

Benba in Literary Anthropological Perspective - The Boundary between Dream and Reality

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Abstract: *Benba* is modeled on the Mongolian heroic epic *Dzhangar*, rewritten on the basis of the original epic through the transformation of dream and reality, time and space, exploring the spiritual belonging and the meaning and value of life. Under the anthropological perspective, the legendary story of *Dzhangar* in the world of *Benba* is analyzed through archetypal criticism, fictionalization of literature, and games in the text to explore the pursuit and return of the spiritual home in the human unconscious. Liu Liangcheng reinterprets the exploration of the myth of the hero and the search for the significance of realistic values through the transformation of dream and reality.

Keywords: *Heroes, Dreams, Childhood*

1. Introduction

Benba has been called "an epic of innocence and a fairy tale of giants", and it shows its uniqueness compared with previous Maodun Literature Prize-winning works. The Mao Dun Literature Prize has always had its own traditions, purposes and aesthetic tendencies, expressing the needs of the times, advocating family and national sentiments, and deeply reflecting real life. The appearance of *Benba* "means that the aesthetic structure of the highest national literary award has stability and continuity, as well as extensibility and possibilities"[1], and its appearance has injected new vigor and vitality into the Mao Dun Literary Award. The uniqueness of *Benba* lies in the fact that he rewrites the original epic poem, giving it wings of imagination, fairy tale and poetry, transforming time and space, dream and reality into opposites, and providing a new language and literary imagination.

2. The birth of a hero in the steppes

Based on the Mongolian heroic epic "*Dzhangar*", "*Benba*" pulls the story of *Dzhangar Khan* leading twelve lions, thirty-two tiger generals and six thousand warriors to defend their homeland and fight in all directions into a brand new, dream-like scenario. *Dzhangar* and his warriors were born in the Mongolian people's pursuit of ideal life and outlook, full of strong heroism. He was endowed with divine characteristics in the legend and was a celebrity in the world. He is sung by generations of *Dzhangarchi* to this day. In Liu Liangcheng's *Bomba*, the heroes in the epic take on a different look and are given a deeper meaning. They are no longer the invulnerable divine warriors of the past. They are also endowed with weaknesses, and they search for their place of return in the time that has been stood still and in the border between reality and illusion.

The epic poem of *Dzhangar Khan* and his warriors epitomizes a universal psychological experience that has been passed down from generation to generation in human society, and which lurks in the heart of every human being. "It is a typical or recurring imagery"[2] and a "literary archetype"[3]. In *Benba*, Liu Liangcheng peels away the layers of unconsciousness in people's hearts about the heroic epic of *Dzhangar*, explores the "new faces" of the heroes, and searches for the spiritual home of mankind and the refuge of the soul in the mirror-like dream world. In the text of *Dzhangar*, time is locked, whereas in Liu Liangcheng's *Benba*, *Dzhangar* and his warriors are given unlimited life and the ability to travel through time in a time that is static and locked. In the *Benba*, each pause and reversal of time has its own hidden meaning. Time develops in a non-linear way, each time has its own space, it is layered, it can be stopped, it can be shuttled. All the men of *Benba* stopped themselves at their most vigorous age of twenty-five, the age when they were physically the strongest and most energetic enough to deal with foreign enemies. Under *Dzhangar's* leadership stops time forever at their own twenty-five years. Here Liu Liangcheng awakens the reader from his dream of *Dzhangar*, where still time becomes fluid, but

has to go on in the midst of the stillness. Because the twenty-five years of age represents fear, the fear of Dzhangar, the fear of the people of Benba, who are afraid of their own old age, afraid that like their fathers, when their bones become brittle, they will be invaded by the Mang Gusi suddenly without being able to fight back. They do not want to follow in the footsteps of their fathers, but also fear the day of danger once again, so they chose to stop at the age of twenty-five, their most energetic and physically strong.

