

THE IMAGES OF ANIMALS IN PRAIRIE LITERATURE---TAKING EXAMPLES OF THE WORKS OF CHINGIZ AYTMATOV AND ZHANG CHENGZHI

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named after Mirzo Ulugbek.

Abstract: As an literary trend originated from the nomadic cultures, the images of animals inevitably play an important part in Prairie Literature. In the works of Prairie Literature, the animals are not seen as the appendants of human, instead, they are seen as equals as human beings, with their own distinct characteristics and wisdom, and sometimes nobler spirits compared with human beings. The images of animals in the Prairie Literature reflects the attitudes towards animals and nature of the nomadic culture and break the “human-nature” duality. In the works of Chingiz Aytmatov and Zhang Chengzhi, animals often serve as the alter egos of the main characters, which, is another common feature of the Prairie Literature.

Keywords: animals, Prairie Literature, Chingiz Aytmatov, Zhang Chengzhi

Introduction

Animals constitutes an important part of Prairie Literature and the portrayal of the images of animals by authors of Prairie Literature is unique and have profound philosophical connotations. Different from people from the sedentary cultures, the nomads rely heavily on animals in their daily life, and have a much deeper bond with the animals they raise. For the nomads, animals are wealth, prosperity, their lesser brothers, their friends and also their families. And also different from the modern perception of animals, which regards them as tools and the uncivilized, the nomads treat the animals with great equality and do not see the animals as the “other”. Consequently, the animals often play an essential role in the nomadic literature, in which the image of animals are often personified and most of them have their own names as human beings.

As two traditional nomadic groups, the Kyrgyzs and Mongols share a literary tradition that highlights the importance of animals by juxtaposing man and animals, especially the totemic ones like the horse, wolf and deer. For example, in the great Kyrgyz epic *Manas*, the names of Manas and his lieutenants, are always mentioned together with those of their horses, while there are countless Mongolian ballads that expressing human’s feelings through depicting that of a horse; in Mongolian mythology, the Mongols are the children of a gray wolf and a white deer, while Kyrgyzs also have the legend of the red dog and the forty maids. This literary tradition have a profound influence on the contemporary writers of the Prairie Literature.

As two authors with nomadic cultural backgrounds, Chingiz Aytmatov and Zhang Chengzhi also, inevitably, involve the images of animals in most of their works, for example, the Horned-Deer Mother in *The White Ship*, the horse in *Farewell, Gul’sary!*, the camel in *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years*, the snow leopard in *When the Mountains Fell Down*, the wolfs in *The Place of the Skull*, and the horses in *The Black Horse* and *The Golden Pasture*. The animals in their works are not seen as the appendants of human beings, rather, they either represent the characters alter egos, or the character’s ideal self, and also as Joseph. P. Mozur once said, they often serve as the “moral yardstick” by which the characters humanity is measured²¹³.

²¹³ Mozur, Joseph. *Parables from the Past*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. 1995.- P.22-23.

Methods

The main methods for the study were selection and systematization of the material, analysis, synthesis, analogy, comparison, generalization, description, and the specific literary critical methods like the method of synchronous diachronic analysis, and the literary analytical methods like contextual approaches, archetypal criticism, psychoanalytic literary criticism and context-oriented approaches.

Results

By carefully studying the animal images in the novels of Chingiz Aytmatov and Zhang Chengzhi, the author found that the images of animals could function as the following role, i.e. the characters alter egos, characters' ideal self and moral yardstick.

Characters' Alter Egos

In the works of Chingiz Aytmatov, the image of animals often serve as the main character's alter ego, complementing the other side of their personality which is not been fully depicted by the author. In *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years*, the camel Karanar can be seen as the other side of the protagonist Yedigei. Normally, Karanar is a great camel who is strong, healthy, lively and loyal. When Yedigei was torn by his feeling toward another woman, Zariipa, Karanar was rebellious and grumpy. It is by no means an coincidence that Yedigei and Karanar were "rebellious" at the same time. By depicting the rebellious behaviors of the camel, the author is in fact allude to the inner world of Yedigei at that time.

In another novel of Chingiz Aytmatov, *When the Mountains Fell Down*, the snow leopard Jaa-Bars was lonely, isolated by his community and abandoned by his lover, while the protagonist, Samanchin shares the same fate. And the ending of the novel, in which the protagonist and the snow leopard died together, indicates in a most direct way that actually the human and the animal are one, this also shows the author's equal attitude towards man and animals.

Characters' Ideal Self

In Prairie Literature, the image of animals, especially the horses, could also represents the character's ideal self. Like Georgii Gachev once wrote: "It is the mediator between the natural world order and the artificial one, created by man. And since man is also a being of the middle kingdom, that is a creation of nature and 'art', there is nothing closer and more intimate to him than the horse."²¹⁴ In two novels of Zhang Chengzhi, *The Golden Pasture* and *The Black Horse*, the author use large paragraphs to describe the motion, the expression and even the psychological activities of the horses in these two novels. By depicting *Odden Hulun*, a red champion horse, the author expresses his determination and resolution towards his ideals; and by describing the silver-white horse racing towards the horizon, the author shows his yearning for freedom. In these two novels, the horses are the author's ideal self, representing the innermost yearning and most fundamental characteristics of the protagonist and the author.

Moral Yardstick

The image of animals could also serve as an important moral yardstick. In *The White Ship*, the attitudes towards the deer reveals their different morality; in *Farewel, Gul'sary!*, the attitudes towards the horse could been seen as a key measurement of one's personality; in *The Place of the Skull*, by depicting two wolfs, Akbara and Tashchaynar, the author showed the innocence of the animals and the evilness of modern human beings by parallel plots with sharp contrasts.

²¹⁴ Georgii D. Gachev. "O natsional'nykh kartinakh mira," *Narody Afriki i Azii* 1 (1967): 85.

Discussion

The image of animals can be seen as an important feature of Prairie Literature. The authors often use animals as the characters alter egos, characters' ideal self and moral yardstick, which is also unique to Prairie Literature, which originated from a nomadic cultural background. The images of animals in the Prairie Literature reflects the attitudes towards animals and nature of the nomadic culture and break the "human-nature" duality, which could provide crucial philosophical insights into human-nature relationship for the world today.

References:

1. Mozur, Joseph. Parables from the Past. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. 1995.
2. Georgii D. Gachev. "O natsional'nykh kartinakh mira," *Narody Afriki i Azii* 1 (1967): 85.