

Original Paper

A Brief Discussion on Ma Yan's Poetry Creation

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Abstract

This paper takes the late Hui poet Ma Yan's life as a starting point to examine her poetry creation over more than a decade from two aspects: ideological characteristics and artistic features. It mainly involves the forward-looking nature of Ma Yan's poetic thought and the responsibilities she sought to undertake in her poetry, as well as Ma Yan's unique accomplishments and pioneering spirit in the art of poetry. By employing a close reading method, the researcher analyzes the reasons for the strong appeal of Ma Yan's poetry, summarizes the excellent quality of Ma Yan's poetry, and then draws inferences the position Ma Yan should obtain in the history of contemporary Chinese poetry.

Keywords

Ma Yan, poetry creation, ideological foresight, artistic pioneering

1. Introduction

In the process of the rapid development of human civilization, artists (including poets, writers, and all those engaged in literary creation) are always in a desperately awkward position. Many of them suffered a lot and lived a poor life during their lifetimes, yet became famous after death, such as Kafka, Van Gogh, and Hai Zi. This is a norm, but it is also a silver lining on a cloud. Regardless of whether it benefits the artists themselves, it is indeed important and necessary for the progress of human civilization to discover the works of an excellent, overlooked artist. However, there is another kind of artist who endures various pains during their lives, but still in a neglected position after death; the late poet Ma Yan is one of them.

While collecting information, the author found that there were very few studies on Ma Yan. There is only one academic paper on CNKI about Ma Yan's poetry creation, and only a few commemorative texts and research articles about Ma Yan can be found in other journals and networks, which does not match the strength of Ma Yan's poetry creation. However, it would not be entirely accurate to say that

Ma Yan is completely overlooked, as Ma Yan still holds a certain influence in the mainstream poetry circle. For instance, the renowned contemporary poet Bei Dao once commented on her: “Overall, contemporary Chinese poetry is too unctuous, while the pure power in Ma Yan’s poetry forms a stark contrast to this” (Quoted from Leng Shuang’s “Ma Yan Poetry Collection”, Beijing: New Star Press, 2012). Ma Yan has profound influence on the academic poets born after 1990, which shows that Ma Yan’s verses are frequently quoted, and her poetic concepts are absorbed and developed by many.

In the course of thirty-one years of life, Ma Yan created one hundred seventy-six poems and nearly four hundred thousand words of prose. Relatively speaking, Ma Yan’s poetry is not abundant, which is mainly due to her almost harsh requirements for her writing. However, considering these nearly two hundred poems, Ma Yan can already be ranked among the excellent poets of contemporary China, and her poetic ambitions extend far beyond this. One can imagine that if she had lived longer and realized the ambitions she mentioned in her poetic theories, it would have been a great fortune for the entire Chinese poetry landscape.

Based on this, this paper intends to make a brief overview of Ma Yan’s poetry creation and systematically discuss Ma Yan’s poetry and the poetic concepts behind it. This is a preliminary effort to draw more attention to the importance of Ma Yan’s poetry creation in contemporary Chinese poetry and to encourage more research on her work.

2. The Ideological Characteristics of Ma Yan’s Poetry

2.1 “Charming Danger”

The most important quality in Ma Yan’s poetic philosophy can be described with the terms “charming” and “dangerous”. The term “charming” comes from her poem called “Cherry”, in which Ma Yan embeds all the emotions brought by death into the imagery of cherries, calling cherries “the charming food”. This is also one of the most notable characteristics of Ma Yan’s poetic craft, which is to turn the words into words with personal symbolic meaning. That is to say, in Ma Yan’s work, “charming” no longer simply contains its original meaning but has a broader connotation. In this context, “charming” has effectively become an image. As for “danger”, Ma Yan frequently mentions it; for instance, she once said, “Every word we write carries the risk of life”. Thus, the first ideological characteristic of Ma Yan’s poetry can be combined into one, or rather, these two words are inseparable. “Charming danger” can also be replaced by a line from Ma Yan’s famous poem “Beijing City”, which states, “Obsessed with responsibility yet utterly helpless”, indicating that Ma Yan often finds herself in a severe contradiction between “responsibility” and “helplessness”, or “charming” and “dangerous”. “Charming danger” can be divided into two aspects: first, the “ambition” to establish a poetic order directed toward the future; second, the exploration of the relationship between the individual and the collective.

