

# An Analysis of the Image “Snow” in Liang Xiaosheng’s Educated Youth Novels\*

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**Abstract**—“Snow” is one of the common images of Liang Xiaosheng’s educated youth works. The “snow” as a natural phenomenon in his works not only becomes a characteristic display of the Great Northern Wilderness area, but also the main medium for the inner activity and the theme of the work to be exposed and sublimated. Influenced by the tendency of the work, the “snow” of the Great Northern Wilderness presents different forms in the text, sometimes graceful, sometimes violent and fierce. The overwhelming blizzard and the silent snowfield witnessed the bleakness of the Great Northern Wilderness and the “youthful years” of the educated youth in there.

**Keywords**—“snow” image; Great Northern Wilderness; wilderness; youthful years

## I. INTRODUCTION

Liang Xiaosheng’s educated youth writing mostly uses the “Great Northern Wilderness” as the field of creation. For this reason, the “snow” image has become the main embellishment of the background rendering of his works. The land reclamation team in “This is a magical land” sailed to the snowy field, Fei Xiaoyun in “Snowstorm tonight” died in the cold snow, the “Back to City” wave in “Snow city” occurred in the snowy winter, Zhao Tianliang and others in “Educated Youth” almost died in a blizzard, Lin Chaoran and He Ningzhi in “Back to the City” returned to Harbin in the snowy winter night. The image of “Snow” is everywhere in Liang Xiaosheng’s educated youth narrative, when entering the age of educated youth, it seems to entered the world of snow. “Snow” has a layer of frosty air with its unique seasonality and bright colors, but it also gives the writer’s text a unique humanistic connotation.

## II. SNOW — REGIONAL BACKGROUND RENDERING

Influenced by his own experience of educated youth, Liang Xiaosheng’s stories of educated youth mostly occurred in the “Great Northern Wilderness”, especially in the border area of Heilongjiang. The biggest difference between the Heilongjiang area and the mainland is the “wildness” and “cold”: the thousands acres of black land reflect the fact of “wildness”, and the “snow” naturally becomes the image of “cold”. Nearly half a year in the Northern Wilderness is covered by snow and

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ice, therefore, writing in the background of “snow” is in line with the natural status of the Great Northern Wilderness. In the works, “snow” is a fixed color in winter, and it is a vivid display of the “cold” winter in the Great Northern Wilderness.

The novel “Snow city” written in the 1980s was screened in 1987. Every time I think of “Snow city”, I will see a cotton hat rolling in white snow field, this scene was completely rendered the devastating wildness of Great Northern Wilderness in the tragic melody of theme song “There is a sun in my heart”. In the prelude opening of the TV series “Educated Youth” in 2012, the snowflake is also displayed in front of the audience, although the lens is relatively short, it also shows the natural characteristics of the “Great Northern Wilderness” with snow. The first shot of the film “Snowstorm tonight” is also “an empty field, the north wind is whistling, the snow is flying in the sky”, the TV series “Back to the City” also presented the snowy night of Harbin, the protagonist He Ningzhi and Lin Chaoran walk toward home in the snow. After these Educated Youth Works were adapted into film and television dramas, they all seized the image of “snow”, and began the story of educated youth with “snow”, and the “snow” set off the desolate features of the Great Northern Wilderness. The display of this kind of lens is not designed by the director out of thin air, it is derived from the writing background of the work.

The novel “Snow city” in Liang Xiaosheng’s pen is based on “pickup at the station” in snow night to start the story. Along with the intense pick-up, the author cleverly interspersed a small piece of natural description: “What a big snow! It snowed a whole day and is still snowing. On the night of December 26, 1979, the snow was falling from the sky all over the world. “[1] This short description of “Snow” reveals the background, explains the time and place of the story, and of course gives the atmosphere to the later narrative. Then the work once again showed this natural scene with the eyes of the protagonist Yao Yuhui: “The snowflake is big, white and fluffy, and it is falling quietly all over the sky. On the balcony handrail, there is snow more than ten centimeters thick” [1]. The snow plot of novel “Educated Youth” mainly focus on Zhao Tianliang, Qi Yong, and Xiao Dibao three people rack antenna in snow weather. In this plot, although the description of snow is only a few words, it all shows the characteristics of the snow in the Great Northern Wilderness, such as: “North wind shouting in the northeast snowy night”, “violent wind

swept a burst of snow", "wind and snow together with cold fiercely rushed to Zhao Tianliang", and "let the snow powder covered his face", and these few descriptions fully revealed the dry, cold and violent characteristics of the northern snow. The opening of the novel "Back to the City" also took an indirect description of the beauty and magic of the northern snow, "At the end of 1979, a snowy night in Harbin, the flood control monument stood in the snow, the frozen Songhua Jiang looks like to covered with white carpet. Street trees on both sides of the street are covered with new snow, huge like silver coral." [2] (China Youth Publishing Company, e-book) from time to speculate that this snow should be the same like the one in "Snow city", they all show how big the snow was, but the description of "Back to the City" is more poetic, reflect the beauty of northern snow through the river and tree.

