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## Mo Yan's Symbolism and Literary Root-seeking

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**Abstract**

*Mo Yan is the first Chinese writer to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. After he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in October 2012, he immediately drew the attention of the world. In the past nine years, there have been many theoretical articles on Mo Yan's creative style and narrative art, but a very few articles on Mo Yan's root-seeking characteristics from the perspective of symbolism. This paper attempts to explore the ways Mo Yan searches for his roots through his writings.*

**Keywords:** Mo Yan, symbolism, literary root-seeking, local culture

Symbol is a widely used concept, in human life, symbol is everywhere, it involves literature, arts, aesthetics, theology, psychology, logic, linguistics, semiotics and many other disciplines related to human thinking. The word symbol originated from the ancient Greek word "sumbolon", which originally referred to a piece of wood or pottery divided into two halves, each holding one to ensure mutual friendship. Later, when it entered the religious field, it became a mysterious thing to communicate the relationship between man and God. The concept of symbol has always been vague, and symbol has different connotations in different fields. In the field of semiotics, Charles Sanders Peirce, the founder of semiotics, believes that symbol is an artificial symbol, and the relationship between its object is artificial or conventional (qtd in Liszka 6). In the field of anthropology, Victor Witter Turner and other anthropologists believe that symbols are condensed forms of meaning, through which people adjust themselves to the external world and its changes (26). In the field of philosophy, Kant thinks that symbol is the intuitive representation way for people to enter the invisible world in the process of aesthetic appreciation (qtd. in Kuehn 30) while Hegel says that symbol is first of all a sign (qtd. in Singer 97). In the field of aesthetics Susanne K. Langer interprets art form

as a symbol feelings (66). In the field of literature, René Wellek said in his book *Literary Theory*, the more appropriate meaning of this term should be that thing A implies thing B, but thing A itself, as a means of expression, also requires full attention (203). Obviously, the concept of symbol is developing. Simply speaking, it is to express or imply a certain concept, philosophy or emotion with a specific image, and when applied to creation, it is an artistic expression technique of expressing emotions by means of metaphor.

In China, Chen Duxiu, a professor of Peking University, was the first to mention symbolism, but he did not explicitly use the concept of symbolism, but only mentioned some symbolist dramatists. Symbolism has been translated as representationalism until 1919, when it was officially translated as symbolism. In fact, symbolism has a tremendous and profound impact on Chinese literature, and promotes the emergence and development of Chinese symbolism literature. During the May 4th Movement and the mid-1980s, a large number of symbolic narrative theories and works of Western fiction were translated into China. The two great movements of Western learning spreading to the East promoted the emergence and development of Chinese symbolic narrative novels. As one of the most influential schools in western modernist literature, symbolism and symbol have certain inheritance, but they are quite different in essence. Symbolism, as a long-established technique, is often active in various styles of different writers in different periods, and coexists with human art. Symbolism is only a literary school or literary trend of thought in a certain period of time, which rose in France in the 1880s and 1890s, and then spread to all countries in the world in the 1920s and 1930s, becoming a global literary trend of thought. In a word, compared with symbol, symbolism is a relatively small concept, often included in the symbolic system, and a special form of expression in the development of symbolic art. It mainly shows the connotation of the work, the development of things and the truth of the author's heart through symbols. Generally speaking, symbolism first rose in the field of poetry. Baudelaire, the French "devil" poet, is the basic basis for the occurrence and development of symbolism. His work *Flowers of Evil* is the symbol of the formal rise of the Symbolist literary movement. *The Literary Declaration* published by Jean Morias, a young French poet, in the Paris newspaper *Figaro* in 1886 is regarded as the birth certificate of symbolism. He called the poets who despised realism and naturalism and tried to express their personal ideas symbolists. In fact, before the name of symbolism appeared, French poets such as Stephara Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine created many symbolist poems and became the most famous symbolist poets after Baudelaire. In 1899, British poet Arthur Simmons published *Symbolism Literature Movement*, which introduced symbolism to Britain, and the influence of symbolism literature crossed national boundaries and spread to the whole world rapidly.