2.1.1 Poetry Directed Toward the Future

For Ma Yan, this “charming” (responsibility) primarily stems from the unique ambition to establish a writing order. Ma Yan once stated: “Poetry possesses a certain ambition (which is also a possibility in the functional setting of poetry), which is to attempt to establish a power order that penetrates into and influences the real world through linguistic experimentation”. It is easy to imagine why Ma Yan has such a passionate interest in everything and anything, from poetry and novels to history, religion, music, painting, architecture, and film, as well as knowledge of various artistic forms, secret languages, feminist or anarchist thoughts etc.

Ma Yan’s enthusiasm for establishing this new poetic order can be seen everywhere in his specific poems. In a poem titled “Disgust”, Ma Yan deconstructs the Chinese character “厌” (disgust) to derive the main images of “dog”, “tears hanging from the eyebrows”, and “a standardized stroke”, creating a love poem. This poem is primarily based on logical reasoning, but it encompasses not only love but also deeper layers of emotion, ethics, and the configuration of power. “Disgust” transitions from the limited to the infinite, expanding the connotation of the word itself while broadening the boundaries of poetry. In a poem titled “Learning to Play the Field—In Tribute to Comrade Zhang Chunqiao’s Outstanding Article ‘Breaking the Bourgeois Legal Thought’”, this ambition is vividly reflected. The world, the theater, and the grand high mountains converge to form a powerful gravitational field, perfectly integrating history and reality, while Ma Yan confidently proposes her core poetic concept: “Those who invent words invent the future”.

Undoubtedly, the new order of poetry is a perfect virgin land that entices poets to explore continuously, providing immense satisfaction, and its infinite boundaries are its most charming aspect. On September 18, 2010, just three months before her death, Ma Yan wrote eight poems in one go, which can be seen as her most significant and final outburst of poetry. In a poem titled “North China”, she writes:

People often think of grand atmospheres,
The pain that changes with the seasons,
...
Illusions? People in Henan pretend to love lying,
Hebei people pretend to love eating pears, and
People in Shandong and Shanxi study
All kinds of significant issues throughout history,
...
What great movements will be initiated again?
Actually, no, we just want simple
Everyday life, the truck selling green onions
Parked by the roadside, the loudspeaker monotonous
Yet sincere, potatoes rolling on the ground.

This poem can be seen as a concentrated representation of the “poetic model” that Ma Yan seeks, presented in the form of “concrete pillars”, indicating the poet’s cautious and restrained writing process. “North China” encompasses both the “pain that changes with the seasons”, illusions, and “significant issues throughout history”, as well as the small things like “the truck selling green onions”, the loudspeaker, and the rolling potatoes. The author acts as a “filter” standing in the river of history, continuously using personal experience to filter these vast or tiny vocabularies, allowing them to resonate with the future—“What else is there? People are hoping”.

Without a doubt, the forward-looking posture of poetry brings Ma Yan both the joy of creation and the burden of responsibility. However, this is also dangerous, as the ambition (aspiration) that extends from words to “personal words” makes Ma Yan feel the pain that is equal to happiness, which is why she would say, “We only clarify ourselves, understand the darkness step by step through poetry”.

2.1.2 From “i” to “I” in Poetry

In addition to the ambition to establish a new poetic order, Ma Yan’s “charming” (responsibility) also stems from her concern for the relationship between the individual and the collective. The exploration of the relationship from the individual to the collective, from the “small self” to the “big self”, and from the individual to the community has always been an important theme in Ma Yan’s poetry, which is also related to how poets should exist.

