

Using "Gaze Theory" to Explore the Plight of Women in Literary Rhetoric and Real Society in "Fang Siqi's First Love Paradise"

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Abstract. "Fang Siqi's First Love Paradise" is a novel by the late Taiwanese female writer Lin Yihan, the main content of the novel is that the junior high school girl Fang Siqi was sexually assaulted by cram school teacher Li Guohua for a long time, and finally had a nervous breakdown. "Fang Siqi's First Love Paradise" has attracted the attention not only Fang Siqi, who has been sexually assaulted but also a large number of female images under the gaze of male power ideology and male subjects, losing freedom and discourse, unconsciously being shaped into the appearance of male hope, the novel directly exposes the survival dilemma of women's reality in this regard. At the same time, Lin Yihan writes in the highly rhetorical language of literature, exposing the violence of male power in the world of rhetoric and skillfully outlining the plight of women in the world of literary rhetoric. Starting from the theory of "gaze", it focuses on analysing women's postures in both literature and reality and explores the manifestations and reasons for women's double dilemma.

Keywords: "Fang Siqi's First Love Paradise", Women's Literature, Gaze Theory, Dilemma.

1. Introduction

"Fang Siqi's First Love Paradise" is the only novel by Taiwanese female writer Lin Yihan before her death; this novel tells the story of Fang Siqi, a beautiful girl immersed in literature since childhood, who was seduced and raped by Li Guohua, a Chinese language teacher in a cram school, and was sexually assaulted for a long time and finally had a nervous breakdown. The novel is adapted from the writer's own experience, and the heroine Fang Siqi in the story and the writer Lin Yihan herself has a high degree of similarity, so the novel attracted widespread attention from society as soon as it was published. What has made the topic continue to increase, causing heated discussions in society, is that a few months after the publication of the novel, writer Lin Yihan ended her life by hanging herself. Later, the police launched an investigation and verification of Lin Yihan's sexual assault case, and finally ended in the conclusion of insufficient evidence, but the interview and the content of the novel text left by the writer made the recipient almost directly regard it as the author's autobiography.

However, it is worth noting that Lin Yihan emphasised that she wrote a story of a "girl in love with a rapist"[1]. "Love" as a sweet and warm word used in the context of women's violence is very contrary. It is the result of the rhetorical confusion of literary discourse, which leads to the dislocation of the girl Fang Siqi at the factual and psychological levels of the violation. Literary rhetoric, with its gorgeous and affectionate qualities, became a means to confuse the girl in the process of Li Guohua's aggression, helping him complete his criminal performance. In countless self-doubts, Fang Siqi lost her freedom and right to speak and was forced to face the gaze of the male subject that existed in the gorgeous rhetoric, and women struggled under the "gaze" of the literary discourse of the male standard.

At the same time, the main women in the novel, in addition to Fang Siqi, who was sexually assaulted, as well as Xu Yiwen, who was subjected to domestic violence, Bing Gan, that was rejected by her boyfriend after being violated, and Guo Xiaoqi, who chose to be exposed but was ridiculed by society, did not get a trace of warmth from relatives, friends, neighbours, and strangers in the darkest time of their lives. As the critic Yiwen Tsai puts it in the book's preface: "Any sexual violence is done by the whole society [1]." These women are alienated by the power system, such as the gender difference between men and women in reality, and in the "gaze" of the entire patriarchal society and

culture, the viewers suppress the possibility of expression, which fully exposes the survival dilemma of women's real society.

Lin Yihan's writing is both an attempt to expose the "gaze" of patriarchal society and an effort to resist the "gaze" of power, and at the same time, she inevitably falls into the violence of being "stared" by readers [2-4].

2. The Dilemma of Women in Literature and Rhetoric

Lin Yihan once said that she tells the story of a young girl who "falls in love" with a rapist, and the novel uses this seemingly absurd emotional pattern to dig into the hidden truth.