Then, why did symbolism come into being in literature? As a school, it has different backgrounds in society, economy, literature, art and culture. Symbolism opposes the strong sentiment of Romanticism, but inherits the introspective characteristics of Romanticism. Symbolists believe that the objective world is illusory and unknowable, only the subjective world is real, the objective is only the hints and symbols of the subjective spirit, and the world is "a symbolic forest". In other words, they deny the truth and describe the reality objectively, emphasize the expression of intuition and fantasy,

pay attention to subjectivity and introversion, and pursue the so-called highest truth in their hearts. Therefore, the most important feature of symbolism is the symbol and hint.

When it comes to the topic of symbolism, we need to clarify the two different concepts of symbolism as a means of expression and symbolism as a method of creation. As a method of expression, symbol has a long history in China. As early as 3000 years ago, the ancient Chinese ancestors had the idea of symbol, and in a large number of totem literature and art accompanied by religious color in the primitive period of China, symbolism expression methods had created very rich works. For example, the most representative dragon totem and phoenix totem in totem art are the symbols of the two tribal alliances. Later, because the dragon totem merged the phoenix totem, the dragon became the symbol of the pluralistic integration of the Chinese nation. The Yin, Yang and Eight Diagrams in *The Book of Changes* symbolize various phenomena and changes in nature, reflecting the traditional Chinese cosmology. There are still many such primitive symbolism, which cannot be elaborated here. Perhaps for this reason, Hegel once believed that symbolic art originated mainly in the East (qtd. in Singer 9). Zhou Zuoren also said that symbolism is a new trend in foreign countries, but also an old way in China (211). Generally speaking, the use of symbolism in Chinese poetry is the earliest and the most, from the earliest collection of poetry- *The Book of Songs*, “Bi Xing” has become a traditional method of poetry creation. But this does not mean that other literary styles are used less. For example, there are “precious jade”, “golden lock” and other symbols in a *Dream of Red Mansions*, and so on. This kind of primitive symbolism and classical symbolism works show that symbolism is not only the product of the West, but also the traditional method of Chinese literature. Then, how does Chinese symbolism change from an accidental and unconscious use to a conscious literary means? When will it become a literary trend of thought in China? What influence did symbolism have on Chinese writers? These problems involve the creation method of symbolism, which is juxtaposed with realism and romanticism.

Symbolism, as a category of creative methods of modern and contemporary literary theory, should be a concept introduced into China along with Western symbolism. Before and after the May Fourth Movement, there were articles introducing the works of the symbolists. From March 1920 to November 1921, *Young China* published seven articles written by Wu Weinan, Tian Han and Zhou Wu to introduce the Symbolists. Symbolism was always translated as representationalism until 1919, when Chen Qun published “a Glimpse of the Literary Trend of Thought in the Nineteenth Century in Europe” in the magazine *Construction*, calling the late nineteenth century the era of New Subjectivism (New Romanticism), Symbolism and Mysticism, and symbolism had a formal translation. After 1920, many important western symbolist writers and works were translated and introduced to China. For example, in 1907, Lu Xun translated the Russian symbolist writer Andreev's novels *Silence (Mo)* and *Hatred (Man)*; In December 1924, Xu Zhimo published the translation of Baudelaire's poem “Dead Body” in the third issue of *Yusi* magazine, and so on. After symbolism entered China, it attracted people's attention, and had a tremendous and profound impact on Chinese literature, including fiction, poetry, drama, prose and other aspects, and thus formed the Chinese symbolism literature.