Jiang Tao once said, “The identity of the poet has been repeatedly corrected from prophet, lover, fighter, and reckless man to sage”, and he also stated, “We are all outsiders in the field; not only poets, but an entire generation of human intellectuals have been forced or willingly returned to the sidelines”. This reflects Jiang Tao’s discussion on the changes in Chinese poets since the 1990s and serves as a lens to understand Ma Yan’s poetic thought. For Ma Yan, poetry is not high above; she advocates for equality in all things. She once said, “When poetry should not be smaller than a pebble, it should not be higher than a plastic bucket either. It should find, or rather, obtain its appropriate height”. Combining Jiang Tao’s argument with Ma Yan’s poetic theory, it is concluded that in post-1990s China, poetry (or poets) has lost or abandoned the role of an enlightener, no longer attempting to preach or guide, and no longer needing to express a clear theme, meaning, or concept. Instead, it focuses on expressing desires and experiences from the “outside” of life and existence. However, this “outsider” stance poses a dilemma for excellent poets, including Ma Yan. They feel the danger while also recognizing their responsibility—how to handle the relationship between the individual poet and the entire community after becoming an “outsider”? Especially for Ma Yan, this is a significant test, which means another form of “charming danger”. Ma Yan provides an answer in her poetic theory: for her, the world needs poets to delve into its “complexity” and then emerge from it, experiencing not only personal pain but also the pain of the masses. However, this “pain of the masses” is neither Yan’s literature nor public literature. To be precise, it requires standing at a higher vantage point and a broader perspective to view the matter. Only in this way can personal experience be authentic; if you exist among the masses, then

you exist. Ma Yan's perspective of showcasing "I" (the individual poet) also reveals "I" (the human community), illustrating the idea that only when "I" exists does the world exist. This theory is passionately practiced in her specific texts.

In a poem titled "Art Museum", written before her death, Ma Yan uses the "art museum" as a basis to observe the "distinct creativity" of cats, dogs, sunflowers, and pumpkin vines. She also focuses on the existence of artists, poets, workers, and guests, all of whom soar in the poet's "strange imagination". Although they share the same despair and "harbor secrets", "these humble creations possess power". This poem can be seen as Ma Yan's attitude toward the entire artistic world and human life. She is acutely aware of everyone's despair but still walks among them to become a relic of history.

If "Art Museum" narrates the relationship between the poet's subjectivity and the community in a vague poetic manner, then in the poem "Beijing City", this relationship becomes exceptionally clear. Ma Yan writes:

Most are precisely defined symbols,
A small part are scattered leaves,
This city is windy and likes to spin.
There is also some dust, from Inner Mongolia,
Knights here dream ancient dreams.
...
This city is strictly controlled by rules,
Not allowed to escape futile responsibilities.
Sometimes, there are beautiful moments,
For example, the revelers swimming under the Silver Ingots Bridge
Suddenly become the center of attention.
There are those who often gather,
Pointlessly studying issues; this city
Is obsessed with responsibility yet utterly helpless.
No one dares to come here anymore,
Because it has already been destroyed. What an innocent situation...
To love painfully, to be reborn in despair.

Ma Yan uses nearly perfect rhetoric to showcase the joys and sorrows of Beijing. In Ma Yan's poetry, Beijing is not only a political and cultural center in the general sense but also a symbol of the era. In this space, people are like symbols, like leaves, blown around, unable to grasp the direction of life. Everyone who comes here is living an "ancient dream", yet they are controlled by rules, "obsessed with responsibility yet utterly helpless". However, Beijing also represents a habitat for a small portion of people ("there are those who often gather"), who bear the pressures of the times and strive toward the ultimate meaning of humanity, loving painfully in this "innocent situation". They feel "despair", but

despair and love coexist in a state of “rebirth”. The “despair” here deserves special attention because it is almost the core explanation of Ma Yan’s inquiry into the relationship between the individual and the collective. Ma Yan found the word “despair” when he was exploring the true meaning of his life and finding the connection point between himself and the entire human community. She uses “despair” to summarize people’s relationship with the era and life, and also writes her psychological state when exploring this meaning. As Duras said, “Continue writing, ignoring despair. No: writing with despair”. This “despair” has also become “Ma Yan’s word”, which not only contains helplessness and resignation but also encompasses “love”. In other words, where there is “despair”, there is “love”. The more weight “despair” carries, the more “love” will also increase.

