

Original Paper

Analysis of “the Other World” in Naoko Awa’s Fairy Tales

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the other world in Naoko Awa’s fairy tales. Firstly, it elaborates the definition of other world, then analyzes the types of other world and the symbolic meaning of other world in her works, and then discusses the characteristics of other world in her fairy tales and the reasons for its formation. Naoko Awa’s fairy tales have strong Japanese classical culture color. The other world in her fairy tales is not only deeply influenced by Japanese ancient language, but also can feel the strong atmosphere of Japanese ocean belief and mountain belief.

Keywords

Naoko Awa, fairy tale, other world, faith

1. Introduction

Naoko Awa (1943-1993) is a famous female fairy tale writer in Japan. Her famous novel *Pepper Baby* won the Third New Talent Award of the Japan Children’s Literature Association. Later, her works won the Shogakukan Literature Prize, the Noma Children’s Literature Prize, and the Niiminannkichi Children’s Literature Prize, which plays a significant role in Japanese children’s literature. Naoko Awa left behind a few works, but they are very wonderful. Her fairy tales have a typical Oriental color, more accurately, a strong Japanese rustic flavor. Her pen quietly flows with the spirit of Japanese classical culture—harmony between man and nature, which infiltrates into every word of the fairy tale. As an important concept in Japanese traditional culture, “other world” is reflected in Naoko Awa’s fairy tales. The author selects fifteen fairy tales of Naoko Awa, such as “The Forest of the White Parrot” and “The Story of the Sea at Dusk”, as the research object, to analyze and study the “other world” in Naoko Awa’s fairy tales.

2. The Definition of the other World

The other world is a world different from the one we live in.

Daito analyzed the change of the concept of other boundaries in Japan: in ancient Japan, the concept of other boundaries refers to the vague world that exists outside the daily life circle of human beings, such as the kingdom of Huang Quan and the kingdom of Konju. After the introduction of Buddhism, the concept of other-world evolved into the world of bliss and hell, which is adjacent to the daily life circle of human beings. But after the Heian period, he also referred to the pure land that existed in the beautiful nature or on the other side of the mountain.

Miyake, from the standpoint of folk religion, believes that from the perspective of space, based on the present world, the other world can be divided into four categories: heaven, earth, sea and mountain. This classification is widely recognized and it's also related to the burial system, cremation is in the air which is in the sky, burial is underground, sea burial is in the sea, mountain burial is in the mountains. The celestial other world refers to the other world where God rules over human beings in heaven, such as the high Heaven, Heaven and so on. The underworld is the world to which the dead go, such as the Underworld, the Root State, Hell etc. The meaning of the sea other world is relatively rich, one is that the sea is the origin of life, is the origin of the human soul, so after death, the soul will go to the other side of the sea, the other is that the sea other world is the sea monsters live in the terrible world. And in the mountain he is the mountain god, ancestral spirit and demons and ghosts mixed place.

According to the general legend, there is a realm space between the other world and the present world, where the gods of the other world will appear, and people in the present world can also enter the other world through this space. This space can be trees, caves, Wells, mountain passes, hills, as well as a cemetery in the foothills, a river bank, a lake shore, a promontory etc. Although the other world and the present world are adjacent in space, they follow different laws in space and time. The residents of the other world and the present world can make their contacts closer through some means, but they will also break off contact because of some behaviors.

This paper selects this kind of classification method of other world, and classifies the 15 fairy tales of Naoko Awa in heaven, underground, sea and mountain.

3. The Type of the other World in Naoko Awa's Fairy Tales

Table 1. An Overview of the Types of the other World in Naoko Awa's 15 Fairy Tales

<i>Land of the Setting Sun</i>	The Heaven	<i>Lady's Earrings</i>	The Sea World
<i>The Balcony No One Can See</i>	The Heaven	<i>Castanet</i>	The Mountain
<i>The Apron Hen</i>	The Heaven	<i>On the Day of the First Snow</i>	The Mountain
<i>The Forest of White Parrots</i>	The Underground	<i>The Long Gray Dress</i>	The Mountain
<i>The Story of the Sea at Dusk</i>	The Sea	<i>The window of the snow</i>	The Mountain
<i>The Red Fish</i>	The Sea	<i>Far Wild Rose Village</i>	The Mountain

<i>The Time Nobody Knows</i>	The Sea	<i>Till the paprika is Cooked</i>	The Mountain
<i>The Flounder in the House of the Sea</i>	The Sea		

As shown in the above table, the author divided the 15 fairy tales of Naoko Awa according to the above classification method, including one story about the underworld, three stories about the heaven, five stories about the sea, and six stories about the mountains.

