

## On Mo Yan's War Ideas

--- Based on *Red Sorghum*, *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*

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### Abstract

Mo Yan has expressed his simple war ideas through his war fictions. He writes that the bandit resists against Japan for the purpose of rewriting the standard of the hero of resisting against Japan. He praises mother and expresses his own anti-war position by mother's boring sufferings. Mo Yan's war fictions have shown the war phenomenon from many different aspects, and has expanded the aesthetic space of the war greatly.

**Keywords:** Mo Yan, War, Bandit, Mother

The war is an avoidless subject for Chinese contemporary writers because of the specific social and historical reasons. They even haven't experienced the ruthlessness of war, but also grow up in the reading war works. Hesternal wars have been into the creative background. Besides history books, we also can understand the history of wars from the parents' narration, which provides a new interpretation for the writers. "They found the possibility of creative thought to history in the evolvement of history. That is, on the basis of comprehension and imagination of themselves, they carry out creative expression to that history with a strong body colour and artistic personality." (Ruo Qianglie, 1987, p.143) Mo Yan is a successful example, and a series of his war fictions, such as his *Red Sorghum* and *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* etc, have caused great repercussions in the literary world. Through his fictions, Mo Yan expressed his understanding of the war.

### 1. Bandits resist the Japanese invaders: to rewrite the standard of anti-Japanese hero-take *Red Sorghum* as an example

China has a long history of culture, and also has a long history of bandits. Bandits are the result of freakish social system. They often live in a social instability, war continues, the environmental conditions of people. China is an agricultural country and land is the lifeline of old farmers. Due to social instability, severe flood, drought or other reasons, farmers were forced to leave the land and lost natural means of subsistence. In them, negative people may become beggars, but those activists might become bandits. During the period of Republic of China, the society was ruled in the darkness, natural disasters occurred frequently, and especially the Japanese aggressors invaded, which brought about a lot of displaced people. In such a case, bandits increased. Because of their special status, the description of them can help us understand a regional or even a national real existence and lifestyles. In Chinese Modern Literature, we can find many bandit images, such as Shen Congwen's Western Hunan bandits, DuanMuHongliang's northeast robbers, Li Jieren's gangsters of Sichuan province and Ai Wu's southwest mounted brigand etc. They all have their own distinct features. The social reality that heavy metal came from abroad and the contest for the governance issued from interior was a change to inspect their personality. In this case, many of them have the baptism of spirit and sublimated their personality. The bandits image in modern work, As Pang Zengyu said on bandit images written by the northeast writers: "They discarded the evil factors of bandit's traditional character and enlarge the goodness, so as to realize the poetic sublimation as fleeing writers utilitarian purpose and broader social cultural expectations." (Pang Zengyu, 1995, p.129)

Bandits are a group of complex social images, and are the collection of contradictions. On one hand, as the negative images of violence they commit all sorts of wickedness. On the other hand, the identity from the folk bottom make them suppress the evil and pacify the good. The bandits written by modern writers are always round character. But, the bandit images have the defects of simplification and stereotype since the founding of the People's Republic. Bandits as negative images in many works, such as Linhaixueyuan and Wulongshanjiaofeiji, have been depicted vividly. They raped, lost the human nature and were heinous. They totally become demon images. Of course, in order to establish the initial heroism, optimism and improve people's awareness, the literature of newly-built republic regime was not wrong to do so, but it has undoubtedly

led to a result that the historical truth is covered on the depicting bandits images.

So long war, especially eight years of painstaking Anti-Japanese War, was not only an inspection of civil patience and perseverance, but also the comprehensive test of character. Finally we win. At the same time, it also produced a lot of anti-Japanese hero. The reason of winning the war is various. Chinese Communist persisted in resistance in enemy's rear area. Chinese Nationalist party checked the Japanese in open battle. Red Army supported us in Far East. Through the official texts of literature and history, we know a number of the Anti-Japanese War heroes. They are strong and unyielding, and they are Chinese real backbone. But among them, we should not ignore the bandits. Bandits have their own independent personality, and undertake war of resistance, especially the war against Japan. They also reflect the notion of errantry. As Lu xun's evaluation on them: "China is indeed in the fashion of reading Sanguozhiyanyi and shuihuzhuan because the society need errantry." (LuXun, 1981, p.79) On account of national feelings or other reasons in the Anti-Japanese War, many bandits had had positive struggle to foreign enemy. MoYan's Red Sorghum is subject to this it in the new period.