2.2 “Pain is Direct”

The second important characteristic of Ma Yan’s poetic thought is her repeated chant of pain. “Pain is direct” comes from Ma Yan’s poem “Cherry” and can be regarded as an important summary of her poetic philosophy. We focus on the word “direct” here, which appears in a rather peculiar context. Why is pain considered direct? According to the Xinhua Dictionary, “direct” is that it does not go through the intermediate link, and it is opposite to “indirect”. In Ma Yan’s view, pain does not have any intermediaries; it directly affects individuals, making this pain more intense, clearer, and more painful than ordinary pain. Of course, based on Ma Yan’s habit of transforming words into her own, “direct” may also refer to a deeper pain or happiness. In any case, the “pain” in Ma Yan’s poetry is not just ordinary pain; it is a “mutated” pain that has been processed through her poetic lens, which is another important characteristic of her poetic thought. This “direct” pain can be analyzed into two parts: first, Ma Yan’s re-understanding of the fatigue of life and death, and the separation of life and death; second, how she, as a poet, is fascinated by life.

In Ma Yan’s poetry, the description of pain stemming from life and death is almost ubiquitous. This can be seen from the numerous titles of her poems, such as “Cherry”, written in memory of her deceased mother, “Summer Letter” dedicated to her late friend Ma Hua, and others like “Frenzy is My Shroud”, “The Tragic Nature of Life”, “Pain Will Not Destroy the Possibility of Pain”, and “Yes, I Must Die”. Within Ma Yan’s poetry, the imagery of death and pain is abundant, such as in “Cherry”, where she mentions “bloodied ghosts”, “cherries”, and “syringes”, and in “Death is the Greatest Politics”, where she writes about alcohol, water, ants, and dust. In another poem titled “Dear, I Am Dying”, Ma Yan writes:

Dear, in Chengdu, rain and snow began in the morning,
I am dying. I die in the gloomy afternoon,
You see, since then, I have been confused until now.
They leave one by one, I used to dance on
The stone slab, this is a joyful festival.
We all have festivals, you pass through sharp Beijing,

...

This poem, written in the spring of 2004, shortly after Ma Yan's mother passed away, presents a clearer image of "death". It arrives with the morning rain and snow. Notably, the line "I am dying in the gloomy afternoon" precedes "I am dying", indicating that the pain of death is not fleeting but rather a continuous experience. The line "They leave one by one" serves as the core of this poem, suggesting that the deaths (including separations and losses) of others bring the author a sense of near-death experience, leading to a constant reminiscence of past joyful moments, ultimately falling into despair—death is inherently linked to "the fall of everything".

On the other hand, Ma Yan is constantly enamored with life, or rather, her repeated writing about the fatigue of life and death is a way of expressing her love for life. She once directly stated in an essay, "I truly adore life", and even in her last essay before her death, she imagined how to decorate her new home. From this, we can observe that Ma Yan is not a pessimistic person; her focus on significant issues of life and death stems from her love for life. As Ma Yan herself stated, "Life is so complex; my experiences of pain and happiness, though insignificant, are genuinely worth writing down, even through limited poetic techniques, to make this writing a reminder and a creation". This is merely an impulse, a desperate desire to use poetry to alleviate the sadness in life, but the way of writing is too obscure, leading people to mistakenly perceive Ma Yan as a negative and depressed individual.

Ma Yan has repeatedly mentioned her love for life in her essays and diaries, and the "clear" beauty of life is particularly found in her poems. In a poem titled "Winter Letter" written to her friend Ma Hua, she concludes with the line: "Do those steep mountains in the cold, dry air/Also, like us, remain calm and not in pain?" Before this line, Ma Yan narrates the trivial matters between her and her friend using a lot of narrative techniques, but the ending suddenly shifts to the mountains and air, which, like the author, endure the pain of life, yet they remain calm and not despairing. In an earlier poem titled "Twelve Streets", Ma Yan uses subtle techniques to weave a picture of a girl's life, writing a fresh and clean story about "her" youth. Particularly noteworthy is the poem "Country Teacher", where Ma Yan writes:

They open their mouths and laugh. They run in the classroom,
I scold, prohibit, and even silence. Yes, later I
Sank into them. Gradually finding something still strange.
That year, we talked until midnight in the small building at the foot of the mountain.
On the empty concrete square, we looked at the unfamiliar stars. But when
We climbed the decayed cliff, we sang in the evening wind.
We would spend our last penny. The flowers on the table would soon
Wither and fall... the life of a country teacher.
She often daydreams in class, often creates bizarre sentences.
Sometimes, she walks around the classroom like someone who has lost something.