What is the background of symbolism in Chinese literature? Since the rise of Enlightenment at the end of the 19th century, foreign literature, including modern symbolism, has been introduced in large numbers. The conception of Chinese literary creation was once deeply attracted by the broad sense of symbol, thus forming the phenomenon of broad symbolism. The formation of this phenomenon is closely related to the social background at that time and the writer's world outlook and artistic outlook. The darkness of society and the embarrassment of life around the May 4th Movement made Mao Dun, Lu Xun, Lao She, Guo Moruo and other pioneers of the New Culture Movement feel that they could use symbolism to expose the darkness and ugliness of Chinese society at that time and inspire people to strive for lofty revolutionary ideals. In this way, the flowers of revolutionary symbolism blossomed out. In terms of novels, Lu Xun's novels such as *Medicine (Yao)*, *Hometown (Guxiang)*, *Diary of a Madman (Kuangren Riji)*, *Changming Lantern (Changming Deng)*, *White Light (Baiguang)*, *Public Exposure (Shizhong)*, *Mending the Sky (Butian)*, etc.; Others, such as Mao Dun's *Poplar Praise (Baiyang Lizan)*, Lao She's *Cat City (Mao Cheng Ji)*, Shen Congwen's *Border Town (Bian Cheng)* and so on, all draw on the expressive techniques and skills of symbolism to varying degrees. In poetry, the use of symbolism is the most skilled. For example, Li Jinfa's *Light Rain (Wei Yu)*, Dai Wangshu's *Dream Seeker (Xun Meng Zhe)*, Guo Moruo's *Goddess (Nv Shen)* and *Phoenix Nirvana (Fenghuang Niepan)*, etc. In drama, Guo Moruo, Tian Han, Hong Shen, Tao Jingsun, Cao Yu and other dramatists also used symbolism drama skills, which made great contributions to the emergence and development of modern Chinese drama. However, the development trend of symbolism in China is practice first, then theory. According to the times, it can be divided into three stages: primitive symbolism, classical symbolism and modern symbolism. The emergence and development of modern Chinese literature is inseparable from the acceptance and transformation of Western symbolism literature and art by Chinese writers. Nevertheless, no one can deny that the emergence and development of Chinese symbolism literature is not only due to the leading role of Western literature and the new tendency of new writers, not only because they like to use symbols, but also because of the requirements of the times. In other words, it was the critical and expressive requirements of the May 4th Movement that determined the inevitable position of symbolism in the literary world of China at that time. The pioneers of the New Culture Movement deeply embodied the historical requirements of social criticism, ideological criticism and cultural criticism through literary forms, and skillfully and naturally integrated realism and symbolism. Their symbolism of the West is such a use for me, not a blind copy. Through the unique transformation of symbol, they make symbol thoroughly Chinese. In a word, Chinese symbolism has always shown strong national characteristics in its long history.

Mo Yan's literary works are full of symbolism. When it comes to the symbolism of Mo Yan's novels, we have to talk about the influence of Latin American magic realism on Mo Yan. When the Nobel Committee announced Mo Yan as the winner of the 2012 Nobel Prize in literature, it said that Mo Yan does a good job of blending magical realism with folk tales, history and contemporary society. The world in his creation is reminiscent of the fusion of Faulkner and Marquez's works, and at the same time, he who with hallucinatory realism merges folk tales, history and the contemporary.

Generally speaking, magic realism is a kind of modernism rooted in Latin America, which is formed and developed in Latin America and accompanied by the movement of searching for national identity in Latin America. Based on the cultural tradition of Latin America, it expands the meaning boundary of the surface language through the use of symbols, metaphors, hints, metonymy and other means of expression, and has a profound impact on the creative concepts and artistic method of Chinese writers, among which the magic realism works represented by Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* have the greatest impact. The so-called symbolic technique of magic realism refers to the addition of illusory, absurd and deformed elements on the basis of traditional symbolism, which enhances the uncertainty of symbols and the depicted symbolic entities, and weakens their own certainty, so the symbolic technique of Magic realism is less affected by the objective attributes of symbolic entities. It's a hyper-representational, hyper-realistic composite. Obviously, the symbol is the magic realism writer commonly used technique, in their writing, both in changes the reality into the fantasy and does not lose its truth the magic reality local righteousness creation basic principle, the symbol has realized the fusion with the national culture, thus complied with this time novel creation by the current objective social discourse to the illusory history and the cultural discourse development evolution. The reason why Latin American magic realism can be favored by root-seeking writers, especially Mo Yan, is that it combines the symbolic narrative of root-seeking fiction with magic realism.

