

From "Making up Carefully" to "Without Makeup"

Analyzing Evolution of Female Images from the Feminist Perspective in Works of Tie Ning

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Abstract—Tie Ning, a famous contemporary writer, created many photorealistic female images of kinds of forms. In the creating process, both writing skills and female images changed from "making up carefully" to "without makeup". At the same time, through the evolution of female images in works of Tie Ning, we can find the change of bisexual relationship, which is worthy of discussing.

Keywords—*Tie Ning; female images; bisexual relationship*

I. INTRODUCTION

As a famous member of the group of women writers in literary world, Tie Ning is the unique one undoubtedly. During 30 years of writing career, she produced a lot of excellent works and constantly implemented the leap of herself. Along with the increasing number of works and maturity of writing skills, her works also increasingly cause the attention of readers and the critics. In particular, the female images in her works yield unusually brilliant results and appeal many scholars and masters in research fields. Of early stage, Tie Ning shows to readers an exquisitely carved world like wintersweet and praises for kindness, beauty and truth. After the deep research on the living conditions of female, she turns style of the writing from praising beauty to discovering ugliness. She displays ugliness and distortion in works. She finished *The Gate of Roses* in 1988. This work represents the secrets and ugliness in female's hearts and its style is totally different from previous works. Therefore, the critics think that Tie Ning breaks up her threshold and grows up. However, she wrote *Pregnant Women and Cattle* in 1992 in an idyll style again. As the appearance of varied works, people can't help but annoy that the writer's new book brings pure and fresh breath to the literary world. *City of No Rain* completed in 1993 fully shows the constant struggle in vain of women. *The Big Bathing Lady* of 1999 digs sin consciousness deep in the hearts of human. Tie Ning didn't stop here, she turns to look for a more harmonious human nature after revealing the ugliness and evilness profoundly. *Stupid Flower*, published in 2005 shows history of circulation, cultural change and the human relationships in the stupid flower village from the late Qing dynasty to 1940s. *Fire Pot* published in 2013 is a more typical representative.

The author uses the works mentioned-above as materials to reference and finds the evolution of female images from their growing process.

II. "AN INTERNECINE STRUGGLE" OF SI YIWEN

As the pinnacle of works of Tie Ning, *The Gate of Roses* tells conflicts between men and women as well as those among women. Some conflicts are apparent, others may be dormant. The conflicts lasted for more than half a century. *The Gate of Roses* is the gate of awaking, appetency and soul for women and connects women with society. "Inside the gate is female impudent pursuit of individual life, outside the gate is the male's social muzzle and bondage for women, every woman must overcome the gate in the process of pursuing self-realization". [1] *The Gate of Roses* deduces scenes tragicomedy and stories of love and hate in the particular historic morphology.

Si Yiwen was born in noble family and grew up in a scholarly family. She has a happy and scallion childhood and was familiar with poetry and literature. A few years of school life makes her contact with the modern civilization. In the progress social activity, she got to know and fell in love with the spiritual lover of her life – Hua Zhiyuan. She could have taken this opportunity to enter a wider and more ideal world, but all this was engulfed by the traditional society and an arranged marriage. If she was said that interference of the patriarchal makes her loss first love and vanish her longings for the future, the authority of husband pushes her into the endless dark. At the beginning, she struggles hard to change in the marriage without love, and even to tolerate Zhuang Shaojian's dissolute shameless. However, everything she had done is meaningless. What she did doesn't change his original opinion of her, ugly and horrible. He still felt that Si Yiwen was just dispensable and at the mercy of him. He conducts sexual abuse and sexual violence on her insanely and makes her taste insult and shame of love and sex. At the time, however, under era background that men are superior to women, Si Yiwen was unable to crusade against Zhuang Shaojian, not to mention the patriarchal society. The pressure of society and shackles of culture made her cannot breathe free. "She can only grow into a ferocious distorted poppy plant impregnated with poison in the compound to change and grow abnormally". [2] She lived with the resentment and hate against the patriarchal society. In the revenge to Zhuang, she had to give up individual dignity and the alienation of human nature inevitably. She insulted her old father-in-law with sexual behavior to express the sexual repression conducted by Zhuang Shaojian. When Si Yiwen who once was full of hope boiled days of her youth, ushered in the Zhuang Shaojian's