In addition to the description of these "snow", Liang Xiaosheng also described many "snow" scenes in other works. It can be said that the writing of "snow" enhances the regional characteristics of the Great Northern Wilderness, of course from the later narrative, "snow" writing also highlights the theme of the work, the psychological activities of the characters, and the ups and downs of the plot.

### III. SNOW — EMBODIMENT OF THE CHARACTER'S MOOD

"Snow" is not only a kind of regional display, but also a perspective of the character's mood in Liang Xiaosheng's works. In the works, the author often uses snow to set off the mental activities and mental state of the characters. At this time, the "snow" was given a soul by the author. It either set off the hero's perseverance with its bravery, or showed the spiritual confusion of the character with its madness, or expressed the grace and tender of the character with its softness.

The work "Snowstorm Tonight" is a typical example to combined natural "snow" with the "mood" of the characters. The work first showed the "sinking" of the silence before the storm and the tide of returning to the city. Then, with the coming of the blizzard, the wave of educated youth returning to the city also rapidly surged. The madness of the educated youth and the madness of the blizzard screamed the land of the Great Northern Wilderness, and the calm after the blizzard raging and the sorrow and solemnity caused by the sacrifice of Liu Maike and Fei Xiaoyun contrast each other, painted a sad ending for the work. It can be said that "Snow" is the plot promoter of the whole novel, and the detailed depiction of "Snow" shows the psychological fluctuations inherent in the educated youth. When 800 educated youths were stunned by the blockade of returning to the city, a thrilling blizzard came: "Under the bleak moonlight, the high walls of the snow-like heads rushed from the wasteland and rolled over." [3] It is so arrogant. "It screams, wants to sweep more than 800 educated youths from the earth and raise them into the air." [3] The violent and madness of the blizzard and the riots of the eight hundred educated youths has formed a interaction, with the help of "Snow" the author expressed the mental state of the near-frustrated and confused before the educated youth returned to the city.

Compared with the riots before returning to the city, the educated youth after returning to the city really went into a puzzle. "Snow city" and "Returning to the City" can be said to be the sequel to "Snowstorm tonight", "Snow city" and "Back to the City" also continued to write the returning to the city at the end of 1979. Although the tone of the description is different, it all implies the difficulty of the road after the educated youth return to the city. Compared with their enthusiasm for returning to the city, the outdoor snow and the cold are extremely uncoordinated. This contrasting description undoubtedly indicates that the "city" is difficult to root. Of course, compared with the difficulty of survival, spiritual adaptation and integration is more difficult. The most concentrated display in the works is the protagonist Yao Yuhui. As the mayor's daughter, she always couldn't forget the life experience of the Great Northern Wilderness. Compared with her sister and her brother, she seems to be incompatible with the city. In the Great Northern Wilderness, she was the instructor of the camp, and when she returned to the city, she was confused about her future. The author revealed her heart with a description of the snow: "She took a handful and felt a heart-wrenching cold", "This is the last heavy snowfall in 1979, it's so calm, so tender...", "The snow flakes blocked her sight, making the city a little farther and illusory..." [1] This illusion not only reflects Yao Yuhui's confused inner heart, but also summarizes the common psychological characteristics of the returning educated youth groups, Yan Xiaodong, Liu Dawen, Xu Shufang, Wang Zhisong, etc. are all seeking the space for physical and spiritual habitat in the cracks of the city like headless flies. Different from this euphemistic narrative, "Returning to the City" presents snow poetry in front of the readers, the first snow that Lin Chaoran and He Ningzhi saw after returning to the city is beautiful, full of warmth, which is also indicate the calm and expectations of the two people after they arrived home, it dressed up the Songhua River and Harbin City, seems to be waiting for the return of the wanderers. And the sunny weather after the snow, in the eyes of Lin Chaoran is also full of goodwill: "Snow just stopped, the moon came out, it is a rare situation! The moon, is it because you are compassionate to my pregnant wife, kindly illuminate the way home for her?" [2] Although the snow road made Lin Chaoran sprained his foot, the unexpected rescued experience seemed to contrast with the gentleness of the snow, suggesting the hero's difficult yet warm way of life.

There are still many scenes in Liang Xiaosheng's works that write "heart" with "snow", I will not repeat them one by one here. This kind of lyrical writing technique has undoubtedly played a role in shaping the character image of the work, and has also laid a certain foundation for the development of the plot.