As a famous writer of root-seeking school, Mo Yan is also deeply influenced by Latin American magic realism literature, and has developed into a magic realism writer combining Chinese and Western. He himself admits that Latin American magic realism literature had a great influence on his early creation: my novellas *Ball Lightning* and *Blonde Baby* all have traces of imitating magic realism. He added: "I was very surprised when I first read *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in 1984. It turns out that novels can be written like this!! Mo Yan said, after that, I have been fighting with Marquez for more than ten years." *One Hundred Years of Solitude* not only let Mo Yan find his own artistic field, but also let him find his own artistic expression. While continuing the special structural mode and expressive perspective of magic realism, Mo Yan added allegorical symbolism to his writing. Symbolism is a commonly used writing technique in magic realism, and symbolism can be seen in most of Mo Yan's works.

Under the influence of Faulkner and Marquez's literary geography, Mo Yan created a local world full of life consciousness- Gaomi Northeast Township. More than 20 years of rural life experience has made Mo Yan have a unique and profound experience of rural life and peasant psychology. Most of his works are created around the background of his hometown, deeply rooted in the national soil of Gaomi Northeast Township, widely absorbing the vitality of folk culture, and narrating the joys and sorrows of Gaomi Township. Mo Yan turns Gaomi Northeast Township into a vibrant life world, and explores the original meaning of life through the ingenious use of symbolism in his novel creation. As early as in the *Red Sorghum Series (Hong Gaoliang Xilie)*, Mo Yan used a lot of symbolic techniques. "Red sorghum" is the symbol of the whole article, is the symbol of the Chinese people's strong vitality, sorghum wine, derived from the red sorghum, a symbol of Gaomi Northeast Township people's indomitable enterprising,

heroic and masculine Dionysian spirit. In Mo Yan's works, Hometown is a kind of imagination, a kind of boundless, not in the geographical sense but in the literary sense. Mo Yan uses myth, absurdity and fable to express the symbolism of Gaomi Northeast Township.

The first is the myth model. Mythological mode, with its complete and self-sufficient overall symbol, constitutes the narrative strategy of root-seeking novel, supports the symbolic narrative of the novel, and strengthens the symbolic art of the novel. In Mo Yan's works, the construction of mythological mode not only enhances the magic factors of the novel, enriches the symbolic implication of the novel, but also becomes the writer's creative style and characteristics. In the Red Sorghum Series, Mo Yan established a fantasy myth world by applying myth mode to his novels, and achieved the purpose of revealing the national character. The second is the absurd narrative. The main feature of magic realism is the extensive use of absurdity, deformation and fantasy elements. Absurdity is the concrete embodiment of mythological thinking in symbolic narrative, and the contrast and integration of absurdity and reality can increase the symbolic implication of the novel. Absurd narration is ubiquitous in Mo Yan's novels, which runs through almost all of Mo Yan's creative process. In *Ball Lightning* (*Qiu zhuang Shandian*), *Thirteen Steps* (*Shisan Bu*), *Mangrove* (*Hong Shulin*), *Wild Mule* (*Ye Luozi*), *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* (*Feng Ru Fei Tun*), *Wine Country* (*Jiu Guo*), *Forty-one Cannons* (*Sishiyi Pao*), *White Cotton* (*Bai Mianhua*) and *Sandalwood Penalty* (*Tanxiang Xing*), he carefully constructed an ugly and dirty absurd world by using a large number of absurd things. The third is the national fable. There is a close relationship between allegory and symbol. National fable is a strategy of symbolic narration in root-seeking novels. National fables originate from Jameson's third world national fables, the core of which is to express the perception of national survival with localized symbols and imagination. Mo Yan's text has multiple meanings, and national fable is one of the important connotations. Mo Yan combines symbolism with allegory, which makes local imagination become a kind of national allegory imagination, and also an allegory about national survival. In *Red Sorghum*, Mo Yan expresses his regret and recollection of the loss of the excellent part of the national spirit through the absurd and bizarre stories of my grandfather and my grandmother. *Fatigue of Life and Death* (*Shengsi Pilao*), *Sandalwood Punishment*, *Frog* (*Wa*) and *Wine Country* all create national suffering, frustration and hope. The black boy image and the carrot image in *The Transparent Carrot* (*Touming de Hongluobo*) make the whole novel text like a poetic fable, and so on.