Literary rhetoric is undoubtedly a very important part, and its role in this novel is very important, which is why "Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise" is different from similar themes in other books. Li Guohua chose Fang Siqu as the target of aggression for two reasons: first, Fang Siqu has a beautiful face like a lamb; Second, she has a high level of literary literacy. The text of the novel is full of fine rhetoric and metaphor, and this language is very aesthetic so people ignore the violent element in the beautiful wording. At the moment when Fang Siqu was raped by Li Guohua, this delicate metaphor erupted intensively, adding ambiguous colours to Li Guohua's desire and Fang Siqu's struggle: "Bamboo thighs, ice and snow ass, just to change and wash the plain little panties that are not meant to sexual temptation, and the little butterflies that stop just below the navel on the panties. All this is as white as paper, waiting for him to doodle [1]." The process of Li Guohua's rape was exposed to the written word through metaphors, and Fang Siqu became the object of staring at and lost her right to speak in her confusion about herself and became a body that passively accepted Li Guohua's sexual violence. Lin Yihan wrote in the text that Li Guohua used the rhetoric of words to cover up the rape: "Tell her that she is a pale hope of his chaotic middle age, first let her smash in words, the sea of words that boys do not understand let her feel grown up in words, and then let her soul deceive her body" [1]. Fang Siqu is entangled in the blurring of rhetorical discourse and has difficulty recognising reality; coupled with Li Guohua's authority as a teacher; Fang Siqu cannot leave this context anyway. Therefore, after Li Guohua succeeded in the first rape, he began to frequently use rhetoric to her: "This is the most extreme thing that two people who like each other can do, you can't be angry with me. The first time I saw you, I knew you were my destined little angel. But can you reproach my love? Can you blame yourself for your beauty. You are the best Teacher's Day gift in the world" [1]. "I'm with you as if joy, anger, and sorrow have no name [1]." Taking Li Guohua's words out separately, it is difficult to say that these words are not beautiful; for example, he compared Fang Siqu's appearance in the process of being violated to Lin Daiyu's "delicate and slight" in her debut, and he described himself as "talented but not reused in loving"[1]. Therefore, Li Guohua uses the unique context created by literary rhetoric, uses literary allusions and metaphors to supplement and solidify this value system full of cracks with words, and then induces Fang Siqu to enter the oppression of his discursive gaze obediently [5].

From Fang Siqu's point of view, how is this deformed "love" possible? Unlike Li Guohua, who uses the beauty of rhetoric to cover up the fact of rape, Fang Siqu believes in the identity of rhetorical expression and real objects. As a girl who was watered out of literature, almost all the love that Fang Siqu came into contact with came from the literary world. She believes that a person who understands the beauty of literature must be rhetorical and intrinsic value unified, so in the face of Li Guohua's use of literary rhetoric to cover up the fact of sexual violence and beautify her desires, Fang Siqu could not imagine that she was not facing real love, but a language scam. In Fang Siqu's aesthetic pursuit of love, there is only one way to recognise love: "sacrifice-style devotion"[1]. For Fang Siqu, on the one hand, the pure and immaculate love she has learned from literature, and on the other hand, Li Guohua's infringement in the name of love is supported by the entire 5,000-year-old literary context of China. It can be said that what makes Fang Siqu obsessed is not only Li Guohua's beautiful words but also the context of the entire Chinese classical literary system behind it, but she cannot bridge the actual pain caused by Li Guohua's sexual assault. "After thinking about it for a few days, I came up with the

only solution: I can't just like the teacher; I have to fall in love with him. You can do whatever your loved one wants to do to you, can't they? What a great thing the mind is! I was once upon a fake of mine. I have to love the teacher. Otherwise, I will be too miserable [1]." Therefore, Fang Siqu eventually self-alienated, forming a body consciousness under the gaze of power, constantly modifying and transforming her body, and showing the behavioural choice of trying to "fall in love" with the teacher [6, 7].

3. The Dilemma of Women in Real Society

Lin Yihan once repeatedly created the survival dilemma of women of different ages and social identities in the book and expressed the following view: "Any sexual violence is done by the whole society. Rape is not an 'action' that can be done, but a process, or the sum of a series of ongoing events that can be weakened before the action occurs and can be intervened after it has occurred" [1]. In "Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise", Fang Siqu is only one of the victims, and the tragic experiences of other women together constitute the context of women's plight in real society.

