

Redefinition to the Researching Value of Romance in the Rain

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Abstract: Qiong Yao, the well-known queen of love story in Taiwan since 1990s, has wrote countless love fairy tales in her works. *Romance in the Rain*, which was wrote in the first person, is one of the few works of Qiong Yao with a deep sense of history. It depicted decades of China's chaotic history from one angle and employed the rise and collapse of the powerful warlord Lu Zhenhua's family as a cue. It discussed how people's fortunes changed through time and demonstrated many humanities through the intense character conflicts as well. *Romance in the Rain* not only reflects Qiong Yao's ideal world but also her real existence. It can be accepted as Qiong Yao's masterpiece which was inspired by and related to Taiwan's political climate in the 1960s, the rise of Taiwan's realistic literature. This article uses the method of text analysis to study the novel, and explains the customs of "foreign countries and places", and then transforms this visual and spectacle representation of others into imagined China, which satisfies the needs of Taiwanese audiences at that time. The curiosity of Chinese audiences creates the value of "pan-Chinese" nationalism.

Keywords: *Romance in the Rain*, Qiong Yao, love story, redefinition, deep sense of history

1. Introduction

Qiong Yao is the penname of Chen Che, a Taiwanese writer and producer who is often regarded as the most popular romance novelist in the Chinese-speaking world [1]. Her novels have been adapted into more than 100 films and TV dramas [2]. Since she has created various forms of love stories that are specific to various ages, backgrounds, classes, and eras. Her books have earned the moniker "Encyclopedia of love" [3]. *Romance in the Rain* stands out from other popular love stories since it not only ends up with a tragedy but also expresses the collective confusion which is how to deal with life [4]. The plot makes a concerted effort to examine how society and life are recognized. Along with describing love, it also inserts the question of fate. Outwardly, what it writes appears to be about the problems in the home and marriage of Lu Zhenhua, but it actually covers a deeper subject. A dynasty can be identified by the ups and downs of a family. The author combines real life with history. She aims to get people to think about issues that are more significant and profound than family strife by comparing reality and history.

This article uses the text analysis method to mine and analyze the background of the novel creation and to experience the novel personally from the perspective of the times. Romance novelist Qiong Yao, as a popular female writer who has influenced several generations in China, has been obsessed with writing and reflecting Chinese life, human feelings and traditional ethics for half a century; The

ideal world of life; the pursuit of health, happiness, and upward humanistic caring character and the artistic effect of appreciating both refined and popular tastes. Her works have aroused continuous controversy and comments on her and her works in Taiwan and mainland China since she was born. Interpreting Qiong Yao's works from the perspective of feminism and revealing the feminist significance of her text system is the proper meaning of feminist literary criticism. The writing of anti-patriarchal consciousness in her novels is expressed through two aspects: shaping the image of the patriarchal hegemon, reproducing the destruction of feudal patriarchal ethics on women to highlight the crimes of feudal patriarchal ethics; The patriarchal consciousness and its tragedy are deduced in the text. At the same time, her novels publicize the subjectivity of women. Qiong Yao's novels create two types of subjective images: rebellious classical women and independent and strong modern women, trying to convey the superiority of women and the subjective value of women as the savior of disabled men. Her novels portray androgynous ideal male and female images to readers, showing the poetic thought of "androgynous body" [4]; and express the idea of "bisexual harmony": personality equality, poetic true love and partnership are bisexual respectively. The fundamental foundation, forceful guarantee and perfect form of harmony. Her novels construct a female discourse with triple gender consciousness: emotional familism, caring consciousness, philosophy of love and concept of redemption, as the coordinating principle of her entire creation, so as to achieve the understanding of family, society and society with "different voices". Human moral appeal. Only by deeply appreciating and perceiving Qiong Yao's texts can we dig and discover the femininity and super-gender consciousness in her novels, and also realize the enduring charm of her works more comprehensively.

Qiong Yao's novels reproduced China in a way that takes love as the supreme principle and integrates generational conflicts, class conflicts, and ethnic conflicts. Her novels transcend ethnic differences and class differences through love stories, presenting a combination of classical Chinese and contemporary love sensibility.

2. The Underlying Causes of Subversion

2.1. The Subcultural Elements in *Romance in the Rain*

Subculture means non-mainstream culture in society. The scientific and systematic study of subculture begins with Chicago School. And the foundation of Modern culture research center of Birmingham in England developed youth subculture. "Youth subculture" theory of Birmingham was affected by Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony deeply. It believes that the core of subculture is the resistance to the ruling class ideology, and their own space can be gained by this resistance. In other words, resistance is the most vivid characteristics of subculture [5].

1960s Taiwan saw the rise of modernist literature. Additionally, Qiong Yao's complete novel *Romance in the Rain* was released in 1963. In contrast to previous serious writing, which expressed cultural views produced by political and cultural leaders, it won readers over with a tender and lovely love story. It is a novel about a non-mainstream subculture that this kind of ideal love mode of "scholar and beauty" is desired but cannot be accomplished in actual life [6].