This poem employs Ma Yan's narrative technique to reflect the life of a country teacher, showcasing the poet's compassion. Whether it is the children "opening their mouths and laughing and running" or the "strange stars" and "flowers on the table" that I and she see, they all reflect Ma Yan's deep empathy as a poet. Particularly in the line "She often daydreams in class, often creates bizarre sentences", and "She walks around the classroom like someone who has lost something", the poet vividly portrays the peaceful life of a literature-loving country teacher. In fact, this poem is also a reflection of Ma Yan herself; she yearns for such a life, singing in the "evening wind".

The two aspects discussed above further confirm the second important ideological characteristic of Ma Yan's poetry, which is the continuous mutation of the phrase "pain is direct". The places where Ma Yan feels pain and happiness are intertwined. These poetic concepts and poems may seem to others as mere literary expressions, but for Ma Yan, they have unconsciously become a way of life. She feels powerless yet happy, oscillating between the two, ultimately leading to her real death.

3. The Artistic Characteristics of Ma Yan's Poetry

3.1 "Clean New Possibilities for Chinese Poetry"

Similar to the depth of Ma Yan's thoughts, she also holds herself to strict standards in her poetic language. In contrast to these strict requirements, Ma Yan's poetry presents readers with a sense of naturalness, showing no signs of repeated polishing. Overall, Ma Yan's poetic language consists of two main characteristics: first, the cleanliness of the language and the "full of holes and scars" that coexist with it; second, Ma Yan's enthusiasm for creating new possibilities for language.

Firstly, Ma Yan's poetic language is exceptionally clean. Although she organizes language in a genius-like, natural, and "unrestrained" manner, a little analysis reveals the secrets of her poetic language. Ma Yan's "clean language" is not a natural product but something she has created. However, this creation differs from the general deliberate crafting of language; it requires "the poet to find all the secrets from their daily language". This is also the main reason why Ma Yan's poetry incorporates a lot of colloquial language. Ma Yan is adept at allowing poetic language to grow from everyday language without carrying impurities. Ma Yan possesses a natural ability to discern, ensuring that all vocabulary (language) is treated equally while being able to select the most suitable language for poetry. For example, in "The Cleaner", she uses the phrase "pink floral shirt" as an entry point into the cleaner's world, making it feel intimate and natural. In "Notes on Watching Lotus Flowers", she concludes with "A spoonful of water has become the sea; we watch the lotus", combining a somewhat obscure and ambiguous sentence with everyday language to create rich poetic meaning.

In the cleanliness and equality of the language, it is also noteworthy that Ma Yan does not often use obscure words, only occasionally doing so. Most of her words are focused on simplicity and directness, without excessive complexity. However, this does not mean that the poetic meaning is simple. In other words, how to create "complex poetic meaning" using clean and simple language is a direction Ma Yan

unremitting pursues.

Secondly, the second characteristic of Ma Yan's poetic language is her enthusiasm for creating new possibilities for language and exploring new possibilities in Chinese poetry. As Xie Mian once said, "The establishment of new poetry begins with questioning (or 'destroying') old poetry". (Here, "new poetry" and "old poetry" represent modern poetry and traditional poetry, but can also be understood as "the future of poetry" and "the present of poetry".) Ma Yan is a poet who is keen on "destroying" the existing poetic order, and this is particularly evident in her poetic language. Li Guohua, in discussing Ma Yan's poetry, stated, "She (Ma Yan) has inherently rejected a possibility of the commonality of the Chinese language". Indeed, Ma Yan has abandoned the commonality of the Chinese language itself, which corresponds to her thoughts on creating a new poetic order. Whether it is "the charming food" in "Cherry", the deconstruction of the character "厌" (disgust) in "Disgust", or the metaphor of a town as a watermelon in "Qiao zi zhen", all reflect Ma Yan's ambition to create new possibilities for the Chinese language. This is also why many readers feel a sense of being bewildered by the language when they first encounter Ma Yan's poetry, yet they also seem to grasp some understanding. As Hugo Friedrich said, "When reading the poet's work, the reader has an experience that brings him close to an essential feature of the poem before he even thinks about it. "In fact, the reader gets closer to the essence of Ma Yan's poetry, which is the fruit of the constant collision between mystical ideas and everyday life.

