

Research on "Waiting Consciousness" in Mo Yan's New Works

Minbang Shang¹

¹ School of Chinese Languages and Literatures, Lanzhou University, Lanzhou, Gansu, China

¹ Corresponding author. Email: atsing@foxmail.com

ABSTRACT

Mo Yan's new works reflect a strong consciousness of "waiting". The novel "Waiting for Moses" replaces the story with narration, achieves cross-layer narration by suspending the narrator and highlighting the formal narrator, reveals and explores the expressive form and constructive nature of narration with unique meta-fiction skills. The novel takes "waiting" as the core theme, and gives narration tolerance and understanding while reflecting narration, which reflects Mo Yan's new understanding of narrative ethics.

Keywords: Formal narrator, Suspension, Waiting, Normalization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mo Yan has attached great importance to artistic techniques and artistic structure since his creation. In his novels such as "Humor and Interest", "The Republic of Wine", "Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out", "Carpenter and Dog" and other novels, many meta-novel skills such as "Mo Yan", author identity, author's body, author's relationship with people, text intertextuality, revealing creation traces, and self-evaluation writing are often interspersed.

In his new work, Mo Yan pays special attention to meta-consciousness. Whether it is the "Luxury dress", a drama written with a novel, "Seven Stars Bright Me", a group poem about literature and daily life that talks with world literature masters in an ordinary capacity, or the unexpanded short novel composed of more than ten notes "Yidou Attic Notes" and the novel collection "The Late Maturer", all reflect on the literary narrative in form and content, reflecting the new work's distinct thinking and innovation consciousness. In Mo Yan's new works, the short story "Waiting for Moses" has a distinct and self-contained consciousness of waiting, which is mainly reflected in three main aspects: the narrator's suspension, the scale highlighting of the formal narrator, the use of meta-fiction strategy and meta-narrative discussion, and the manifestation of waiting philosophy.

2. THE NARRATOR'S SUSPENSION

Gerard Genette uses the method of narrative layering to resolve the conflicts and differences between the "character" and the "narrator". Wang Yang deems that the narrative rights of characters are granted by the narrator (author, implied author), so the character should not be referred to as "narrator" to confuse with the narrator. Thus, he calls the narrative characters "formal narrator"[1]. In this way, no matter how a text narrative is layered, it can only be divided into narrators, formal narrators and characters. According to this understanding, "Waiting for Moses" as a whole can be summarized as: "I" is the narrator, Moses is the character, and the others are the formal narrators. In the actual text, "I" is also one of the members of the formal narrator, and Moses' wife Ma Xiumei is also one of the characters.

The novel consists of two interwoven narrative actions: I –inquire - people, people - narrate - Moses. Among them, the narrator "I" is the organizer and recorder of all the narration, as well as the subject of the narration in the form of questioning and recording, pointing to the level of the implied author. Formal narrators constitute a group whose narrative behavior and narrative content constitute the main body of the novel.

The narrator "I" organizes the whole narrative frame by linear narration. First, the relationship

between Moses' origin and "I" is explained, and then the relationship between Moses and the people and his fate is connected through several time points. At the same time, the historical background is melted into linear time, and the fate of the character is highlighted. Advance from the narrator's linear narrative time, which itself has the meaning of inquiry and waiting, reflecting the fit with the theme of "waiting". The first-person "I" is the subject of self-waiting, and also the subject of waiting that leads the entire text narrative. The first person of the restrictive perspective always restricts its own narrative viewpoint and narrative desire, choosing to explore and wait. Through recollection and inquiry, the final ending of the novel can be obtained.

As far as the narrator is concerned, he does not disturb the logic of time subjectively, but "waits" for the fate of Moses according to the advance of time, which can better reflect the nature of waiting in the physical time logic. From the perspective of the character Moses, the linear time narrative more truly shows its own life course, and reduces the degree of "storyize" of the narrator's fate as much as possible. What Mo Yan does is to clarify his new artistic thinking with the form of "passive narration" of "waiting", that is the richness and multidimensional nature of life sometimes overflows the narrative expectation of the novel.

In the inquiry and record of linear time, the first-person "I" as the narrator is always "suspended" and the subjectivity is withdrawn. "I" gives way to the narrative power and is willing to be an "objective" recorder. "I" does not control the narrative behavior of the formal narrator, but only asks and listens to the narrative as the subject of the formal narrator. Due to the setting of restrictive perspective identity, "I" is not only an inner character participating in part of the "story", but also an "outsider" isolated by part of the "story".

