various “big female leads”, which is the deepest level of irony. How sad it is that the “big heroine”, under the banner of feminism, is objectifying women, internalizing the male aesthetic of women as the female aesthetic of women! We can see that men’s stories can be devoid of women, whether it is the male aesthetic of Romance of the Three Kingdoms or the female aesthetic of delayed literature, but the “big heroine” story cannot be devoid of men, only that it has changed from a male-centric story to a female-centric story. This has led to works with “big heroine” being considered pseudo-“big heroine” and the root of “Mary Sue”. A large part of the success of “big heroine” is that they are favored by quality men, recognized and adored by men, and fall in love with domineering CEOs. This has been proven time, and again in online literature, so the feminist banner of “big heroine” is very awkward.

6 The Antagonism of Relationships with Other Women

In the stories of “big heroines”, it is often the men who give help and support to the female protagonists, while the jealous, destructive, and love-stealing ones are the other women who exist, and they often constitute the cause of the “big heroines” being betrayed, bullied and tragic. Si yin loses her lover and master because of the betrayal of the Qing Nv; Su su jumps off the execution platform because of Su Jin’s bullying, and even Bai Qian, because of Su Jin, cannot forgive Ye Hua. In the “big heroine” story, all other women of the same generation are synonymous with jealousy and are the embodiment of “green tea”, the “black lotus”. In reality, women of the same generation are often in competition with each other, and in the story, they are either a stumbling block in the workplace or a third party in love. Even close sisters can betray the heroine over interests and love, and girlfriends can turn against each other. Women of the same generation fight to the death over a man or a common interest, and this kind of drama still binds the setting of “big heroine” to their marriage and their family.

7 Conclusion

“Big heroine” online novels are currently on fire online, on screen, and even in the periphery, but we still have to take a sober look at the deviation from the traditional “talented and beautiful” novels in which women are the aesthetic subjects, and also see that their appearance is a manifestation of at a time when consumerism and entertainment are paramount, the portrayal of women in ‘big heroine’ novels is still far from the traditional circle of female love. Female online literature is still far from being feminist literature.

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