

The Global Circular Diaspora in Mo Yan's *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out**

WANG Gang

Shanghai University of Engineering Science, Shanghai, China

The 2012 Nobel Prize winner in Literature, Chinese writer Mo Yan, describes the 50 years history of Chinese countryside from 1950 to 2000 in his masterpiece *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*. By the six artistic images of the innocent killing landlord's reincarnation as a donkey, an ox, a pig, a dog, a monkey, and a big head baby boy, it focuses on the topic of the land. It explains that all the relationships between the peasants and the land, and shows the changes in the life of Chinese peasants and their tenacious, optimistic and tough spirit since the foundation of the New China. By analyzing the unique plot of the six great divisions in the wheel of karma and the hero's mental journey, it can be found that the theme of the novel is to reveal a global circular diaspora with the moon, rather than the sun as the center of the circle, which is quite different from the real world.

Keywords: *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, circular diaspora, the moon

Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out is one of Mo Yan's masterpieces, which narrates that a strangled landlord has experienced six reincarnations. Each time he reincarnates into a different animal, he has not left his family and left the land. However, people on this special land are much closer to the moon than to the sun. And this world of prophecy and underworld is different from the real sun-lit world, which is centered on the moon, but the people on this land are better than the sun and the moon. Through the artistic images of the circle of life and death, the novel makes the story extremely weird, distorted, and absurd, but it is in absolute conformity with the philosophy in the story. This is an epoch-making epic work that transcends time and space and its theme has become global circular diaspora with the moon as its center, which is deeply enjoyed by readers all over the world.

Diaspora, Circular Diaspora, and Global Circular Diaspora

One thing should be made clear that both the concepts "Circular Diaspora" and "Global Circular Diaspora" are put forward by a Chinese scholar Prof. Wang Gang for the first time, before we analyze the origin and development of diaspora, circular diaspora, and global circular diaspora.

In general, the word diaspora was originally derogatory in English, specifically referring to the Jewish immigration and diaspora, and later it was gradually used to refer to all immigrant groups. Diasporas lost their

* This is a phased outcome of the author's National Social Sciences Fund Project, "Study on the Global Circular Diasporic Characteristics of the Nobel Prize Winners of the 21st Century" (18BWW070) and also a phased outcome of the University's Talent Introduction Research Start-Up Project "Study on the Classic Works of Nobel Prize Winners in the Dimension of Community of Common Destiny for all Mankind" (SUES's Start-Up 2018-71).

WANG Gang, Ph.D., Professor, dean of the School of Foreign Languages, Shanghai University of Engineering Science, Shanghai, China.

base of existence, and became homeless spiritual prodigal sons. According to Rushdie,

Traditionally, a full-fledged immigrant has to suffer a triple division: he loses his place, and enters a strange language, finding himself in a crowd that differ from himself in social behavior and criterion different from his own and that even hurts himself. (Rushdie, 1998, p. 286)

Therefore, diasporas feel lost in the community, resulting in self-identity crisis: Who am I? Where am I from? Where will I go? Diasporas without a sense of belonging are like a kite with a broken line in a state of weightlessness, difficult to drift to the ground.

In the author's opinion, first of all, literary diaspora is a double reaction between the individual and the collective, from reality and illusion, and from one place to another. The place here not only can refer to multiple countries, but also can refer to different regions of a country and inevitably cause changes in time and space. The diaspora must have the following four elements: forgetting the time of the occurrence, losing the exclusive space, drifting to the culturally different people, and encountering the difficulties of language. Therefore, the diasporas began to pursue from the following four aspects: the memories of the past and exploration of the future, the journey of root-seeking, the recovery of self-identity, and adaptation to the language and culture of other countries. However, just like "drawing knife to cut off water and flow more", the diasporas lose the sense of belonging, like a broken kite, and they are in a state of weightlessness that is difficult to land without roots.