death, her soul also withered and became the second "Cao Qiqiao". Holding the pursuit of spiritual freedom, she always fought with people with shenanigans and even didn't let off her harmless sister Si Yipin and granddaughter Xiaowei. Such life makes her exhausted. In the intrigue against others, Si Yiwen lost her beauty as human gradually and entered the damn and contemptible abyss of human nature.

Si Yiwen swallowed herself crazily in her shocking life, swallowed the person who was intelligent, open, polite and cultured, healthy and beautiful. She completed her "internecine struggle". We have to recognize that Si Yiwen expected her clean soul can rise from the "rose" all the life, so she cared for her femininity, valued her own individual life and constantly looked for opportunities to make the heart desires come true, but that was just illusory because of social exclusion. Comparing to the struggle of Si Yiwen, Gu Ba closed herself forever, her female life desires were shelved outside the door and had no longer any illusions and expectations on love and marriage. The bloody fact tells us: in the age that men is the highest authority, the women have no other possibility.

III. "THE LEECH" TAO YOUJIA

As one of the three full-length novels of Tie Ning, *City of No Rain* tells original impulse and the horny crisis of a city based on sex. Comparing to Si Yiwen, Tao Youjia grew up in a much brighter environment. At that society, men naked oppression and discrimination against women has largely lifted, women have the right to freedom and emotions, but this does not mean that they can achieve real equality between men and women. In *City of No Rain*, the author just analyzed men and women from this perspective: between love and sex, the race, fled, gain and loss for women and men.

Because his wife was slovenly and boring, the new executive vice mayor Pu Yunzhe chased after the beautiful young female journalist Tao Youjia crazily and soon they showed up in some occasions in double. Traced back, human has no absolute love or pure sex and they always go together. But under the moral restrict of society, the human is not free, so love and sex can't be randomly displaced. For Pu Yunzhe and Tao Youjia, their tragedy not only comes from moral restrict of society but also because of the different psychological structure influenced by patriarchal culture and sexual instinct of men and women, which brings a variety of impatience and friction. As byron said: "love is a part of life for a man but the entire for a woman" [3]. In this tragedy, Pu Yunzhe was both the director and producer. He controlled the overall situation and process all the time, and he won the heart of beautiful Tao Youjia so he was in a good mood. However, "desire of climbing high and unplanned opportunities can really change a person overnight in a pair of head and face," [4] especially when Tao Youjia tried to get rid of his control and wanted more love, she obviously became burden or baggage for Pu Yunzhe, so he was going to take her out of his world. In the real sense, she's just padding for his loneliness and emptiness, so in the fight of power he alienated to another one. However, in order to pursue an ideal love, Tao Youjia begun to please Pu Yunzhe, the independent and pursuing girl before crushed in the wheel of history became the one never allowed him to have any other women. Therefore, the beauty of first

meet and the limited equality were exhausted. He became more and more estranged from her but she was more and more attached to him and tried to retain him. But she forgot: in Pu Yunzhe's eye, she was only the appendages chose and abandoned by Pu Yunzhe casually.

City of No Rain revealed to readers a "no rain world" lack of sincere love. In this world women chased for their own desire of love wishfully with the hope of regaining love. However, such a hopeless pursuit of love of women was penetrated by Tie Ning, she saw through the woman's ignorance and unawareness clearly. Men had male chauvinism while women had their own pursuit and freedom. They were like mercury and Mars, which could not compatible. Under the surface of equality, the fact that he men ruled the world and women still cannot be changed. At the same time, the unawareness and limitation o women were unfold, which was the biggest sorrow for women.