"I" as a character voluntarily accepts the limitations of the story when acting within the time-space of the novel, rather than taking precedence over other characters. It is the identity setting of the characters who are both connected and separated that becomes the main narrative driving force of the novel. Therefore, such narrative concession not only gives the formal narrator a broader and free narrative space, but also presents the real face of the narrative itself, and expresses the narrator's self-control consciousness. The narrator embodies high consciousness and rationality, transcending the domination of narrative passion. In sharp contrast,

the formal narrator groups publicize their own narrative subjectivity and libido, which seem to be out of the control of the narrator and trapped in the narrative passion.

As far as "I" is concerned, the formal narrative adopts a phenomenological approach of "suspension". "I" only provides space for "inquiry" for the formal narrator, and does not give conclusions and judgments. The first step in suspension is to put on hold the Moses "facts" and their narratives, to "bracket" the narratives about Moses, to temporarily "suspend" trust in their short-term, partial, unproven narratives and judgment. The author embeds the spirit of doubt in the narrator's consciousness. Leaving the question open manifests that the narrator adds little narrative intervention to the formal narrative. The narration of "I" is in the form of recording, and in essence it is of the nature of exploratory waiting.

"Suspension" also requires the narrator to maintain self-censorship, suspend judgment, and suspend narrative intervention. The phenomenological strategy of suspension becomes the philosophy of "waiting" for Mo Yan. The purpose of "I" is to restore the truth of Moses, but "I" must suppress the urgency of restoration in the process of restoration. The restoration of Moses is achieved at the end of the novel. The narrator "I" first obtains the restoration of inter subjectivity consciousness. When Moses' return is confirmed in the courtyard of Moses' house, "I" begins to pay attention to the world outside Moses for the first time. At this time, things other than Moses which have never been focused on before begin to return to the consciousness of "I".

"I" is once lost in the process of suspension. At this time, the external exploration psychology begins to turn to myself. Secondly, it is the restoration of "I" as the narrator and novelist's transcendence and experience, the conscious awakening of one's own curiosity and construction consciousness, and the restoration of the previous transcendence and experience. Finally, it is the essential restoration of the novel narrative and the reality narrative, which not only recognizes the rationality of the natural otherness tendency of the narrative, but also constantly expects to obtain the authenticity of the narrative. Narration and receive-narration contain not only practice itself, but also the consciousness of practice, which together constitute the two sides of narration and narration.

3. META-FICTION NARRATIVE STRATEGIES

Meta-fiction is a kind of novel about novel, which mainly aims at revealing the fictional and creative process of the novel and suspends the narrative of the story as its essence. A sober and self-conscious author's self-awareness is the foundation of meta-fiction. From the perspective of textual reality and reflecting reality, meta-fiction increases the expressive scope of the novel and the dimension of self-reflection.

Exposure is the most obvious feature of meta-fiction, and it is also a kind of meta-fiction art technique frequently used by Mo Yan. "The narrator self-exposes the traces of narration and fiction in the text, and even openly discusses various narrative techniques in the text"[2]. Mo Yan reveals his own name and pseudonym, physical appearance, occupation, identity, work interconnection, actual interpersonal relationship and other author's temporal and spatial aspects, which not only forms a sense of substitution for the novel, but also constantly deconstructs the fictional narrative. "Waiting for Moses" directly points out that this is a "novel that has never been published", and adds that "it is a novel, but it is basically a documentary", and also reveals the creative process - "But I have to solve this problem, I must give a series of descriptions"[3].

The exposure to the creation shows the authenticity of the novel's creation process. The definite chronological time and the individual time of the "I" reveals by the author clearly point to the truth of time. Under the interpellation of "I", the narrative of Moses by the villagers forms the complete structural picture of the novel through the collage of "I". Through the metaphor and parody of names, Mo Yan makes "inter-textual" correlation between literature and history through the transformation of time nodes and the evolution of characters' names. Whether it is the era of revolution, the era of reform, or the era of economic construction, whether it is Peter and Aidong, Moses and Weidong, or Matthew and Xiangyang, the surname is always Liu, and after the form of parody, it finally returns to the concrete human.

The meta-fiction feature of "Waiting for Moses" is also reflected in the intertextuality with Lu Xun's novels. Return to the native place, the inability of "I" to answer the question that Ma Xiumei belongs to Mistress Xiang Lin, such as the Runtu's "Master" to call Moses "Boss Liu", the same spectator

situation, all of which are inter-textual with Lu Xun's novels.