Secondly, however hard the figures in the book struggle, they cannot escape from their invisible circle. As far as the causes are concerned, sometimes it is out of helplessness, and sometimes it is out of their own will. As far as the routes are concerned, sometimes they go deep into the earth, and sometimes they float without roots. Every time there is a divergence, there is a tumultuous and painful change between the old and the new. This literary divergence route is both linear and circular, the later being the main one, and each diaspora has his/her own diasporic center, which the author calls a circular diaspora.

Thirdly, with today's increasingly development of science and technology, the wave of globalization is surging, and the significance of the traditional home country and homeland is also undergoing subversive changes, geographically and psychologically. In a sense, the earth has become a "global village", and everyone on the earth is diasporic. The constant home we thought is no longer there, and everything has become a phantom. Going home becomes an illusion that we cannot achieve. For everyone in the world, their home is in the imagination, and everyone, regardless of his/her nationality, ethnicity, gender, age, occupation, love, psychology, memory, and etc., is on the way home. Such a circular diaspora has transcended the era, the region, language, and culture. To some extent, it even covers life and death. In this case, the circular diaspora becomes a global circular diaspora.

Global circular diaspora is mainly reflected through the following literary research methods that best reflect human global problems: images, time and space relationships, reality and illusion, stream of consciousness, Limbo state, polyphony principle, iceberg principle, music and literature relationship, and so on.

Mo Yan's *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* is a typical work of diaspora. By making use of the six artistic images and unique plots of the innocent killing landlord's reincarnation as a donkey, an ox, a pig, a dog, a monkey, and a big head baby boy, as well as the hero's mental journey, the writer creates the theme of the novel, which is a global circular diaspora with the moon as the center of the circle.

The Global Circular Diaspora With the Moon as the Center

To most of us, we live in a sun-centered world. From a biological point of view, sunlight, air, and water are the three essential elements of life. Judging from the characteristics of rural life, we can decide that, for thousands of years, human beings rely on the sun, working from dawn to dusk. Nevertheless, as to the novel *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, she has a sun-centered world belonging to few people, and a moon-centered world belonging to most people in the novel, especially to the heroes at the same time. For these people, the moon is the whole part of their lives, and the whole thing of their faith, which is the only essential element of their lives. These people seem to be quite different from the mainstream of the people, who live in their own world tenaciously and freely.

It is astonishing that we have found that there are all together 128 places where the moon is mentioned in *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*. It is such a large number that none would deny the moon plays a very critical role in the novel. There are mainly four aspects to be discussed in the following context, the sun-centered world and the moon-centered world, all things in the moon-centered world, supernatural power, and the integration of the reality and illusion, which all together form global circular diaspora with the moon as the center.

The Sun-Centered World and the Moon-Centered World

For most people in the secular world, whether their life attitudes or life trajectories are roughly alike or not, they are all walking the similar way and living in the sun-centered world. On a sharp contrast, there are still a very small number of people adhering to their own beliefs and choices, who live in the moon-centered world, which occupies the lion's share in the novel. Just as the main character Lan Lian in *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* said, "I remember what he said when I was a cow: Cow, the sun is theirs, the moon is ours" (Mo, 2012, p. 281). But above all, the world of *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* focuses on the moon-centered world,

On a bright night in the moonlight, your father would take a shovel out of the yard. It has been his habit to work in the moonlight for many years, which is known to the people not only from Ximentun Village, but also from the northeast of Gaomi City. (Mo, 2012, p. 503)

Next, when the novel expresses that the majority of people are doing things in the same way, it is also saying, "even if I don't let Lan Jiefang go crazy, I would let him have a myriad of thoughts, a whirlpool of emotions, and thoughts going through the world in a minute... Is that even my original thought?" (Mo, 2012, p. 299)

In addition, the paths that different people take would interweave and meet very often, which means that the sun-centered and the moon-centered world would also have an intersection, such as, "that evening the moon could not wait to rise when the sun was not downhill" (Mo, 2012, p. 252). Furthermore, the hero goes on to mention that "I am anxious to tell people the beautiful sky where the sun and the moon shine at the same time. But the pig farm was confused by Lan Jiefang who becomes suddenly mad" (Mo, 2012, p. 254).