### IV. SNOW — CATALYST FOR THE THEME SUBLIMATION

Through reading Liang Xiaosheng's works of educated youth, you can appreciate the writer's good intentions for the educated youth generation. The dedication, perseverance, and youth without regret of the educated youth are always the praise objects of the author, and this is reflected in the "This is a magical land", "Educated Youth", "Snowstorm tonight", "Back to the City" and other works. In order to highlight such

themes, in addition to shaping the heroic image in the works, the writer also added the implicit expression of the "snow" image, which invisibly sublimated the theme of the work.

In the "This is a magical land", the company "I" was in have poor harvest for years because of the wrong selection of places, the deputy instructor Li Xiaoyan with great pressure to take us deep into the "the wasteland" to reclaim the wasteland and established a station. On the way there the author took the opportunity to insert the description of "snow": "The sledge with the tent, dragged by the tired iron cow, advances on the snowy snowfield..., looking out from the tent, it is always white... white earth, white mountain, white river, white forest. 'The big smog has been scraped up', such as thousands of hairy crazy bison rushing out, chasing behind the big sledge." [4] The description of the snow clearly shows the readers how "terrible" of "the wasteland" in advance, and presupposes the environment to highlight the protagonists' spirit of "reclaim wasteland", the harsh environment can better reflect the perseverance and sacrifice spirit of the pioneers. The novel "Educated Youth" also used this style of writing when demonstrating the sacrifice spirit of the educated youth. There is a section in the work that depicts Zhao Tianliang, Qi Yong, and Xiao Dibao rack antenna in the snow weather. The blizzard came in the dark moment, and the three people who had twilight blindness lost their way in the snow, they shared the same enemy and fight against the wolves together, Zhao Tianliang sent a distress signal from memory, finally they were rescued later. This encounter with the blizzard day highlights the perseverance, courage, and tact of Zhao Tianliang and other educated youths in the Great Northern Wilderness. This has undoubtedly played a reinforcing role in displaying the theme of "youth without regret".

Compared to the above two works, the display of "Snow" at the end of "Snowstorm tonight" is euphemistic and profound. When the educated youth Zheng Yaru boarded the long-distance bus and left the Great Northern Wilderness forever, she installed a tooth-mug of snow and wanted to take it away to express her deep affection for the Great Northern Wilderness, but "the snow has turned into water". The author sighed: "Oh, the snow in the Great Northern Wilderness, this is so beautiful and so charming snow in the Northern Wilderness prints, but once the snow left the land of Great Northern Wilderness, it has melted so quickly!" [3] And the protagonist Zheng Yaru also sighed depressed: "Couldn't I even take a handful of snow?" [3] Finally, she shed tears and returned the snow to the land of the Great Northern Wilderness. The description at the ending can be seen from the lines of the word that the author is full of emotions, which reveals the author's humanistic understanding of "the educated youth returning to the city". The wave of educated youth returning to the city is just as passionate as when the educated youth went to the countryside ten years ago and took root in the frontier, however, the educated youth return to the city cannot be judged simply by abandoning the oath. After all, they have sacrificed ten years of youth for the Great Northern Wilderness, even life. As the old political commissar said: "You, spent a whole decade in the Great Northern Wilderness, you are a well-deserved generation of the Great Northern Wilderness. I, speak as an old person from Great Northern Wilderness, I

thank you! Because, you contributed youth to the Great Northern Wilderness!..." [3]. This passage of the old political commissar is actually the author's summary of the educated youth generation, and it is also the nature determination of history to the educated youth generation: the educated youth returning to the city are the same as those educated youth who root, even sacrifice at the frontiers, they were all worthy of recognition. The author also borrowed Kuang Fuchun's parting speech to Zheng Yaru to encourage the educated youth to "don't complain, don't curse, don't laugh at yourself and laugh at it..., we have paid and lost a lot, but we have gotten more than lost, what we got is weight more than what we lost". [3] It is obvious that the words of the old political commissar and Kuang Fuchun all implied the theme of the work. At this point we understand that "Snowstorm tonight" face up to the educated youth, it is the interpretation of the vows of "youth without regret". At the end, Zheng Yaru's various emotions to "Snow" is the sublimation of this theme, although the educated youth returned to the city, the spirit of the educated youth stayed in the land of the Great Northern Wilderness as the snow, continuing and inheriting.

## V. CONCLUSION

The author Liang Xiaosheng endowed the "snow" of Great Northern Wilderness with spirituality. Whether it is violent or tender, it shows the hero's feelings and the author's emotional sustenance. The borrowing of the "snow" image not only renders the emotional tone of the work, but also enhances the infectivity of work, so that makes the writer's educated youth writing more aura and more contagious.

## REFERENCES

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