The description of Moses in "Waiting for Moses" constitutes an ontological judgment: What is Moses? In this judgment, Moses is an object waiting to be defined, and the formal narrator is the subject who issues this definition. As for the judgment of Moses, Mo Yan's narrative strategy is to highlight the outward appearance of narration, hide the essence of connotation, and internally point to the presupposed narration of otherness. In the novel, the "truth" of the story is replaced by the "truth" of the narration.

The self-consciousness of meta-fiction lies in "questioning and testing the traditional conventions of fiction" and "questioning and testing the narrative conventions on which it relies to narrate"[4]. As a writer, Mo Yan tries to rethink the relationship between literature and life through novels.

Mo Yan poses a multi-faceted question of literature, that is, literature should not only reflect the author's subjective consciousness, but also have an object consciousness oriented towards the writing object. Mo Yan says, "When I write novels, I also suppress my strong subjectivity and presuppositions of character labels, eliminate the inherent concepts of good and evil in my mind, and strive to put the historical characters of the novels in an equal position. The shortcomings of good people are not covered up, and the good flashes of bad people should not be avoided."[5] Mo Yan's new works are no longer a sand table for the author or narrator to play their subjectivity at will, but focus on the exploration of narrative inter-subjectivity.

Zhao Yiheng believes that "meta narration is an important feature of human thinking mode and an important way to fight against ideographic stylization"[6]. In fact, the stylized narration is the main way of human narrative thinking, and it almost dominates the whole narrative with its existing paradigm, habitual mode and convenient way of thinking. Meta-narration is just a kind of strategy, which is the introspective consciousness of the narration. It tries to deconstruct the stylized structure of narrative with strong subjectivity, questions the reliability of narrative, and hopes to find the truth of narrative.

Meta-narration prompts and parses the structure of narration, aiming to reveal how narration constructs meaning. The purpose of meta-narration

is not to demand the compromise and tolerance between the narrative subject and the main body, but to consider the presence of the narrative object as much as possible and avoid the total presence of "self" and the total absence of "others". Therefore, narration not only has the right to express fully and freely, but also has the obligation to restrain expression. The rights and obligations of narration are complementary and unified.

From the perspective of deconstruction, Mo Yan deconstructs the narrative center of the novel and subverts the control narrative centered on the protagonist's events. Meta-fiction generally lacks narrative drive due to its prominent meta-consciousness, but "Waiting for Moses" skillfully deals with this weakness. Mo Yan does not deliberately destroy the structure of the novel because of the pursuit of the purport of the meta-novel. On the contrary, he obtains the "meta" characteristic with his customary conventional structure. Its purpose is to present the novel and the life through the novel, so as to achieve the effect of reviewing the novel and narration. The narrator or character in the meta-novel replaces the critic or theorist, and criticizes the narrative rules from the inside of the story.

4. THE PHILOSOPHICAL MEANING OF "WAITING"

Mo Yan says that most of these new novels are actually written in 2012, because of the Nobel Prize for literature they are temporarily shelved. He says, "When I find out these novels again, I find that they could not be published in this way and have to be revised. These novels are like radishes and cabbages buried in the ground. We think they would not grow long when they are buried. In fact, they are still growing. Radishes are full of buds, and cabbages have green buds. The characters in these novels all have prototypes. In five years, the fates of these prototypes have changed. A dead person suddenly comes back alive, a very backward person suddenly drives a Mercedes, and a very cowardly person suddenly does an earth shaking thing. From this perspective, novels can grow, and novels based on their hometown are full of openness and will never be closed." [7]

This is the origin and opportunity of the "waiting" philosophy of the novel "Waiting for Moses". Moses is the prototype of the "narrated" character who died and came back alive. Mo Yan confesses, "Moses' is based on a real person, and the story of this person has changed in reality. I can

no longer use his death as the answer to the riddle of the novel, so the closed novel must extend or rewrite the ending. Therefore, the novel that I thought could be published at that time grew up like a tree after a period of time. Life has not only changed this novel, but also exceeded my imagination, which is really touching. Of course, these new changes in reality will also give me some inspiration to write new endings." [8] "Putting off for a while" is "waiting", and the enlightenment that life finally brings to Mo Yan is a new thinking about the narrative of the novel.

In "Waiting for Moses", Mo Yan also reveals that "the reason why I haven't published this work is that I always feel that the story is not over". Waiting means that the narrator is not eager to give a judgment under the impulse of "narrative libido". The process of waiting is a gap and a blank, but also a tolerance and waiting for infinite possibilities. Waiting for Moses means that the narrator "I" only provides space for "inquiry" for the various forms of narrators, and does not give conclusions and judgments. The narrator and the formal narrator's narration present two different forms. The narrator is introverted and withdrawn, while the formal narrator is explicit and publicized. Thus, two different cognitive modes, value judgments and narrative attitudes are presented.