In the poem "Summer Letter", we can glimpse the most complete aspect of Ma Yan's poetic language. In this poem dedicated to her late friend Ma Hua, she writes:

Last week, at night, a phone call woke me.

On the other end, they said: I still want you to call, save me some money.

Where are you? The cool breeze is rising... that boy

...

I live there, desolate and desperate. Yes, you

Live there, desolate and desperate. Your fish-scale clouds

Did not bring love; today I am here writing a summer letter.

When the cold river water washes over you, someone keeps

Writing to you, writing to you when the cool breeze rises.

This poem is entirely constructed from everyday language, with almost no difficult words. Yet, it is this simple language, arranged by the poet, that creates a wonderful feeling. This is the ultimate example of Ma Yan's expertise in creating "complex poetic meaning" through clean and simple language. In the line "I live there, desolate and desperate. Yes, you", Ma Yan's "you" represents the collective soul of the poet, not just one person but a "you" composed of two individuals. Here, we can see Ma Yan's ambition to create new possibilities for the Chinese language. The final line does not conclude with Ma Yan's usual "aphoristic ending", but rather follows the previous narrative tone: "Someone

keeps/Writing to you, writing to you when the cool breeze rises”, evoking a sense of the poet’s resurrection, as if the talented and handsome poet Ma Hua had not passed away and was waiting for this letter to come to him.

3.2 “Form Governs All Possible Values”

In contrast to the clarity of her language, Ma Yan’s approach to poetic form appears somewhat “deliberate”, which is related to her pursuit of an ideal poetic state. Ma Yan desires that poetry be clear and understandable, yet not entirely transparent; language bears the responsibility of being “clear and understandable”, while form, in a sense, serves the role of being “non-transparent”. This “non-transparent” does not imply that the author intends to pose, but rather that poetry inherently requires such a carrier, or that poetry itself needs a part that is “unclear”. For readers, this type of poetry differs from poetry that is obscure and excessively plays with rhetoric; everyone can derive what they seek from it.

Jiang Roushui once said, “Poetry is a craft, and the result of the craft is a static text, even if it contains incandescent emotions, which have to be made by cold quenching and water grinding”. Indeed, for mature poets, technique is of immense importance to poetry, and this is especially true of Ma Yan. Ma Yan’s obsession with form is particularly evident, and she emphasizes the importance of poetic technique. She once stated, “Form governs all possible values. That is, scholars, mystics, and mechanics”. This can be interpreted as Ma Yan’s pursuit of the importance of form in poetry, especially in her poetry, where this aspect is vividly expressed. Ma Yan values the craft of poetry, which does not mean that her emotional investment in her poems diminishes; rather, the continuous improvement of technique is precisely to express emotions more accurately. Poetic technique includes many aspects, such as rhetoric, rhythm, form, etc. Ma Yan especially emphasizes the shaping of form, and she once said, “Form is the domination of all possible values. That is, pedantry, mysticism, and mechanism”. This can fully explain Ma Yan’s obsession with form, and she realizes the “new possibilities of Chinese poetry” by taking form as the dominant factor. This includes many aspects, firstly, “pedant”, obsessed with poetry, passionately studying and exploring every word and every thing she writes; secondly, “mysticism”, i.e., anything can enter into poetry, can be openly concerned, but here there is mystery, there is mysticism. Then there is “mysticism”, the idea that anything can enter poetry, anything can be brought to public attention. But there is mystery, the mystery of the world itself, as if everything were unknowable. Finally, there is the “mechanic”, which means that the poet must be responsible for his own “product” (the poem) like a worker, constantly improving the poem’s appearance. This is an ideal poetic pursuit, as Bloom says of the genre’s most central technique, the metaphor: “The metaphor is a deviation from the literal sense, and the form of a great poem itself can be a rhetoric (transformation) or a metaphor”. Form in Ma Yan’s poems plays such a role, but goes beyond that to encompass more elements of poetic technique. For example, in the poem “North China”, the form of “concrete columns” is both an expression of the poem’s linguistic prudence, and a structure used to fit the “regulated area”

of “North China”.

