

# Yu Xiuhua's Personalized Writing Poetry

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**Abstract:** Yu Xiuhua's poetry has unique historical and personal significance in contemporary poetry. In the history of poetry, as personalized writing gradually becomes marginalized today, as a specific example of personalized writing, Yu Xiuhua's poetry has adapted to the development trend of the mass media era, won some viewers for personalized writing, resisted the trend of personalized writing becoming increasingly marginalized, and added unique aesthetic dimensions and vitality to the development of new poetry. In terms of personal expression, her poetry writing has two distinct creative consciousness to a certain extent: one is the consciousness of survival, which is concentrated in not succumbing to physical disabilities and always maintaining an upward determination; the other is the feminist consciousness, mainly reflecting the tragic marriage life of rural women. These two types of consciousness make her poetry reflect to a certain extent the real life of disabled rural women, and therefore have a strong sense of realism.

## 1. Introduction

Due to her strong desire for self-expression and the influence of personalized writing trends, as well as the convenience of online dissemination, Yu Xiuhua began publishing works on poetry websites in 1998. It was not until 2015 that she became famous for her poem "*Crossing Half of China to Sleep with You*". From official media reports to discussions among ordinary people, there were even literary figures Shen Haobo and Shen Rui who engaged in online criticism. The discussion about Yu Xiuhua continued to ferment, with identity imprints such as women, cerebral palsy, rural areas, and poets becoming the firearms for poetry discussions. This triggered a phenomenal event in the history of Chinese new poetry in the 21st century, known as the "Yu Xiuhua Incident".

Her poetry is full of survival consciousness and female subjectivity full of resistance spirit. On the other hand, as a disabled rural woman, her poetry has caused a huge uproar in society. Although the biggest reason for her popularity is the title of "cerebral palsy poet" imposed by the media and highly topic guiding poetry titles, the value of her poetry in contemporary poetry history cannot be underestimated. This paper will explore the unique poetic spirit of Yu Xiuhua through her personalized writing of poetry.

## 2. Personalized Writing in the New Century

In the 1990s, the writing trend of contemporary Chinese new poetry began to undergo significant

changes. In the context of mass consumer culture, the scattered escape of poet groups has led to the widespread disappearance of cultural and poetic qualities. Poets are clearly aware that the fate of poetry is beginning to marginalize, and they reflect on the changes in social context in poetry content. So poets began to understand that the development of poetry needs to adapt to the cultural context of mass consumption, and only such poetry can be poetry works that conform to the characteristics of the times. As a result, avant-garde poetry underwent a transition to adapt to the times, and personalized writing emerged on the stage. As a concrete example of personalized writing, Yu Xiuhua's poetry not only adds a unique aesthetic dimension to the development of new poetry, but also adds vitality to it, reflecting to a certain extent the real life of grassroots rural women.

## 2.1. The Destination of Personalized Writing

There are two reasons for the gradual mastery of personalized writing in the poetry world of the 1990s: firstly, the essential awakening of self reflection consciousness in the historical development of poetry. Poets began to recognize the shortcomings of the "third generation" poetry, believing that it carries a collective unconsciousness controlled by political discourse, manifested as a preference for grand narratives leading to neglect of personal reality; The second is the change in social discourse environment. The development of modern and commercialized market economy has improved people's material living standards. In order to maintain spiritual and literary independence in the rapidly changing material economy and society, it is necessary to resist the changes in social discourse environment with strong individual differences. Therefore, individual differences and values are particularly important. Due to the alienation from the overall discourse and the emphasis on expressing personal historical experience, personalized writing has emerged as the main stage of poetry under the dual promotion of the times and culture.

Personalized writing is committed to writing about oneself and pursuing intervention in reality. This creative method has produced many writers who support different writing themes, including Wang Jiabin who values personal freedom and historical care; There are also those who focus on salvaging Yu Jian's daily life; There are also Yang Jian and others who think about the connection between fate and poetry... However, personalized writing contains the unity of some internal meridians under the diverse writing possibilities. Since the outbreak of the "Panfeng Controversy" at the end of the 20th century, personalized writing has been divided into two major schools based on poetic concepts: one is "intellectual writing" represented by Ouyang Jianghe, Wang Jiabin, Xichuan, Cheng Guangwei, etc. They emphasizing the absorption of Western theoretical resources and traditional Chinese poetics, presenting an elite stance with enlightenment spirit and humanistic care; the second is "folk writing" represented by Yu Jian, Yi Sha, Han Dong, Xie Youshun, etc. They pursuing personalized daily experiences in oral expression. The two schools of thought are based on the writing itself, coupled with the increasing power of poetry debates, and the writers are flourishing in poetry, working together to construct a highly dynamic environment for poetry creation.