2.2. Game Played by *Romance in the Rain* and Mainstream Culture

Many readers think that the well-known love novella *Romance in the rain* was solely concerned with the subject of "love". Other crucial traits of the main male and female characters have been purposefully weakened. Their social background, self-worth, and social identity all served "love" in some way. The female characters in this story highly depend on male characters. They live and die for love. The story emphasize strongly that appearance and temperament of a girl were only conditions for happy love and a great marriage. Countless readers have indulged in this kind of "pure

love” story [7]. *Romance in the Rain* has been taken as leisure story rather than serious literature taking the theme and the plot into consideration.

Instead of being “meaningless” or “without researching value”, It shows “resistance” to popular love story of the day [7]. A great many of readers are attracted by its content. The author depicted the life of Taiwan people in 1960s with metaphor and innuendo. For example, episodes of Yiping’s resistance to her father Lu Zhenhua and her courage for free love are delivered to readers in form of “productive resistance”, and it would further affect young people with Taiwan Modernist literary thought “new feeling” [8]. Because of that, Qiong Yao has taken a certain place in Taiwan literature for her unique style.

As the influence of *Romance in the Rain* expanded, it has been adapted into films or television works for three times. IP industry around it expanded in Mainland, Taiwan and Hongkong. So that Taiwan's popular love story, which is not taken seriously, has taken root and sprouted in all corners of society.

2.3. The Love in the Midst of Colony and Modernity

In the 1950s and 1960s, the situation of Taiwan was unstable, and the belief of people collapsed or disillusioned. There was a sense of doubt and confusion everywhere. There have been many shocks and uncertainties in politics and economy. This "uncertainty" has to some extent catalyzed the development of Taiwanese modernist literature. Many Taiwan people didn’t know “where am I”. The feeling of loneliness and loss permeates Taiwan's literary world. At same time, some Taiwan writers began to turn their eyes on personal feeling and dignity. Taiwanese modernist literature developed vigorously in 1950s and 1960s. There were modern descriptions of “Urban literature” and “New feeling” in lots of literature works [9].

Under the background of colony and modernity, it seems to be similar to other popular love stories. Yet as a matter of fact it describes the changing fate of characters in warlord Lu Zhenhua’s family. On the surface, the novel describes the family of “Great Patriarch” Lu Zhenhua and love stories of his children, while the deep connotation of it is that the rise and fall of the family, which can be interpreted into an indication of a dynasty [7]. The writer blends history and reality. The intention is to make readers compare the reality and history and think something bigger and deeper than domestic conflicts.

The Lu court, headed by Lu Zhenhua, represents the national government retreating to Taiwan. And Martial law of national government is just like the cruel, merciless and non-negotiable order that Lu Zhenhua gives to his children. The martial law has kept Taiwan under military tension for a long time. The in-fighting of wives and children resemble the shackles and traps that lonely and helpless Taiwan people tried to get rid of at that time. The characters headed by Yiping in the novel represents pioneer people of Taiwan modernism who are brave to express themselves and show their opinions. While the characters headed by Ruping in the novel represents the bullied people in the society who are numb and had no direction.

In the end of the story, Ruping killed herself with a gun. It symbolizes that the numb Taiwan people of 1960s dare not to resist, lived painfully and unhappily. Lu Zhenhua was recipient and victim of this tragedy fate himself too. His children sent him to a mental hospital, and he died alone on the sickbed though he had a glorious past and so many wives [10]. Yiping and Shuhuan split because of guilty feeling to Ruping. Although no one knows what is reasonable ending in real world, the breaking up of Yiping and Shuhuan stands for the feeling of loss of Taiwan people in 1960s to some extent.

After the lifting of martial law, Professor Chen Fangming published *The Construction and Staging of Taiwan's New Literature History in United Literature*. He defined the period after the Republic of China took over Taiwan as the period of colonialism. *Romance in the Rain* was Qiong Yao’s

uncommon novel with great impact, which reflects the state of mind of characters being in colonial culture and the trend of thought in the new era [11].

3. Subject Oriented Writing

3.1. The Expression of Modern Women's Consciousness

Many female characters in *Romance in the Rain* are designed to encourage women to be independent and self-improving, and they have progressiveness by themselves. In the novel, “I”—Lu Yiping and her mother Fu Wenpei were forced to move out of court Lu, but they were not complaining and had the spirit of resistance. They hated people in that family—court Lu, and retaliated against them. Lu Yiping criticized her father bravely. Though Yiping had no absolute spiritual autonomy, she kept resisting Patriarchal ideology and pursuing spiritual independence.

