

Amputated Limbs in the Gaze: The Power and Desire Mechanism of Disabled Performance in Yan Lianke's novel Lenin's Kisses

Ran Cheng

Nanjing University of Information Science & Technology, Nanjing 210031, China

Abstract: In Yan Lianke's novel, "Lenin's Kisses," the portrayal of disabled individuals through performance holds significant importance. This disabled performance can be interpreted as a form of intense observation where the production of desire and exercise of power intertwine among three key forces: the audience, the disabled actor, and the motivation behind it. Within this power dynamic, amputated limbs are strategically manipulated and presented to capture the attention of able-bodied spectators, resulting in a reciprocal exchange of gazes.

Keywords: Disabled performance, Lenin's Kisses, Yan Lianke, Desire, gaze.

1. Introduction

Michael Bérubé pointed out the narrative of the disabled body as a visual object. He believed that "disability demands a story" [2], that is to say, in the real world or the artistic works reflecting reality, the body is always the silent narrator. When the incomplete body becomes the sensory object of human beings, we always have the impulse to imagine this kind of disability and make up a story, which is one of the important reasons why disabled writing is worthy of discussion and research and full of contemporary value. The performance of the disabled makes use of this feature of the disabled body, and achieves its goal through the use of physical technology. In Yan Lianke's novel "Lenin's Kisses", there is a troupe of disabled performers. In their mixed desires, the members of the troupe are constantly alienated into money-making machines for Liu Zhuangying to achieve political goals. This paper analyzes the power and desire mechanism of disabled performance in the novel, and explores the practical enlightenment of disabled performance in and out of the novel through psychoanalysis and some theoretical methods of disability science.

ugly shows, which show disabled people's special bodies to make money, have become popular in a long historical period, "There were no strict requirements for venues, no entry threshold for knowledge level and identity class. The content of the performance is humorous and interesting, mainly featuring deformed body exhibition and personal talent show" [7]. This convenient recreation does come at a cost to the dignity of disabled individuals.

Disabled performance is a common phenomenon in life, but it is rarely used for literary and ideological analysis, because we always "look sideways", when the peripheral light falls on the disabled body, the main body of the gaze falls on the self and others who are also present. The healthy person confirmed his complete body and the position of the symbol world through the disabled performance. When the disabled performance is unveiled, the strong moral sense causes the visual behavior of the normal person to become an object, meaning that the gaze is reversely constructing the subject. As a result, healthy people avoid talking about this controlled scene, while Yan Lianke's novels are good at revealing facts:

"Everything written is true, and nothing in real life is true!" This is Liang Hong using the words of others to evaluate the profound authenticity hidden in Yan Lianke's works, and this paradoxical discourse shows that "Shouhuo"(the village name, which means to live) penetrates the subconscious senses, consciousness, and desires evaded by the real language, and deeply exposes the operating mechanism of the handicapped performance.

2. The Use of The Disabled Body

Lenin's Kisses puts the disabled at the center of writing, carries out Yan Lianke's "realism", expressing the sadness of reality in mysterious and symbolic language. The story takes place in a village composed of disabled residents - Shouhuo village, county head Liu Zhuangying in order to gather together the money to buy Lenin's body, to achieve their ambitions, organized by live village villagers set up a magic group. In this process, the magic group dressed up the uniqueness and heterogeneity of the disabled limbs through the interest chain, exposed the broken limbs to the eyes of others without hesitation, and even exaggerated and distorted their own physical state, which was the first step towards the tragedy of the shouhuo village people.

The group's manipulation of the body, the use of visual impact in line with the requirements of the society for the performance, broken limbs become resources in the chain of interests, in Liu Zhuangying's absurd and realistic plan to buy Lenin's body, the residual limbs are designed as deformed, curious aesthetic tools, to meet normal people curiosity.

"The body is a man's last private possession." [5] in Foucault, the body is extremely passive as "the fulcrum and transit station on which power operates, [the body] is left to the forging of power. The operation of the order is the forging of the body by the power, and the disabled individuals are lost in the economic order constructed by the order, and they flatter the power. Through the transformation of the surgical team, the disabled body showed extraordinary specificity, which made the disabled performance a great success. Entertainment eats away at the tolerance of the abnormal. The disabled limb, which was originally cultivated by day and night, has become an aesthetic organ of the business planners

in the order of commercial exchange, and his broken leg has transformed from productivity into a magical sensory consumer product. All this is the power of the existing order.