As all the people of Benba stayed at their twenty-five years, there was only one man who did not grow up: the hero and warrior of Benba, Hong Guer. Hong Guer stopped himself at the age when he was never as tall as a wheel. As Benba was being devoured by the alien Mang Gusi, Hong Guer's father hid him in a cave in order to preserve the hope of revitalizing Benba, Dzhangar Khan, and allowed his son, Hong Guer, to go to his death in place of Dzhangar. Since the Mang Gusi do not kill anyone who is not wheel-high, they chained Hong Guer to a wheel to watch him grow up, and "as soon as he grows wheel-high, they will kill him, whether he is a Dzhangar or not." Out of fear of death, Hong Guer stops himself for eternity at a time when he is not as tall as a wheel. In the midst of the time that Hong Guer is stopped, it represents Hong Guer's fear of death. He does not grow up in Dzhangar's story, but he is sober and unwilling to grow up in Liu Liangcheng's Benba.

In addition to the reluctant Hong Guer there is another hero, who is Hong Guer's younger brother, He Lan. For He Lan, only his mother's womb is his paradise on earth. The mother and the womb symbolize the urge to return to the original state of life and the call of homecoming when people walk in the world, and the mother symbolizes the place where their spirit returns to, and is the refuge for souls experiencing the trauma of the world. However, in order to save his brother Hong Guer, He Lan had to be born into the world. The people of Benba used time to dispel the impending danger. At the same time, they use time travel to complete unfinished business. Sabur, a wrestler, turned and ran back to his childhood at the age of twenty-three, throwing his partner, who had beaten him as a child, seven years away. Ceji, the schemer who can foretell the evils of the past and the future for ninety-nine years, stands daily on the watchtower of Bambulai's palace, gazing decades away down the road. Gongbu, the pot-bellied hero who wields a double axe, kills all his enemies on the road for years to come.

3. The Game of Life

In Benba time is a special narrative device, but one cannot "say that by making time stop time will stop the Lord, one has to find the logic of making time stop." [4] Thus three games appear in the novel, moving house, hide-and-seek, and dream dream. "The games free the novel from its epic backdrop, with the freedom to speak freely in the wilderness of time at the end of the epic." The game gives it a different twist, and he expands the epic into a wider space, giving it a new meaning.

The game of moving home frees people from the drudgery of life, abandoning the weight of life high and dry, and instead burrowing within the light of life for respite. "He Lan says that the eggs of sheep's dung on the ground are sheep, and the eggs of horse's dung are horses, and the blades of grass are homes that are built up and torn down." The game that He Lan finishes with the old shepherd couple gets them lost in it, happy that they have so many sheep and horses, and that it is so easy to build a house, forgetting in their overflow that it is just dung. He Lan learns the game of moving house from his mother's womb, and the people of the steppe play according to the rules of the game that He Lan has set up, but it turns out that the people take the game as reality. In the game goat dung balls, horse dung balls, and blades of grass are used as money, but have no meaning for themselves. It is because people give it meaning and the people playing the game treat the game as real that these items have value. The people who play the game take it for real and play it as a reality, and then they have value for it. The people on the prairie are lost in the game of imagination, "Imagination itself has no intentionality, but the subject of imagination imposes intentionality on it because of some need. Imagination can never show intentionality automatically, it can only show itself under the guidance of different stimulators. In this way, play is the product of imagination and the condition for its stimulation, and imagination is such a dual process associated with play." People forget the pain, responsibility, and burden of reality in this game of moving house, and abandon the weight of life, seeking solace in a more relaxed and representative alternative, hiding in the lightness of life, flying to the sky, returning to childhood, becoming a carefree child, avoiding the oppression and helplessness of reality, and enjoying themselves in the lightness of life, indulging themselves with abandonment.

"Since fiction expands the imaginative space of play while assuming the role of mediator in making objects visible, the goal of fiction is to fill those voids that are filled with need. As we know, the