It can be said that the personalized poetry of the 1990s was a leap forward period that broke through ideological barriers and pursued poetic innovation and content creation. However, personalized writing also faces creative difficulties in its development, as it requires transforming personal experiences into empathetic poetry, ultimately establishing the poet's spiritual stance. In the process of establishing this spiritual stance, it is inevitable that some people make erroneous attempts. The excessive polishing of poetic techniques and language in intellectual writing has led to the scene of "writing is greater than poetry", and the pursuit of daily trivialities in folk writing has resulted in the tragedy of arbitrary expression. The rebellion against culture and the lack of consideration for the object of description have made poetry become vulgar. Personalized writing is committed to exploring the diverse writing possibilities of writing skills and aesthetic objects, which has led to a surge of excellent poetry. However, its creative limitations still objectively exist,

as its main line and overall pursuit are obscured by individual differences and lack clear guidance. Furthermore, in the 1990s, as mass media attracted a portion of the audience, the audience for personalized writing with a metaphysical temperament was even fewer.

## 2.2. Poetry by Yu Xiuhua

In the 21st century, the internet has developed rapidly and become a new medium for poetry creation, dissemination, and reception. The development from public mainstream media to online self-media has led to a sinking adjustment of the poetry creation and reception groups in contemporary poetry. Through the Internet, Yu Xiuhua, a grassroots person, can also create poems. Under the influence of personalized writing in the 1990s, she successively published poems on her personal blog, forum, and WeChat official account, and her personalized masterpiece "*Crossing Half of China to Sleep with You*" has become popular online.

Undoubtedly, Yu Xiuhua's poetry is also a form of personalized writing. And in the face of external questioning, she insists on focusing on her own writing, presenting her own experiences, expressing emotions with real words in poetry, constructing her own image, and possessing a natural power to move people's hearts. However, in addition to the influence of poetry itself, the poet's identity traits and new media are also an important driving force for the popularity of poetry. The uniqueness of Yu Xiuhua's grassroots background and disabled body runs through the media discourse. In the public's acceptance of this link, media reports on her as a "cerebral palsy poet" are enough to arouse the public's curiosity and inspire inspirational effects. In addition, discussions and even verbal abuse between the public and the traditional poetry community about her. The fermentation of the internet and the tracking and reporting of various media outlets have fueled Yu Xiuhua's rise to fame, forming a conspiracy frenzy in the new media era. Although the subjective purpose of Yu Xiuhua's poetry is not for this, the emergence of her poetry has brought personalized poetry back to the public from the periphery, playing a certain role in resisting the marginalization tendency of personalized poetry.

## 3. The Dual Consciousness in Yu Xiuhua's Poetry

Yu Xiuhua is like a strange flower in contemporary new poetry. She neither succumbs to physical disabilities and expresses her experiences of suffering calmly, but also sneers at the influence of male centered tradition. Her writing is full of female writing consciousness, and she reveals a strong resistance spirit in the poet's survival and writing consciousness.

### 3.1. The Survival Consciousness in Yu Xiuhua's Poetry

In Yu Xiuhua's poetry, disability is an unavoidable topic, which is not only her biggest obstacle to survival but also the reason why she chooses to create poetry. It can be said that she chose poetry, and coincidentally, poetry also chose her. Having also experienced a life with disabilities, the blind poet Zhou Yunpeng, in his poetry writing about the life with visual impairments, displays more emotional experiences that are different from those of able-bodied people and individual poetic thinking as a socially disadvantaged group. For example, in his view, the night is not as fearful and unknown as ordinary people do. He fills his eyes with his ears, believing that the night is just a lack of sound, and regarding the positioning and treatment of blind people in society, In his poem "The Lhasa Gallery", he heard from the perspective of a traveler the unconscious discrimination revealed by the gallery hostess towards blind people. In his poetic description of visual blindness, Zhou Yunpeng is more of a fresh understanding of common things from another perspective, or a philosophical reflection on the existence of the visually impaired group, reflecting a broad mindedness and care for the individual. In Yu Xiuhua's description of his experience with disabilities, he more portrays a survival consciousness that even resists disabilities.

Yu Xiuhua's attitude towards her disability experience is very candid. Although she firmly believes that most of her life's tragedies should be attributed to her disability, she did not indulge in despair. Although she cannot see her own destiny clearly, she did not accept her fate, as she said, "I feel like my disability has ruined my life, ruined the life I could possibly have. Sometimes, not to mention cursing, I have a heart to kill. Of course, in the end, I killed myself. What should I do? I must live. At that time, my mood was: to live for the time being, try to see. I don't know what to see." <sup>[1]</sup>She once wrote: "I mean, the suffering and injustice outside of me are increasing/handing over pain makes me feel ashamed/staying calm also makes me feel ashamed/I stand and bend, and the result is the same, the part you see will also be the same." <sup>[2]</sup>For Yu Xiuhua, The outward expression of pain and calmness makes "me" feel ashamed, and the parts where "I" stand upright and bend are seen are also the same, because the difficulties of life have a painful impact on a person's soul. However, writing only expresses it, and writing does not reduce it. It is still there, so one should face suffering calmly, not care about the oppression of suffering on oneself, and show a survival consciousness of facing suffering directly.