Yu Zhan-ao is the most successful image depicted in Red Sorghum, but he is the most controversial image because of its special status - bandits. Yu Zhan-ao is not bathos, dare to love and hate, abhors evil as a deadly foe, and lives very magnificently. Yu Zhan-ao's successfully depicted in the novel not only lies in his so interesting love with DaiFenglian, but also put down to his struggle with Japanese invaders. Mr. Wu Si once said in his Defining Law: "What is the robbers, bandits, warlords and all kinds of violent group based on? By defining. Defining is the reward of violence.....Defining value is decided by the value of each struggle target." (WuSi, 2003, p.229) Bandits understand the value of defining best of all. In Gong GaoLiang, when Yu Zhan-ao knew that they were deceived by Leng detachment of Nationalist Party, he still launched attacks on the Japanese forces with weak power, until to end the last soldier. In the national calamity, the chivalrous spirit makes Yu Zhan-ao's bandits take their responsibilities to save the people and safeguard national sovereignty. In the national war his spirit is emancipated, which is the ruler of the theme of "degeneration of race" in Mo Yan's works.

Long-term Confucian culture makes our national character become too elegant, even the cowardly. Since the May 4th Movement, many writers represented with Zhou Zhuoren have discovered hominine strength of the Wild. In the 1980s, Mo Yan has inherited the tradition again. Bandits identity of Yu Zhan-ao coincided the need that era called out hero. They choose the rebellion, burst the most primitive resistance, and embodies our national tenacious vitality of the inner.

But because of bandit's special identity in history for a long time, can regard them as the hero? Mo Yan expresses his own understanding of a hero of anti-Japanese war through his Red Sorghum. It is a war of the whole nation to resist against Japan, nearly of different levels and every group makes a contribution to it. Since it is the standard to confirm patriotism, then among the writing of literature, we should not have man-made restriction, and should restore historical truth. That is to say bandits such as Yu ZhanAo should belong to the hero of resisting against Japan too. British scholar Phil Billingsley has had penetrating explanation to it: "No matter whether ordinary common people get the advantage, 'social bandit activity' is often just interpreted as violence of attacking the oppressor. So long as any bandit plays the function at half of time, he should be qualified to get deserved support and protection of 'social bandit'. Only those always aim the weapon at the person without protective capacities, can be thought forever as the birds of a feather with the oppressor. In such an environment, the person perfect in every way does not exist, and even a bandit only fights once for the people, can join hero temporarily at least." (Phil Billingsley, 1982, p.164)

Literature has the function of Activating history through the strength of narration. That the bandit resists against Japan is only a trace that real history is covered by the textbook. We believe the exploration of this kind of resource will make more persons seek the truth of history. The image of Yu Zhan-ao is successfully described. We are convinced that he will exert a positive influence on Chinese literature.

## **2. Object to the war because mother is the person who bears end of the war disaster—take Big Breasts and Wide Hips as an example**

"The war, let the woman go away." It is a word that people often cite while mentioning the war. Because women's beauty and the cruelty of war is a kind of fundamental conflict. However, literary output of all kinds of wars can't do without women again. No matter participate in the war initiatively or passively, women seem always unable to avoid receiving its influence. Especially a kind of woman's image is more unable to escape it. It is the mother. Big Breasts and Wide Hips of Mo Yan regards mother as breakthrough point to narrate war.

The publication of Big Breasts and Wide Hips has caused very great censure. Important reason of censure lies in that that sentence "dedicate to mother soul in heaven" appearing in works title page has produced the enormous conflict with the depicting mother image in the novel. First of all, gaudy title of custom seem to be disrespectful

to mother. Moreover, ShangGuanLushi does not accord with the image of mother in the ideas of people. Fundamentally, a lot of readers can not accept Mo Yan's villainous narration posture on mother. In fact, this image is moulded to mother, Mo Yan's choice is always condemned on the image depicting on mother, such as Nuan in *White dog and swing shelf*, Qi Wendong's mother in *Happiness* and ShangGuanLushi in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*. Writer Yu Hua has expressed the understanding of Mo Yan: "Mother's image became the public result gradually in making up the works". "Singing mother became common hopes of people and the best moment that people explain his own intuitive knowledge at the same time." (Yu Hua, 2004, p.150) Mother as "public result" can only be perfect in the ideas of people, and can't permit a bit profanity. We are convinced that though Mo Yan has used the handwriting style of uglifying mother, but full of love and respect in the process of depicting mother's image.