imagination can be characterized as featureless in finding an effective form for those things that need to be shown." Thus the game of hide-and-seek is established not only by Hong Guer to find his lost brother, He Lan, but also to find or hide up his lost self, "half of the people hide and half of the people go looking." The pinnacle of the game of hide-and-seek is to hide at a certain age; Hong Guer hides at an age less than wheel-high, the Benba at rather five years old, King Hari and He Lan in their mother's womb. "The grown-ups, shouting, caught them out of childhood and adolescence to be grown-ups and do grown-up things. Now they want to hide themselves in a game where they know where to hide themselves deep." The people of the Lama Prairie are forced by the oppression of reality to extinguish that part of their own childishness and become adults, while the innocence that belongs to a child remains hidden in the deepest part of their bodies. "Those Lama's people who were turned into children by the game of moving house, and then hid in the game of hide-and-seek, and then somehow grew up again, all had faces like the eyes of King Hari, half of which were the lively innocence of a child, and half of which were the worldly sophistication and rigidity of an adult." They are forced to grow up on the one hand, but on the other they yearn for the innocence and naivety of childhood. The game of hide-and-seek hides the childlike, innocent side that belongs to a person, and all of them are forced to grow up to be adults by constantly hiding and then being found in this game. He Lan hid deeper and deeper because he was afraid of being found. When Heran looked back he realized that the people who had caught him, the things he had feared, were all gone. But He Lan himself was lost in his childhood, so He Lan became a child who never grew up. In the deeper and deeper he hides, the part of childhood that belongs to him is cut off from his body, and it may be forgotten in a corner somewhere, but it is hard to be found.

"Textual play transforms the impossibility of self-presentation into a possibility that transcends the infinite, and which is virtually unlimited. No kingdom, no matter how vast its boundaries, can encompass this possibility." Thus in game after game the people of the steppe go from youthfulness to graying, and stop and cross at will in the game of time, arriving at the place where King Hari is in a single thought. These text games are full of infinite possibilities, and the people of the steppe get lost in one game after another, yet there are moments of lucidity, of sobriety in the setting of the game. "Who set you up for such a life and taught you as if it were a game? Is it not a greater game? You are addicted to it, and you have not turned from that pastoral path for a thousand years." "King Hari said that you have never stood outside the situation and looked at your lives, so you never questioned what such a life really is." Life seems to be like this like a set game, where we don't know why we were born or why we die, just like in the three Buddhist questions, who am I, where did I come from, and where am I going? We are addicted to the inheritance of traditions designed for us by our forefathers and grandfathers, born to excel, to feed, to survive, to reproduce, and to meet the death that will surely come in the future. What is the value of a human being? What are we really doing in this world? Is any of this really useful? Who created the rules and why do we have to follow them? Why can't we break them and why do we have to follow the path of fate? On the way back to Bemba, Honggur re-encountered the old man who guarded the border, and he seemed to tell us the answer. He said, "When I was sixty years old, the world played a game of hide-and-seek with me, and it hid, so that I couldn't see or hear a thing, and I became deaf and blurry-eyed. When I was seventy years old, I finally found the world, and it was hidden in my heart, quietly. By the rules of the game, it was my turn to hide and let the world come to me." We were rushed into growing up without learning how to see the world, and the part of us that belonged deep inside was hidden. As we become more experienced, we realize that he has actually been hiding deep inside us, it never left, it became part of our lives. This is perhaps the sad part of life, perhaps the precious part. These game after game give us the ability to think and explore about life.

4. Hovering on the border between dream and reality

"Human life cannot be supported without imagination." It is because of imagination that people are able to take the pain of reality and hide in it to paralyze it. The people of Bemba hover in the border between dream and reality, and realize that it turns out to be a big dream, and that the story in Bemba is an extension of the shadow of reality, a story told by the rapper Qi who is suffering. The last game of dreaming dreams can only be revealed in the border between dream and reality. This dream about Bemba is shaped by the people in the epic who are returning to the east and suffering from a lot of dangers. It ties a beautiful trust in the storytelling and hides the bloodshed and cruelty of the real world underneath this beautiful vision of storytelling. "The fictionalized act of re-creating reality is one that points to reality but can transcend reality itself; over-imagination can instead be induced into a certain form. In both cases there is a transgression: the reality fence is torn down by fiction, and the wild

horses of the imagination are penned into the fence of form, with the result that the authenticity of the text contains the color of the imagination, and the imagination, in turn, contains elements of the real. Thus the literary text is a mixture of fiction and reality; it is the result of the intertwining of the given and the imagined, penetrating each other." [5] Thus although dreams turn out to be a comfort zone to escape the cruelty of reality, those who endure the pain of reality draw courage and strength from the stories. The story about Dzhangar Khan leading the twelve heroes to fight and kill the enemy in Benba is their spiritual power. People in reality listen carefully to the rapped stories and dream in the spiritual world, while "when we dream more seriously, the real life will be subverted by us" The two worlds of dream and reality are originally intertwined. "In our serious dreaming, real life can be turned upside down. "The two worlds of dream and reality are supposed to be interconnected, "the real man can be the Benba of the epic, and often heroes are born into the world of men in the epics, who do some great and astonishing thing." So when the little Jiang Geer Qi was taken captive in the real world, there appeared youths who had grown up listening to the epic, and who took the hero's name as their own, as if the hero's name gave the youths infinite courage and strength. These youths faced hundreds and thousands of enemies without fear, and their hearts were filled with heroic grandeur. In the end, these youths used their own blood to save Little Jiang Geer Qi. The youths went from being listeners of heroic stories to becoming heroes of epic proportions. They wandered on the border of dream and reality, this dream is the comfort zone of their spiritual world, giving them the courage to face reality.