4. Different Symbolic Meanings of the other World in Naoko Awa Fairy Tales

4.1 The other world represents the world after death

Until the Pinto beans are cooked in the protagonist Yoru has no mother since childhood, her grandmother told her that her mother is the daughter of mountain god, after giving birth to Yoru turned into a mountain wind and went back to the mountains. Small night in order to see her mother, so also went to the mountains every day, hoping that she can also become the mountain wind, so she strayed into the mountain to provoke fire, but also at this time heard the mother's voice in the mountain wind, guiding the small night back to the world.

Snow Window tells the story of a father who runs a chowder shop, Snow Window, and finally meets his daughter, who died 10 years ago, in the middle of the night in a village below. The Forest of White Parrots the small protagonist water draw raised kitten-Mi, eat the Indian businessman raised by a white parrot can communicate the underground world is hell and the world also has such ability, with water draw came to hell, met her dead sister Natsu. In The Apron Hen, the man loses his wife and is unable to care for his three children. The mother hen returns from the land of the Sun and uses magic to care for them.

In these fairy tales by Naoko Awa, people can feel that death is not the end of life, but the soul reaches another beautiful and wonderful world. People's love and yearning can transcend the boundaries of life and death, so that people shuttled between this world and other worlds. In her fairy tale world, Naoko Awa makes the heavy topic of death light and tender, teaching children how to recognize and face death in such a warm way.

4.2 The other world represents the holy place of the soul

In the six fairy tales of the other world of the sea world, the world beyond the sea is mysterious, beautiful and full of treasures, but there is an ugly side in the hearts of human beings in this world. In The Red Fish, the sea bream with the color of sunrise promises to realize her three wishes in order to repay the grace of saving her life. However, the sea bream promises to live a happy life because of the legend that "if the fish with the color of sunrise can be placed on the wedding plate of the bride, she can live a happy life all her life" as the third wish to ask the sea bream, and the sea bream also sacrifices himself to realize her wish. In Lady's Earrings, the maid, because of her greed, steals the lady's earrings and discovers that the so-called rich businessman who owns a large ship is actually a whale.

Therefore, the lady and the whale can no longer meet, and the family is therefore in decline. In the Story of The Sea at Dusk, Twig makes a wish to the turtle to cure her lover who is seriously ill, but breaks the agreement with the turtle. And the turtle in The Time Nobody Knows and the flounder in “The House of the Sea” all fulfill human wishes at the cost of their own lives.

But Land of the Setting Sun, The Balcony That No one can See, Far Wild Rose Village depicts more of the beauty of other worlds. In Far Wild Rose Village, the three badgers pretend to be the grandsons of the old granny, which brings comfort to the old granny’s lonely heart. Even after the old granny discovers their true identity, the badgers do not dare to come to the old granny’s home again. The old granny also finds the village of the badgers hidden in the mountain alone, and tells them that whether they are human or not, they’re all their grandchildren. It’s the warmth they have for each other. In The Land of the Setting Sun, there is a magic skipping rope, which can be seen after fifty jumps. In The Balcony That No one can See, the magic balcony made by the carpenter, like a spaceship, carries him to a distant place, realizing his boyhood dream.

This kind of symbolic meaning of other world reflects Naoko Awa’s pursuit of pure land, pure and kind soul, and criticism of greedy and ugly human nature. At the same time, this kind of other world also projects people’s dream, vision for the future, and encourages people to work hard towards their goals. In addition, the animal images depicted by Naoko Awa in the fairy tales are mostly kind, selfless and warm, reflecting the animistic thought, which has a positive enlightenment effect on children’s respect for life and protection of life.