The fascination with form is very obvious in Ma Yan’s poetry, and when focusing on the internal form, Ma Yan is also very good at using line breaks and punctuation to realize the role of “form’s unification”, which is also a very important feature of Ma Yan’s poetic form. The last poem of her life, “We Rode the Roller Coaster to the Future”, can be regarded as a sign that Ma Yan’s poetic skill has reached its peak, and many characteristics of Ma Yan’s poetry can be analyzed from this poem. Here, the author enters this poem from the perspective of form. This is how Ma Yan writes:

We rode the roller coaster to the future,
 He and I each held a ticket,
 That was a small boat sailing to the future,
 The undulating waves are my fearless imagination.
 Riding my imagination, they indulge in trampling
 These innocent girls and boys,
 These innocent puppies and kittens.

...

If there exists a space,
 Floating with countless roller coasters, painful roller coasters...

This poem takes “we” riding the roller coaster as the basic narrative event, from “we” buying tickets to enter the roller coaster, seeing the objects and people as the connecting point, to “I” riding the roller coaster with “you”. The relationship between “I” and “you” on the roller coaster and the fantasies of “I” are written. In order to shape “time” as an unending “object” and to “fly into the future”, Ma Yan chooses the roller coaster as the central image and writes In order to “fly into the future”, Ma Yan chooses the roller coaster as the central image and writes about the ideal of “infinite life”. In this poem, we can find the beauty of Ma Yan’s shaping of forms. For example, “He and I each hold a ticket in our hands,/That’s a small sampan flying into the future,/The undulating waves are my fearless imagination. The undulating waves are my fearless imagination./Riding on my imagination, they ravage it to their heart’s content”, we can see how Ma Yan utilizes line breaks to complete the “complex poetic meaning”. “The line after “a ticket” follows “a small sampan flying into the future”, which both refers to the previous ticket and introduces “my fearless imagination”. “Imagination” can also be a tool for “me” to fly to the future. And “Riding on my imagination, they ravage” becomes a line by itself, which seems to have nothing to do with the previous lines, but in fact, this line not only takes over the poetic meaning left by “fearless imagination”, but also writes out “they ravage”. While ravaging “my” imagination, “they” are also ravaging “my” future. Another example is Ma Yan’s skillful use of punctuation, which keeps the poem’s poetic meaning and rhythm in a steady state, especially in the last line, “Floating on countless columns. Especially in the last line, “Floating on countless roller coasters, painful roller coasters ...”, the “infinity” of roller coasters and the infinity of poetry and life together

form a picture that never stops. The roller coaster, as always, has become “the word of Ma Yan”, and the “countless columns of floating roller coasters” have become painful, and in a sense, the “roller coasters” are also the poets themselves. The last “...” is even more ingenious, writing the life experience of “toward the future” to the limit.

4. Conclusion

In summary, this paper mainly discusses Ma Yan’s poetry creation from the aspects of ideological characteristics and artistic features. Whether in terms of her thoughts on establishing a new poetic order and the pursuit of pain, or in her artistic innovations in language and form, Ma Yan continuously touches upon the future of poetry with a forward-looking posture. As readers, we are absolutely convinced that Ma Yan will return in poetry. When poetry reaches the “future”, her forward-looking poetic thought and pioneering artistic spirit will ensure that she and her poetry remain forever in the history of contemporary Chinese poetry, and perhaps even hold an important position in the history of human civilization. In a piece commemorating her late friend Ma Hua, Ma Yan once described him with a line that could also serve as the conclusion of this paper: “He is like a fairy, like a spirit, like a rogue, like a lecher, like a genius, like a relative...”.

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