When talking about the writing of novels, Mo Yan says, "History often has certain conclusions, while reality tends to deviate from the direction of prediction in the rapid changes. Therefore, it is more difficult to deal with reality than to deal with history. For writing with reality as the theme, I think that it is better to let what has just happened in advance, so that it is more likely to see the essence of things. My novels 'Waiting for Moses', 'Left Sickle' and 'Peace in the World' are all rewritten or continued written after I finish writing them because of the reality has changed" [9].

"Waiting for Godot", which is also the theme of "waiting", expresses the absurdity of "nothing happens and nothing being waited for". Waiting is a resistance and substitution to a meaningless world. Different from the overall absurdity of "Waiting for Godot", "Waiting for Moses" is located in a specific social and historical background, with specific characters, distinct space-time fields, and everyone has a vivid personality. Therefore, waiting is realistic and practical. The state of waiting for Godot is confusion and nihilism, while waiting for Moses is to practice waiting with clear consciousness and practical actions. Like the absent

Godot, Moses's presence doesn't occupy much space. The novel's weak theatricality is finally highlighted in the form of epiphany at the curtain call.

"Waiting for Moses" distinguishes three types of subjects in the narrative action -- the waiter, the anti-waiter and the waited. The waiter "I" waits with self-consciousness restraining itself, representing a rare narrative self-consciousness. The anti-waiters are narrators of various forms, representing the releaser of narrative desire. The awaited Moses is the center of the narration and the object of construction. Because of the uniqueness of Moses' life experience, it has "describable". In fact, the waiting of "I" does not mean that "I" am perfect. Mo Yan does not make "I" an ideal narrator. When "I" confronts the characters as the narrator, "I" makes the same thoughtless and arbitrary judgments as the formal narrator. In addition, the curiosity of "I" is itself the key narrative force of the novel. In the novel, Mo Yan always reveals the curiosity of "I" as a novelist and narrator.

"Waiting for Moses" is not an exploration of the absolute truth of the story, but an exploration of the actual form and construction process of the narrative. It is "abnormal" that the formal narration is otherized, incomplete and biased in part and a short period. And because Moses is "describable" and people generally have narrative impulse, the narration to Moses constitutes "normal". For Moses, the otherized narrative constitutes "abnormal" to his own reality, but it is "normal" from the perspective of narrative tolerance. The narrator "I" is the "novelist" of this work. It is "normal" to bear and restrain self-narration as much as possible, and have a clear consciousness of narration. However, it is "abnormal" to impose strict requirements on the formal narrator.

As for the novel as a whole, "I"'s desire to explore the truth of the characters is the same as the narrative libido of the formal narrator, and it has been constructed by otherization, and the collage of various forms of narratives forms a montage "structure", which is a reflection of the characters. A narrative construction that is true to the life of the formal narrator is "abnormal". The normal and abnormal narratives are contradictory and coupled with each other. They not only present the realistic form of narratives and express the reflection of narratives, but also call an ideal form of narratives. In Mo Yan's words, "when a novelist writes, he must stand on the position of human beings and write all people as human beings "[10].

Zhang Qinghua points out that the tension and opposition in Mo Yan's new works have obviously loosened up, "Mo Yan's perspective and way of looking at history and characters seem to have undergone subtle changes, becoming more tolerant and more reconciling with history"[11]. In Mo Yan's new works, the story conflict and critical implication of the novel have been transformed into reflective attention to the narrative of the novel, which reveals deep concern for the narrative.

5. CONCLUSION

Milan Kundera believes that the novel is the summon of thought, "not to transform the novel into a philosophy, but to use all rational and irrational, narrative and contemplative means to reveal human existence on the basis of narrative, so that the novel becomes the highest synthesis of the spirit".[12] Through these new works, Mo Yan tries to re-examine the previous novels, reflect on their coverage and the "fictionality" they unconsciously uphold, expand the focus and narrative dimension of the novel, and think about the narrative otherness and narrative ethics of novels.

Just as Cervantes reflects on the novel of chivalry with the varied meta-fictional techniques of "Don Quixote", "Waiting for Moses" is a thorough examination of previous novels. The observation of the narrative and the "waiting" for the fate of the characters, criticizes the mistake that narration precedes facts, overcomes facts and decides facts. On the other hand, the novel transcends the persistence of distinguishing fiction from reality and gives the greatest tolerance and understanding to the narrator, the formal narrator and the characters. At the end of the novel, the author shouts that "Everything is normal except me", "So I turned around and walked out of Moses' house."

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Minbang Shang.

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