Isn't the body rebellious and willing to become the object of vision? To answer this question, we need to understand how power disciplines the body. In the novel, the shame and anxiety of being reduced to visual objects are dispelled by the desire for economic affluence, and the war between desire and body ends in the overwhelming victory of the former, as Deaf man said: "How can I not go for hundreds of thousands of dollars a month?" Lacan's psychoanalysis emphasizes that fantasy is constantly promoting the reproduction of desire and acting as the intermediary of desire. The rich life depicted by Liu Zhuangying for the shouhuo Zhuang people constantly gives rise to the construction of an affluent ideal self for the disabled, and the desire makes the body subordinate to power.

3. Visual Models Which Desire Support

Desire not only structures the performance of the body, but also exists in the visual interaction between the performer and the viewer. In Lacan, the gaze is always bound with desire, from the starting point of Lacan's theory: The glance of the child in The Mirror Stage between 6 and 18 months of age begins with a representation of the subject's desire to gaze: the child's desire to manipulate the image in the mirror, to try to confirm the image of himself from that image, and the desire to direct his mother to look in the mirror. The visual model of the mirror stage can be abstracted as "I" and "mirror" watching each other under the guidance of the mother, then the visual model of the same disabled performance can also be abstracted as three elements: the audience and the actors watch each other, and the overall planner of the whole performance acts as the mother. And desire is still everywhere in this visual model.

On and off the stage, people with two physical states are clearly distinguished. When the audience watches the disabled person's performance, first of all, they can confirm their complete physical state; secondly, by watching the disabled person's performance, they can experience the modification technology of the body, which helps the audience to relieve the sudden anxiety of the disabled. Finally, they can empathize with the disabled person. The thrilling acrobatic performance gives them sensory expectations beyond the normal state of life. At the same time, the audience's eyes are not only staring at the stage, but also there is a desire relationship between the audience and the audience. Thousands of audiences are similar individuals in the same visual Angle, and they desire each other to confirm their existence. If there is only one audience in a performance, they will always fantasize about the appearance of other audiences and worry about whether the performance is of poor quality. Therefore, the audience watching the performance of the disabled are also wanting each other. Due to the particularity of the subject matter, the audience watching the performance of the disabled needs other audiences to confirm the rationality of their watching behavior. Finally, the audience's desire for the disabled actor seems to establish rationality through the purchase of tickets, which is the contract reached between him and the big other behind the scenes who controls the actor, in the magic group of the living village is the county chief, the head and other organizers and leaders.

In contrast, the actors are in the object status under this

visual model, but at the same time they are also staring, and staring is not a one-way process, but a mutual relationship. At the same time, the subject will also become the object to be gazed at, and they also need to be gazed at and recognized by others to satisfy their desires and obtain self-identification. From what the leader of the troupe said to the actors during the first performance, we can get an in-depth understanding of the actors' desire to belong in the staring activity:

After finishing your performance, remember to bow to the audience; Chief Liu will be sitting in the middle of the third row, so when you bow you should be sure to make him feel that you are bowing directly to him, while at the same time making the rest of the audience feel that you are bowing to them. [1]

This clever stage uses to outline the relationship between the three, the disabled actors desire the power of the county magistrate to enrich them, and in the act of gazing at each other between the actors and the audience, they make a deal of money in exchange for pleasure.