The first is the plight of girls who have been sexually assaulted, represented by Fang Siqu, Guo Xiaoqi, Bing Gan, and others. When Fang Siqu told her best friend Liu Yiting about her relationship with her teacher, Liu Yiting's reaction was: "You are so disgusting, you are so disgusting, stay away from me" [1]. Also, she regarded her views as a responsibility to society, so she told Fang Siqu that she should accept the condemnation of society. She did not see the essence of the matter, blindly looked at the problem from the perspective of the wrong tendency of public opinion, and she completely connected herself with the public, so she participated in the "Fang Siqu-style" rape, and she was also a part of it. When Fang Siqu plucked up the courage to tentatively confide in her parents: "I heard that a classmate at school is with the teacher. The reply was - Such a commotion at such a young age" [1]. After his friends, his parents were also absent forever in Siqu's story, so Fang Siqu chose to endure Li Guohua's sexual assault silently. Similar to Fang Siqu's experience is "Bing Gan", she is Li Guohua's first female student to assault; after Bing Gan tells her boyfriend what happened, the boyfriend decides to break up with Bing Gan within three cigarettes and declares: "Why am I with dirty Bing Gan" [1]. In such a division of power, the boyfriend can be said to be in the same camp as Li Guohua. However, not all victims choose to be silent, unlike Fang Siqu; when Guo Xiaoqi was violated, Guo Xiaoqi's parents first thought of not the physical and mental harm to their daughter, but questioned her: "Do you think you can marry after doing this kind of thing? Incest! You run to hurt other people's families; we don't have a daughter like you [1]!" Guo Xiaoqi also tried to post on the Internet to seek understanding and support, but instead attracted a lot of abuse and accusations: "So how much money did you take from him?" "Third-party to die [1]!" Guo Xiaoqi's complaint made the protest even more desperate and futile.

Then there is the sister Xu Yiwen next door who was subjected to domestic violence. Compared with Fang Siqu, Xu Yiwen can be said to have a more individual rational consciousness, but she is also suppressed by patriarchal morality and stared at by her mother-in-law like a commodity. Xu Yiwen was afraid of being ridiculed by public opinion and was ashamed to tell the truth, that she was subjected to domestic violence. Unlike Fang Siqu, although the two are also trapped by the shackles of social, ethical shame on women, Xu Yiwen is more vigilant against Li Guohua's scrutinizing gaze, Fang Siqu cannot distinguish the difference between literature and human nature in reality, and Xu Yiwen can look at reality to a certain extent out of literature. Xu Yiwen more clearly expressed the uneasiness of Li Guohua's male gaze as a woman, but Xu Yiwen could not remind Fang Siqu that men's evil deeds often seem to be hidden and worthy of tolerance under the blessing of patriarchal cultural concepts, and they cannot even give substantial warnings before the evil deeds are committed, which makes men more and more unscrupulous in the patriarchal cultural system in high positions, while women have to suppress themselves under the shackles of being scrutinized and controlled from time to time [8].

If the sexual taboo under the ethical norms of patriarchal society is an external necessity that forces Fang Siqu to "love" Li Guohua, then the shame generated by the gradual internalisation of this ethical norm provides an indispensable internal possibility for almost all women's behaviour choices. The ethical gaze is a predatory gaze that not only transfers contemplation to the flesh but is a contemplation of matter and spirit that can provide sublimation and purity to the mind. Women's subjectivity "is inevitably closely related to the structure of the gaze and the positioning of the eye of authority. Whenever and wherever she is, the panorama that limits her is always there, and her self-image is always for another person [2]." This gender gaze is to criticize the desire factor in vision on the one hand and to criticize the gaze of men on women on the other hand and shape the discourse power of women in a gender power relationship.

4. The Impact of the Dual Dilemma of Fiction and Non-Fiction

Lin Yihan participated in many TV talk shows after the publication of "Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise", but the audience's viewing did not bridge Lin Yihan's pain, and in the process, it also triggered a public opinion field like in the novel, and finally a few months after the novel was published, the Taiwanese female writer chose to commit suicide. Therefore, the discussion will end with a return to the text formation itself: the preface of the novel, "based on real people and real events," itself implies the possibility of forming violence, and how can literature starting from real people and real things and taking fiction as its essence generate real ethical violence [1]? How does the reader's reading style become an important constructor of another type of violence?