"Are fiction and imagination lies and deceptions that take us beyond reality, or do we inherently live an imaginative life in dreams, conjectures, and hallucinations?" The dreaming dream game exists not only between reality and the story, but also within the story; it is a dream within a dream. Dzhangar is dreaming the dream that stops time at twenty-five years of age, and therefore all the people of Benba are in the dream of twenty-five years of age. Dzhangar kills all the Mang Gusi in his dream, Hong Guer runs to a faraway place in his dream to kill the people who had insulted him. But "in a place, it takes only one man to dream, and the others to believe in his dream. If all dream, no one will do the things of the earth." Therefore, when all the people in Benba were immersed in the dream of being twenty-five years old and singing at night, only Hong Guer stood up in the time of Benba's crisis and went to a faraway place to kill the enemy, and eventually became an old man feared by all the people in Benba, but he bravely accepted his real aging. Dreams are an ideal kingdom, and in addition to the ideal world of dreams, there is also the reality of living on the ground. When we face the reality of great fear, we draw strength in the dream and then feed the reality, the sheep in the story of Bemba, knowing that they will face the end of being eaten, still in the brave life. "Sheep know that they are kept in captivity, so they think of nothing but eating grass and waiting for their shorn wool to grow back. They wait for the short grass to grow back, and for the smoke to rise again from the extinguished cooking fire next to the felt hut. The sheep waited until one morning for the shepherd to walk into the flock, who looked left and right and stared at himself, reaching out to stroke the sheep's head, scratch the fat on its body, and slap it on its chubby ass." Not to be anxious about future suffering, past footprints, this is an optimistic and open-minded attitude to life, a kind of attitude toward death, the face of life suffered all gladly welcome, even in the face of the long-predicted death is also frankly dealt with. "For a sheep, the best mountain is at its feet, and the best grass is at its mouth." We often focus on the past and the future, constantly reflecting on the folly of the past, constantly anxious about the ethereal future, while ignoring the present moment in which we are living, and what we hear with our ears and see with our eyes is all the goodness we can perceive right now. Why don't you stop like a sheep, look at the road under your feet, the scenery in front of you, and learn to live in the present, instead of being immersed in the past and the future. It would be too painful to live in the unknown and in regret, forgetting the reality of the present in the midst of nothingness.

5. Conclusion

"If the plasticity of human nature consists in the infinite elevation of the nature of the human self, literature becomes a kind of hundred gardens presenting the exuberant multiplicity of things that may exist or may happen. For, as a product of fiction and imagination, literature transcends the world's languor and is free from the frames of the institutions that bind human nature." Hariqi says, "Our ancestors have done many things that can be called great, none of which made it into the epics, and so it is with the Eastern Return, that long migration that killed more than 100,000 people and millions of livestock, which, though so long ago, we still grieve when we speak of it, and fear, and ache for the bloodshed of those who were dear to us." Yet the epic is painless; it isolates the pain of reality and places all the people's helplessness and hope in the story, soothing the real hurt with its beauty. The story is a dream woven by the dreamer, which obscures the pain of its reality and leaves the beauty

behind, but "pain is our last flesh and blood connection to our dead ancestors", so we are torn between reality and the dream world, feeling the pain as if we were in it. It is this pain that allows us to distinguish between reality and the dream world, this dream-like utopian Benba, alternating between the real and the unreal, both dream and reality, a spiritual resting place for the soul. Thus, "when we dream, we wake up at home, ready to come back. When we wake up, the dream is a distant and vague hometown. In our endless sleeping and waking, we are returning home", and we are wandering in the border between dream and reality.

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