It can be said that the heroes and main characters in the six great divisions in the wheel of karma live in moon-centered world. The world is sometimes connected with reality, sometimes detached.

All Things in the Moon-Centered World

There is no doubt that in the sun-centered world, everyone wears a beautiful coat, so that people can only

see their appearance but not their real heart. While in the moon-centered world, the true side of the world is completely displayed. Everyone shows his true being and presents his inner self, so that readers could hear their heart beat and have dialogue with their souls. We can see it very clearly from the following two aspects.

Firstly, people who are pious and respectful of the moon, express that, "I found that I catch the moon, not just myself with the flowers. Furthermore, there are others who also catch up with the moon. And in this river, many of the aquarium are catching up with the moon, too" (Mo, 2012, p. 316).

Secondly, people who reveal the essence below the moon, say that "The moonlight shone on Hu Bin's face, so it seems to be a thief's shining face and a snake" (Mo, 2012, p. 178). What's more, people who see the moon as an enemy, say that "there is a half-crazy militiaman shooting against the moon. The moon shakes without a scratch. And then, the moon emits softer light, which conveys ancient information" (Mo, 2012, p. 271).

Supernatural Power

According to the encyclopedia, the so-called supernatural power which is different from the power of ordinary people, is not restricted with the control of nature, and can produce extremely special energy and power. It is said that, in nature, we are unable to see the phenomenon which usually means to confirm things, beyond the limits of modern scientific knowledge, which is considered impossible to produce or fail to explain it. Supernatural power is also often mentioned, considering the unpredictable and irregular power outside the scope of human rational thinking, "It would arouse people's fear, and make people feel pitiful for the protagonists" (Chen, 2004, pp. 204-205).

Supernatural power can also provide people with incredible beliefs and energy.

First of all, the moon blesses for these people who are upright and devout for it.

The moon fell from the sky that night, and the moon came out of the river this evening. The moon was big, fat and plump, and just appeared bloodstained when the moon emerged out of the water. As if the moon came from the vaginal delivery of a naked universe of, it was crying and running, making the river change color. The moon was sweet and sad, which was for your wedding. (Mo, 2012, p. 316)

In this way, the moon overlooks the world, no matter how vigorous human beings are, and no matter what kind of great achievements they have made.

More importantly, the relationship between the moon and the people in the novel is the same as what an English song "Right Here Waiting" says. While People went to the land, the moon hung low and waited for them. While people finally reached the gold land, the moon changed its color, too. What is more important is that, the color change of the moon accompanies with people's mood: At the beginning, it turned out eggplant-like light purple, and slowly turned blue. The following is the best description of this combination, "at this moment, around them, the moonlight and blue water and sky are mixed up together. However, we are the little creatures of the bottom of the sea" (Mo, 2012, p. 508). In this way, not only the things, but also the people are mixed with the moon, which is one of the typical features of global circular diaspora.

The Integration of Reality and Illusion

In the moon-centered world, the boundaries of reality and illusion are blurred and fused, and to some extent, reality becomes illusion and illusion becomes reality, too. The integration of reality and illusion is achieved through a unique relationship between time and space, which is also easily found in the novel. Wang Gang explains the relationship of reality and illusion in the following way,

illusion and fantasy is very close to reality, and illusion transcends the past, the present and the future ... that is, the intense emotions in the present mind remind the writer of what he has done in the past, which evokes the illusion of the future, and the constant illusion has prompted the writer to write it in his works. (Wang, 2011, p. 33)

Firstly, in the novel *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, to those who are in deep love with the moon, they believe that the moon has been merging with their emotions, "I saw tears in his eyes flashing, and he took bamboo over his shoulders, making the hat lift to his back. He looked at the moon, while the moon was understandingly looking at him, sadly" (Mo, 2012, p. 284).