Understanding the contradiction between fiction and reality in "Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise" has a twofold dimension: whether to try to find the reality under these illusory depictions and analyze the text full of cryptic metaphors and detailed depictions of sexual violence or enjoy its literary beauty that cannot be illuminated by language - is an ethical choice in itself. As far as the first dimension is concerned, the public must try to find the truth behind the text surface and analyse and interpret it, just like treating "Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise" as Lin Yihan's blood and tears accusation after suffering sexual violence, which hides the possibility of violence based on non-fiction. Non-fiction writing that uses violence as the object is particularly susceptible to capitalization, transforming violent events into goods that reach audiences through discourse, thereby increasing visibility and public awareness. The unique way that writers use when looking for language materials that can be shown to people has also become the object of investigation of gaze, and writers use gaze methods to find materials that can enter the work and then integrate the things contained in the gaze into the work, and finally present works with the connotation of gaze theory. Therefore, Lin Yihan did not choose the "non-fiction" writing method but accused the truth through "fictional" novels, and constructed the erotic fantasy of the seducer with seductive words and gorgeous metaphors, which is an important process which Lin Yihan and Fang Siqu tried to resist the gaze. Lin Yihan, after completing the work, the work has its vitality, and this vitality is to gaze at the public; Lin Yihan's description of the social environment and the public in the book, in the process of communication to the public, this gaze resistance color will gradually be immersed more and more, the novel also reflects society, reflects reality, focuses on the plight of women's survival, and gaze at society is also produced in this sense [9].

However, from the second dimension, if people do not find the prototype of Fang Siqu's story in reality but only enjoy the beauty of literary language, is such literary research feasible? In the reading of aesthetic metaphors, various environmental descriptions, and multiple characters, readers will gradually find that Fang Siqu, who was injured by sexual violence and finally collapsed, Liu Yiting, a friend who suffered the same pain, and Yiwen, who has been suffering from domestic violence for a long time. Even if there are beautiful words to disguise, they are all a collection of Lin Yihan's fictional pain. In the process of reading, readers cannot help but guess and play with the identity and real experience of the protagonist, and the relationship between the reader and the text, the author, the real and the fictional world has long been reconstructed or transformed [10]. Both Fang Siqu and

the author Lin Yihan have returned to an inescapable gaze, and readers may also be involved in a kind of real-name violence with voyeuristic nature just because they are watching. This kind of gazing violence is born from the reader's second interpretation of the work itself because the reader broadens or narrows the world of the work in his horizon, so it is not just a simple reading but a new reading with gaze, identity politics, power meaning, and the subject's gaze on the object. Also, this seems to have caused neither Fang Siqu in work nor Lin Yihan, in reality, could not escape the fate of being stared at, thus becoming one of the origins of the tragedy.

5. Conclusion

Fang Siqu, Xu Yiwen, Bing Gan, Guo Xiaoqi, and even Liu Yiting and Lin Yihan depicted this group of female images with extremely fine brushwork in the book "Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise", revealing the tragic situation of women in literature and reality. Bing Gan is Fang Siqu, who has a boyfriend; Guo Xiaoqi is Fang Siqu, who has resisted, Xu Yiwen is Fang Siqu, who entered marriage; Liu Yiting is the surviving Fang Siqu. Public opinion likes to express many opinions on Lin Yihan's "reading", thinking that she is immersed in the world of literature and mistakes beautiful words for a beautiful soul. However, in "Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise", the discourse is supported by power, and then the rhetoric is no longer irrelevant, and power can turn the discourse into real violence. Moreover, the violence of the gaze, which is widespread in women, reveals the complicity of power and knowledge and continues the plight of women in a patriarchal society. In addition, writing against the male gaze also means the awakening and growth of women's autonomous consciousness, from individual experience to human awareness, and the author leaves "Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise" in the long river of women's literature with his superb brushwork and compassion.

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