*Big Breasts and Wide Hips* nearly contains all great calamitous incident that took place in China in the 20th century, including Germany occupying eastern Shandong, Anti-Japanese War, war of liberation, the Cultural Revolution etc. There are too many war sufferings in the works. And all these relates to ShangGuanlushi. All political forces, including German invader, Japanese invader, black donkey air gun team, anti-Japanese and explosion group, crossed the wilful performance at the land of mother, and they massacred and disputed ceaselessly. Mother beared unthinkable heaviness that war left to her quietly with the weak both shoulders. She has surmounted the maximum of life energy like a hero in the battle field. She assumed the household of ShangGuan in addition to paying heavy cost for this: hunger, drift, lose beloved daughter bitterly, even oneself raped and wrecking. Facing all these, ShanGuanLushi had no any complaint. She raised her own children, looked after the injured children, bring up the children's children in troubled times. "In this several decades, the persons of the ShangGuan's, is like leek which dies and sends once of once. Someone dies as someone lives. It is easy to die, but it is difficult to live. It is alive to struggle if not fearing death. "In the dull and philosophical words, we can see a dogged mother of vitality of going through all kinds of hardships and difficulties.

The times of the chaos caused by war made too many difficulties and contradictions for mother. Because of individual character and special reason of the daughters, she needed accept the son-in-law who was a bandit, the son-in-law being from Nationalist Party, and the son-in-law who believed in communism. Though having to face the frequent incompatible conflicts between the sons-in-law, she has never produced the hostile thought of different castes and parties. She just considers everything in terms of ethics kindred. When Lu Liren sent SiMa Ku under escort and passed river to the military subarea, she asked him to let her see SiMa Ku, Babbitt off in the capacity of mother-in-law, pray in their safe over river. She can't comment which is right or wrong, and who is good of bad. She just sighed: "Her brother-in-law, you toss about over like this, and what is the stature at time?" "In mother's heart, there is not the difference of enemy and we, party groupings, but only kindred. ShanGuanlaide and ShaYueling surrendered to Japanese, ShanGuanLushi does not think about national position, but looked after their daughter ShaZaohua meticulously. Give her the daughter to raise, When explosion group withdrew, ShanGuanpandi give her LuShengli to raise. Although LuLiren was very strict to her once, ShanGuanLushi still accepted her nephew. ShanGuanLushi is only a mother, an actual woman in time of war. She has her s own love and hatred, but when facing the unworthy children in the war, she has chosen to accept.

In *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* Mo Yan has written a large number of wars, but we can not see his value judgement on the war. What is a just war, and what is an unjust war? Through the novel text, we can not experience out, and only experience mother's suffering. Various personage heartily performs at historical stage of a foul wind and a rain of blood, but all these evil consequence are undertaken by mother finally. All wars, no matter justice or evil, it is the contention of the life to be unavoidable finally. In the life-and-death contends, as to mother and her children, the wars actually have no victor. The injured is mother's children, and the dead is mother's child in the war. The last man that received war injury is still mother finally. War, the blood thirsty machine, bring to mother innumerable health and spirit injure. Through a mother image of ShangGuanLushi, Mo Yan has revealed his own anti-war position. As to the war, while analyzing a soldier in interview Mo Yan has said so: "Why does he become cruel? I think that is caused by particularity of the war. First, war encourages brutish nature of people, arouses desire that people kill, and eliminates all mercy and pity of people. Second, war is infective too." "People and people were originally very on intimate terms, but the war destroyed all these." (Mo Yan 2005, p.35) The simple words have revealed Mo Yan's pure-hearted concern of the life and loving heart to mother. Standing on the higher aesthetic view point, he put forward deep query to war, and thus embodies more humanizing aesthetic comprehension and solicitude.

Taine once said: "The artist becomes the artist, because he is used to distinguishing basic personality of the things and characteristic. Others only see some, but he sees all, and has also caught its spirit." (Taine, 1997, p.36) In Chinese contemporary war literature, this kind of spirit should be reproduced for reducing to history and think

with profound human nature in the war. Though Mo Yan has not gone through the war, but he sees all, and gets hold of its spirit even more.

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