Secondly, no matter when it is in the past or at present, human beings and animals in the six great divisions in the wheel of karma are merged into one,

at this moment, the moon was covered by a hazy cloud, and the past events, regardless of all sorts of joys and sorrows in my mind, mingled with the present. I am awake as a pig, but as a person, I am confused. (Mo, 2012, p. 345)

In addition, the moon-centered world not only exists at present, but also existed in the past. Not only has China owned the world, but the United States and the other countries own it, too. Moreover, it is difficult for us to distinguish reality and illusion between each other, which is a typical feature of diaspora and global circular diaspora, which transcends the boundaries of time and space. One of the most typical examples of this is as follows, "it is clear that the moon is coming to have a date with me, which is the soul of this planet" (Mo, 2012, p. 272).

Conclusion

Mo Yan has been making use of excellent writing skills to portray us a world different from the sun-centered one, that is, he regards the moon as the center of the world in the novel *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*. In this essay, from the four aspects—the sun-centered world and the moon-centered world, all things in the moon-centered world, supernatural power, and the integration of the reality and illusion, we can see that the essence of this moon-centered world is the world of diaspora and global circular diaspora.

Throughout the ages, both the sun and the moon are eternal literary themes in China and abroad, with the sun occupying more and more on the theme of the sun. In most cases, the moon-themed works mainly describe the beauty of the night, softness, romance, and sometimes they are associated with weirdness, drift, struggle, and so on. In this work, Mo Yan not only has achieved the above, but also puts the moon in the major historical changes of China for 50 years, involving people at all levels, crossing time and space, to make them react in illusion like that in real life, which are the typical characteristics of global circular diaspora.

References

- Chen, Y. X. (2004). Supernatural force: Phantom crisis in western tragedy. *Journal of Longyan Teachers College*, 22(5), 204-205.
- Freud, S. (1983). *Modern western literary theory*. Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Publishing House.
- Mo, Y. (2012). *Life and death are wearing me out*. Beijing: Writers Publishing House.
- Rushdie, S. (1998). *Günter grass*. (C. R. Huang, Trans.). Beijing: World Literature, No. 2.
- Sri, P. S. (1985). *T. S. Eliot: Vedanta and Buddhism*. Vancouver: Vancouver University Press.
- Wang, G. (2011). *Circular diaspora*. Beijing: Economic Science Press.

Mo Yan figures are plastic and colorful. The plot is often brutally, full of violence; Nevertheless, a sense of humor resonates - sometimes light and sparkling, sometimes pitch black and sarcastic, all the way to hard cynicism. Brutality, famine, absurd violence against animals, lynching and cruel torture scenes alternate with lyrical passages. Rides the fierce Lord Yama(God of death) to his somber destination, robustly plopped on the back of a water buffalo, waiting to pick the departed soul from the face of the earth. In the quest between Heaven and Hell, the soul lingers in the probability of its verdict. The shimmering blue skin contrasting the black hide of the animal becomes a petrifying vision. "Pray, pray from the heart, so the soul finds a place in heaven." Keywords: Cognitive Linguistics, Conceptual Integration Theory, Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out, Mo Yan. 1. Introduction. 1.1 Statement of the Problem. It is a modern school of linguistic thought that emerged originally in seventies and developed in eighties out of discontent with formal approaches to language. The objective of cognitive linguistics is to see how individuals think, particularly through the study of language. Conceptual Integration Theory (CIT), often called "blending," is a further development of this line of research. So the man led me out cautiously, ready for anything, whereas Lan Lian was escorted out of the compound and the village as if he were an army deserter, past the onetime district offices and all the way over to the People's Commune, which, as it turned out, was where the red-nosed blacksmith and his apprentice had fitted me with my. This coarse diet brought home the hardships of living the life of a donkey. A longing for the fragrant feed I'd gotten used to led me back to the life of a common domestic animal, and I began the trek back to my village, drawing close to human habitation. At noontime that day, I reached the outskirts of Tao Family Village, where I saw a horse carriage at rest beneath a towering ginkgo tree. The heavy aroma of bean cakes mixed with rice straw filled my nostrils.