As a marginal figure, the gaze of the disabled is more special. Lacan believes that once people enter the symbolic system, they cannot escape the fate of being "castrated", and then the subject becomes the subject of division. For the disabled, this castration means that they are excluded from the center of society, and the dignity and equality possessed by normal people become the missing thing of the disabled - Lacan called it object a - the missing object of the subject is also the object of the subject's desire, and the object a of the disabled is their already missing dignity and equality. Object a always exists (does not exist) in the way of absence, has the contractility, it as the object of desire retroactively constructs the desire subject. It is the Phillus that the subject lacks, and the whole drive of the subject revolves around it, but it is the other that needs the subject to lack this Phillus, and the subject lacks this object a, which is its threshold. That is to say, these disabled people who are subjected to the village are actually pursuing the desires constructed by others in order to pursue wealth and interests, and it is a choice that they have made in the long-term demagogy that does not belong to themselves. Lacan has a classic judgment: The subject desires the desire of the great other, that is to say, after the disabled have been included in the stigmatized social symbol system for a long time, they need the sense of security brought to them by money, which is the natural self-protection of the disabled after contact with the external society. When the disabled members of the group make a lot of money, they are deprived of their money by extreme violence. Yan Lianke uses extremely cruel writing methods to structure, deconstruct and re-structure the disabled utopia of the Living village. In the past, the disabled people had a lot of money and imagined that they would no longer farm, just like a dream, and they traveled a circle in the bloody reality driven by their own desires.

4. Avoidant Eyes

In this disabled performance, the eyes are evasive, and the so-called stump in the peripheral vision means that the audiences always are "looking awry" at the disabled actor. When an able-bodied person sees a disabled performance, if they do not intend to pay for the performance, their gaze always evades and their pace unconsciously quicken, because a strong superego overrules the instinct to watch. For those who have paid for the performance, as mentioned in the visual

model above, the ticket seems to provide a reasonable guarantee for their watching behavior, but they care more about the confirmation of the self, the identity of the group, and the stump becomes a vague confirmation tool for them, and they focus on the self and other audience.

And the eyes on the other end of the disabled actor's eyes are also dodging, as the head of the troupe warned them: "Don't look directly at the audience while on stage, because if you do you will become alarmed, so just look at the ceiling instead." [1] The big others are afraid that they see inconsistencies in this visual model, that they find that they do not belong here, and that they, as objects of the eye, are afraid to face their own situation. In fact, a major challenge faced by disabled people is that they often become the object of other people's eyes. In a field full of normal people, explicit disabilities often attract attention, not to mention the ritual of disabled performance, which intentionally reveals disability. As the subject of watching, the eyes of able-bodied people tend to be avoidant. First, the stump naturally allows people to conceive of a story, a disaster, and people often have the instinct of refuge, and the second is that people's "empathy" psychology often envisage themselves as the situation and status of the object of the eye, and this empathy promotes avoidance.

Yan Lianke's novel is the target of millions of readers to watch, and he tells the tragedy of the living village in unbearable language. The modern development tears the clothing of the Shouhuo village and reveals the bloody mutilated limbs of this group of vulnerable groups. This novel magically reverses the vulnerable situation of the disabled. These vivid images make most of the normal readers feel guilty, especially the round people use their physical advantages to plunder all the money of the disabled and rape

the three Yuni children, so that the tragic atmosphere of the whole novel reached the top, but also let the readers' eyes more wandering. It is the final step in the symbolic and complete presentation of the novel:

5. Conclusion

The performance of the disabled in the book is a very distinctive feature in contemporary Chinese writing about the disabled. Yan Lianke presents the readers with a farce and tragedy of the disabled people. The disabled people are used by the county magistrate to set up a troupe of disabled people to transform and design their disabled bodies as visual objects. By constructing a visual model similar to the mirror stage, the disabled performance makes the desire reproduce continuously in the gaze, and finally contributes to the tragedy of the Shouhuo village.

References

- [1] Yan Lianke. *Lenin's Kisses*[M], translated by Carlos Rojas, Grove Press.2012.
- [2] Michael Bérubé. *Disability and Narrative*[J]. *PLMA*.120.2 (2005): 568–576.
- [3] Alice Hall. *Literature and Disability*[M]. Routledge.2016.
- [4] Slavoj Žižek. *Looking Awry*[M]. The MIT Press.1912.
- [5] Wang Minan. *Body, space and postmodernity*[M]. Nanjing University Press.2022.
- [6] Liang Hong. *Myth, celebration, violence and others -- Yan Lianke's aesthetic characteristics of novels*[J]. *Southern Cultural Forum*.2005(04):59-65.
- [7] Feng Yu. *Extraordinary Bodies in the Entertainment World: On the Freak Show in Victorian Britain*[D]. Nan Jing University.