IV. HELPING FANG JING TO FULFIL HIS WISH BY YIN XIAOTIAO

In *The Big Bathing Lady*, the author paid more attention to women themselves so she begun to write the questioning and reflection of women. The author Tie Ning described heroine Yin Xiaotiao as the phoenix nirvana perfect women. It told a story about crime and punishment. We can also regard it as the growing process of a girl who experienced social storm and inner fighting and then got rebirth. During the process, the girl obtained self-awareness and subjectivity. The course of growing up is not smooth for women, they have to overcome kinds of difficulties and reflect constantly, they must be optimistic and positive. But "all of these are followed by soul strike of recognizing themselves and internalization inevitably".

Yin Xiaotiao witnessed a fantastic city in teenage years and she burdened too much because of difficult life. She should have found a worthy good man of trust for life to marry. However, she fell in love with a married man Fang Jing who was rich and famous. Like all the other women fell in love, she was stubborn and blind even without thinking of marriage. In a relationship with Fang Jing, Yin Xiaotiao sacrificed and lost herself. She tolerated and accepted idleness and unruly behaviors of Fang Jing as well as his absurdity, but she rationalized all of these stupidly. This tolerate mentality seems to be great, actually it is only the internalized product of the patriarchal thoughts. Yin Xiaotiao's behavior is essentially "the deep sorrow of reversed strengthening for women implied in the culture arrangement and reality" [6]. But what was worth mentioning was that faced with the damage caused by men, she got rid of the craze like Si Yiwen and stubborn madness like Tao Youjia, she embarked on a more spacious and bright life journey. The most meaningful sentence in this book is "people pursue the completeness in life, while the most complete thing in the world is nothing less than a broken heart" [7]. Because of the brokenness, people look the world clearer; Because of the brokenness, people enrich themselves and widen the road ahead. Brokenness became the path to perfect and improve them. She received a strong inner power to balance herself. Therefore, when she met Fang Jing again after so many years, she showed a new person to him and beat

Fang Jing in spirit. At the same time, she also won the heart of Chen Zai with her personality charm and depth, the person who accepted her when she was abandoned by Fang Jing, the person who solicit opinions from her on marriage and the person who can give her warmth and comfort at any time. But she couldn't persuade herself to live with Chen Zai because she can't ignore the loneliness of Wan Meichen after divorce. She knew how much Wan Meichen loved Chen Zai. She also knew that she fell in love with Chen at the wrong time, so Yin chose to be separated from Chen Zai even she was sad. Yin Xiaotiao saved and completed both love and herself by giving up love between Chen Zai.

The story of Yin Xiaotiao tells us, "male or male society, brought suffering to women indeed to some extent, but the real root of pain in women is the threshold of consciousness" [8]. Women only rely on themselves to get liberation and realize their true equality in this society with preaching the equality between men and women. However, this may not be the real intention of Yin Xiaotiao because even "helping others" is good, it also means regret. Men and women are in harmony in this vast universe and reconcile Yin and Yang is the real equality.

V. "THE COOL AND CONTENTED" OLD LADY

In *Fire Pot* Tie Ning built an old lady who was cool and contented and her life with husband. Tie Ning did realize that the love between two persons became as thin as a cicada's wings increasingly when writing this book and she understood the ugliness, reckoning, indifference and hostility in bisexual marriage indeed. But all of these could not prevent her from writing and expressing wonderful and simple love. She seemed to be more willing to appear simple relationship between husband and wife which was as warm as a fire. Compared to the romantic but fickle affection of modern young people, it is particularly valuable. The author hoped we can cherish simple daily love ignored by us. She wanted us to notice "the warmth and love in the relationship, caring, support, mutual help and understanding, rather than fierce confrontation women to men".