4.3 The other world is a symbol of the fickle nature

This kind of other world is mostly the other world in the mountain. In Castanet, the farmer is enchanted by the castaways of the tree spirit, deceived by the tree spirit, and enters the world in the tree spirit, and almost dies. The farmer’s wife, worried about her late husband, went to the forest to look for him. With the help of the souls of many small animals that had been killed by the tree spirit, the wife rescued her husband from the tree, but did not really defeat the tree spirit, the tree spirit’s castanets still echoed in the forest. The shadow of the tree in The Long Gray Dress rolls away his brother and takes away his life like a gray dress. On the Day of the First Snow the little girl was tempted by a group of snow rabbits, playing hopscotch, unable to stop almost lost her life.

The descriptions of these fairy tales all reflect the mysterious, grand, capricious and full of crises of nature, and the smallness and weakness of human beings in front of nature. They convey to children the idea that they should fear nature, protect nature and keep away from danger.

5. Characteristics of other World in Naoko Awa’s Fairy Tales and their Formation Reasons

5.1 In Naoko Awa’s fairy tales, there are many stories of the other world, and the types are wide

Naoko Awa fairy tales have other world appeared in the number of more, only Dusk Sea story, White Parrot Forest two stories of 21 fairy tales, in there ,the other world of fairy tales are 12, accounting for

more than half. And the other world appeared in heaven and on earth and on the sea and in the mountains. It is also affected by the fairy tale of the subject matter, through her world this concept can increase the colour of the fairy tale of fantasy and before death is a taboo subject in children's literature, people think that let the children direct or indirect contact with the concept of death is a cruel thing, but with the development of time, death education is valued gradually, Naoko Awa through to her description of method, It can weaken the fear of death and bring warm death education to children.

It is also influenced by Japanese dialect. There are stories of people visiting other worlds in the mountains, underground, and the sea, such as *The House of Warbler*, *The Sparrow with Broken Tongue*, and *Urashima Taro*, in the ancient Japanese dialect. Secondly, *Momotaro*, *Fairy Feather Coat*, and *One-Inun Mage* are visitors from other circles who visit villages in order to bring wealth to people or repay kindness.

In addition, Naoko Awa was influenced by foreign fairy tales such as Grimm's Fairy Tales and *One Thousand and One Nights*, and the fantasy color was also reflected in her fairy tales. Naoko Awa herself said that the forest in her mind was the forest in Grimm's Fairy Tales.

5.2 The other world in the fairy tale of Naoko Awa is mostly the other world in the mountains and the other world on the sea

As can be seen from the 15 fairy tales given, the number of other world in the mountain is 6, and that of the sea is 5, far more than that of the underground and heaven. This is influenced by the geographical location of Japan. Japan is an island country surrounded by sea and mountains, and the area of mountains and forests accounts for about 75% of the entire territory. Therefore, in Japanese traditional culture, there are many stories about other boundaries on the sea and other boundaries in the mountains. And it also had a profound impact on Japanese beliefs. Deep in the hearts of the Japanese people, there is always a sense of awe and gratitude for the sea. Many legends and folk rituals have been handed down from different parts of the world about how people thanked the sea for its blessings and sent a heart of faith. And the *Nirai Kanai* belief is still alive in Okinawa. *Nirai Kanai* refers to the world beyond the sea. Therefore, Naoko Awa's fairy tales about the sea and the other world are mostly full of wealth, and the visitors from the sea and the other world are also kind, pure, dedication, and full of good character.

A reverence for mountains is also ingrained in Japanese culture. In ancient times, it was believed that the spirit of the dead, after leaving the body, would float up the mountain until it became a god and became the patron saint of the tribe, the *Shikigami*. After the introduction of Buddhism to Japan and the practice of the divine Buddha, *Sukyando* was created. People believe that if they can return to the present world by practicing in other worlds or dead worlds, they can gain power that ordinary people cannot have. So many people came to the mountains to practice, called *Yamabushi*. Even today, this mountain belief still affects the Japanese people. So Naoko Awa's fairy tale in the mountain of the other world is both warm and beautiful, but also mysterious and dangerous.

6. Conclusion

Through a simple analysis of the other world in Naoko Awa's 15 fairy tales, THIS paper summarizes the main symbolic meanings of the other world in Naoko Awa's fairy tales, and makes a simple exploration of their characteristics and the reasons for their formation. The other world in Naoko Awa's fairy tales is the fusion of fantasy and Japanese traditional culture, which reflects the Japanese traditional perception of nature and life. Her works evoke the communication between life, break the barrier between human and nature, and let warmth and softness, like the genial wind, blow into the hearts of every reader.

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