Surprisingly, after Yiping had collected evidences of Wang Xueqin’s adultery, she found that her mother Fu Wenpei found it out more than ten years ago. Yiping thought she dared not to inform Lu Zhenhua because of weakness. But her mother told Yiping seriously, she had no reason to scold Xue. Since Lu Zhenhua had already had many wives and seemed to be entitled to marry more women. Then why couldn’t Wang Xueqin have her own lover. on this point they had no female competition in traditional big family. From these episodes in the story, the effect of “new feeling” on Taiwan literature in 1960s can be sensed [12]. Women had their own thoughts and breakthrough in the process of getting rid of shackles of man power.

3.2. The Contradiction Between Seeking and Hesitating

In *Romance in the Rain* there showed the emergence of female consciousness, but what it really expressed is the contradiction between seeking and hesitating. The story is presented in the mode of autocratic patriarch family. In the novel the autocratic patriarch Lu Zhenhua had undoubted power over the family. He was feudal and autocratic, and nobody could disobey his order. He burned, killed, robbed for decades as a warlord, and married nine wives totally. When he moved to Taiwan, he only took eighth wife Fu Wenpei and ninth wife Wang Xueqin and their children with him. Later he drove eighth wife and her daughter Yiping out of family easily. When Yiping asked for living expenses and quarreled with him, he whipped his daughter, and no one dare to stop him.

It was pointed out in Beauvoir's *The second sex* that women are passive and submissive in patriarchal society. Women were given “internality” forcibly by patriarchal society [9]. Although “I”—Lu Yiping strived to master spiritual autonomy, she preferred to work to support her living rather than ask money from her father. When she took revenge on the family, she stole her sister Ruping’s boyfriend. Wang Xueqin kept looking for outstanding boys for her daughters Ruping and Mengping. She wished her daughters could realize their own value existing in having a good boyfriend.

In the process of revenge against family Lu, Lu Yiping planned to steal Ruping’s boyfriend, but she found that she fell in love with He Shuhuan actually. The plot setting seems to eulogize the greatness of love briefly. But it was made clear that in that period independence could never win over love. At the same time, after been driven out of court Lu, Yiping’s mother Fu Wenpei never resisted and worked to acquire economic independence. She accepted everything meekly. She lived in a narrow and shabby rental house, asking for eight hundred Yuan of rent and living expenses from Lu Zhenhua, and persuaded her daughter to accept all that happened in her life after she was whipped by her father. In the years after she was driven out of court Lu, she didn’t love any other men but Lu Zhenhua.

It can be found that independence loses to love easily in *Romance in the Rain*. female character are stuck in ideological framework in which women can only get position and respect by depending

on men. Women could never realize true independence fully if she could not get rid of dependence on men.

3.3. The Epochal Significance of *Romance in the Rain*

Romance in the Rain focus on individuals. It is the first Taiwan novel in 1950s and 1960s that showed the Taiwan intellectuals' sense of individual loneliness, political apathy and identity crisis. In context of such times, *Romance in the rain* changed the focus from society to individuals, and it started to pay attention to the bondless inner world. The heroine rebels against tradition. Yi Ping's resisting to her father and her pursuing love reflect the figure of Taiwanese modernist literature.

The work is also unique. Qiong Yao is a fashionable writer in 1960s. Being different from literature against communism and love story in 1950s, literary love stories by Qiong Yao are characterized by depoliticization and decolonization. The unique style of *Romance in the rain* can be interpreted as a kind of silent revolt with no doubt.

Romance in the Rain explores people's state of minds. The novel is special for resisting rational repression, and emphasizes intuition and subconsciousness. It showed importance of consciousness in the complex and diverse interpersonal relationships changes in court Lu. At same time, it provides a new thought for later writers of popular love story beside the thought of pure love.

4. Conclusion

To some sociologists, psychology and literature researchers, Qiong Yao's works, especially *Romance in the Rain*, have a greater researching value considering female marriage psychology than its literature value [10]. But some limitations can be found out in her works. She puts too much subjective feelings and self-experience into her works, and her identification with women's reliance on men and some patriarchal idea can be perceived. The value is opposite to modern women's faith in freedom and independence.

Yet *Romance in the Rain* is not meaningless or worthless. It has its symbolic meaning, reflecting the unstable social and political situation of Taiwan in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the awakening of female consciousness. As the Queen of Taiwan love story, Qiong Yao followed aesthetic rules that fit for popular love story, and her unique position and value in literature history should be recognized.

At present, the shortcomings of the research are: the theoretical support is not enough, and there are still many people in the literary criticism circle who have the literary status of Qiong Yao's novels.

Qiong Yao's novels have a pattern tendency in plot structure, characters, theme, language and other aspects, forming a unique Qiong Yao model. In the history of modern and contemporary Chinese romance literature, Qiong Yao is a writer who inherits the past and ushers in the future. With the development of time, the literary status of Qiong Yao's novels should have a unique literary value and status.

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