The old lady in *Fire Pot* was a commentator in a museum. How eloquent and shrewd in money matters she was. However, Faced with her wooden, obedient, clumsy-tongued engineer husband, she was tolerate and preferred to enjoy the joy from the husband and to be cool and contented. She would not quarrel with her husband because of his slow speech. Instead, she regarded ordinary trivial of daily life as the most beautiful love confession. Through the full text, we saw her image as a Chinese wife and mother, she was not the avant-garde or pioneer, so she was different from Si Yiwen, Tao Youjia and Yin Xiaotiao. She was just a traditional woman, she has a full cognition and precise positioning on her role and she knew she and her husband just accompanied each other. Therefore, even in their old age "they could sat somewhere hand in hand without impatience". And therefore, the old lady stretched out her hand to the old man's back to scratch when they went shopping or in the supermarket; He felt comfortable and considerate when his daughter scratched his hair; the warmth of love revealing between bowls and chopsticks when they ate hot pot together; The goodwill hiding when the old lady bit "seaweed" which was rag actually from the old man; the

inexplicit banter when drinking noodle soup with toothpaste flavor; the simple desire of the old lady to live in the same hospital room. These were coveted Chinese emotional expression hidden in the daily life and they gave people a plain feeling, like still waters running deep. It was also stretching, like a constant dropping wears away a stone, there is a huge penetration - through time, through the aging. Even through in the year of whitehead, nearly sunset, they were a couple of sweet love. Their tenderness and inseparable emotion still like the rising sun beyond the time's ruthless decomposition and destroy to the love.

Have to say, facing love and marriage, in front of relationship, the old lady in *Fire Pot* was the biggest winner. She went beyond Yin Xiaotiao and finally made her unfinished business become "perfect". There was no darkness or killing to human nature like in *The Gate of Roses*, restrict or boring in *City of No Rain* in *Fire Pot*, nor vapidity or betrayal in *The Big Bathing Lady*[11]. It performed the most beautiful music in the world, which made us men and women in the world heart skipped.

VI. CONCLUSION

All in all, from *The Gate of Roses*, *City of No Rain*, *The Big Bathing Lady* to *Fire Pot*, the writing style of Tie Ning turned to "without- makeup" from "making up carefully". The female images in her works became equal and harmonious from fierce conflict with patriarchal society. Investigate its reason, there are mainly the following several aspects:

First of all, the turn of writing style from "making up carefully" to "without- makeup" is the feature of mostly Chinese literators. It was existed since ancient times. Such a choice of Tie Ning is reasonable and within expect. Then, it is related to the life faith of Tie Ning. "She once strongly denounced the injustice against women in the patriarchal society, she really hoped that men and women have equal status and are in spiritual harmony" [12]. Especially in her 50s after getting married, the idea becomes more and more intense, so she wrote *Fire Pot*. Finally, the great change of female images in Tie Ning's works also a kind of return for traditional culture. Si Yiwen, Tao Youjia and Yin Xiaotiao in her early works are symbols of vanguard and pioneer. Even they realized they have the right to be happy, they are unable to make it, they didn't realize their limitation, so "they couldn't save themselves, not to mention other things" [13]. Until Tie Ning returned to the tradition and wrote *Fire Pot*, expressed insipid, caring and harmonious of life of the old woman, she finally completed unfinished "career" of Yin Xiaotiao. To reconcile Yin and Yang is a traditional idea, the writer tried to find strength from traditional to get out of the plight of women as secondary things. Of course, we can take this traditional regression as a writer to avoid the plight of women as secondary things but she just put women into the fuzzy and chaos, so there was no real internal harmony.

By the changes of writing style and female images, we may know clearly the ideal relationship between men and women the author tried to express: the relationship between men and women should not only depend on the sex, men and women are also the partners of the soul and spiritual confidants. They care each other and share together, meanwhile, they are

independent. As women in modern age, we must realize clearly we have a long way to go to realize harmonious bisexual relationship. We must be alert on the way and improve our own values at the same time. Only in this way can we get out of the plight of women as secondary things and reconcile Yin and Yang in society.

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