However, Yu Xiuhua's poetry is not simply about expressing pain and complaining about the hardships in life. She has an upward vitality like a vine, which objectively describes disabilities while also containing a strong spirit of resistance against them. This is mainly reflected in her use of the word "climb". "You once accused me of stealing your rose in the middle of the night/putting the chastity of a horse into a well. Oh, you said of your collapsed city wall/there are traces of me climbing" <sup>[3]</sup>When it comes to love, she longs for it, even though her body is inconvenient, she still wants to climb the city wall, Steal the rose of love. This image of her walking difficulties has a strong visual sense, shaping a woman with strong tension. She is not good at walking but still has vitality, enduring hardships but never surrendering.

### 3.2. The Female Subjective Consciousness in Yu Xiuhua's Poetry

In Liu Huiying's book "Breaking Out of the Barriers of Male Power Tradition", Liu Huiying argues that in many male centered literary works, the female image is an empty symbolic character without her own consciousness. At the same time, the love that women give to men is selfless, without seeking or receiving rewards, and men are portrayed as strong in such literary works, And women always attach themselves, dedicate themselves, and submit to men, and this type of literary work has a strong influence on the creation of Chinese literature. However, Yu Xiuhua went the opposite way. Out of her full expression of individual emotional life needs and care for the living conditions of disabled farmers, she vividly portrayed the desires of the body in her poetry. She used a "transitive" body writing to demonstrate the vitality of women, resisted the constraints of male centrism, and reflected a strong concern for the essence of life as a poet.

Female subjectivity refers to the ability of women to consciously realize and fulfill their historical missions, social responsibilities, and life obligations, while also being aware of their own characteristics and participating in social life in a unique way, affirming and realizing their social values and life needs. Female subjectivity unifies 'human' and 'woman', reflecting the value pursuit that includes gender and transcends gender. <sup>[4]</sup>Since the 1970s, feminist ideas have been introduced to China. The establishment of the People's Republic of China and the reform and opening up have gradually liberated women politically and spiritually, overthrowing the male centered ideology that overwhelms women. In this regard, Yu Xiuhua's poetry reflects the characteristics of the rise of feminist ideas in the era. Her poetry stands on the perspective of women, reflecting the spirit of resisting male centrism with individuals as specific objects. As a victim of a distorted marriage, she knows too well how a woman's life is destroyed, so she always uses a tone of complaint to express the painful fate of women losing their self-control, resisting the oppression of marriage on women, "A woman runs away from home: passing by cotton fields, ponds, and more and more graves - how to tie the earth around her neck and know how to make her limbs stand upside down." <sup>[5]</sup> "Look, people who can paint a country in the spring breeze often can't bear to carry a woman." <sup>[6]</sup>Due to her

deviation from male centrism, Yu Xiuhua fully expresses her rejection of the tragic marital life.

The female subject writing consciousness of Yu's poetry is not only reflected in resisting the oppression of women's marriage, but also in her tragic portrayal of the fate of female characters and accusations against men with bad morals in her poetry. In "Zhang Chunlan,"<sup>[7]</sup> she used extremely simple sentences to portray a poor rural woman named "Zhang Chunlan." However, due to her husband's domestic violence, Zhang Chunlan set fire to her house and eventually surrendered to prison. In "The Village at Midnight", the male protagonist works outside for years, while the female protagonist falls ill at home. The male protagonist is also indifferent, so the female protagonist drowns their son. She wrote at the end, "Women remain silent in front of their children's graves, unable to shed a single tear all night/How much land has been abandoned in the village, men don't know/How cold a woman's heart is/Men don't even know."<sup>[8]</sup> Most of the tragic women portrayed by Yu Xiuhua are based on herself, hoping to accuse violence and indifference in marital relationships. This creative consciousness gives her poetry a strong sense of realism.

At the beginning of the 21st century, there were also female poets from the lower class who expressed women's subjectivity in their poetry, such as the working poet Zheng Xiaoqiong. She focused on shaping the working life of the lower class female workers, describing the workers working in assembly line factories and the sweat, hardships, and even alienation of the lower class workers behind the rapid expansion of modern civilization from a firsthand perspective. She was more related to the economic process, but had very little description of the lower class women in rural society. The emergence of Yu Xiuhua has to some extent supplemented the description of women's situations. She, together with Zheng Xiaoqiong and others, spatially complemented the portrayal of tragic female characters in both industrial and rural social fields.

#### 4. Conclusions

In a society that pursues click through rates, some mass media have shown biased reports on the issue of disability, including stigmatized expressions of direct discrimination, charitable expressions of sympathy and pity that are superficial but belittled, and supernatural expressions that replace disabled groups with successful individuals. However, Yu Xiuhua insists on exploring the path of personalized writing, focusing on the practical description of on-site experiences in poetry. Depicting the details of life, she portrayed the true spiritual pursuit of a disabled rural woman.

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