Mo Yan also takes women as the center to construct his literary paradise. The female images in Mo Yan's works are inextricably linked with symbolism, which is first attributed to Mo Yan's childhood experience and his gratitude to his mother. Mother is a symbol, a totem, a transcendence and an ideal in Mo Yan's works. In Mo Yan's novels, women are the metaphor and symbol of the pursuit of freedom and love. The Chrysanthemum Girl (Juzi Guniang) in *Transparent Carrot*, Dai Fenglian in *Red Sorghum*, Mother (Niang) in *Joy* (*Huanle*), Shangguan Lushi in *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, Sun Meiniang in *Sandalwood Penalty*, Women in *Women Embracing Flowers* (*Huaibao Xianhua de Nvren*), Aunt (Gugu) in *Frog* and so on—these women fight in different forms and under the suppression of male culture. Even the variation of human

nature, only for their own survival opportunities and power. In Mo Yan's works, women are a symbol of vigorous vitality, she endured great pain, tenacious survival, become the true symbol of the Chinese nation. The female images created by Mo Yan contain endless symbolic meanings.

At the same time, Mo Yan is also a master of using color. His novels often use gorgeous color to create a strong sense of picture for readers in reading. Here in Mo Yan, color has been separated from the easy and elegant function of embellishment and decoration, and acts as the carrier and symbol of life's painful feelings. After contextualization, color generates new meanings and constructs the symbolism and allegory of language. Red is the most common color symbol in Mo Yan's novels. The carrot in *Transparent Carrot*, the red pony in *Song of Garlic Bolts in Heaven (Tiantang Suantaizhi Ge)*, the red satin in *Blonde Baby (Jinfa Yinger)* and the red rooster crown have become symbols of hope, strength, joy and life. The red color in *Red Sorghum* has become the background tone of the novel and the symbol of indomitable progress. The lush red sorghum in the novel symbolizes the vigorous primitive vitality.

In a word, symbol is a means of literary creation for writers to express some abstract concepts, thoughts and emotions with the help of concrete images according to the links between things. Symbolism makes the text have multiple interpretations, and leads the reader from the real world to the other side of the world, which is not divorced from reality, but also increases the meaning of the text. Mo Yan has been writing novels for a long time, with a large output of works and a changeable style of creation. We cannot analyze them with several unified laws and standards. Because each novel has its own unique side, it is a creative experiment of Mo Yan in the process of folk transformation. The writing techniques of Mo Yan's novels are changeable and varied, whether it is magic realism or symbolism or film montage editing techniques, its rich imagination space and wanton words can always be amazing.

Mo Yan has a far-reaching influence and inspiration on the development of contemporary Chinese literature. His representative works *Red Sorghum*, *Sandalwood Punishment*, *Big Breasts and Wide Hips*, *Wine Country*, *Fatigue of Life and Death*, *Frog*, his maiden work *Rain on Spring Night (Chunye Yu Feifei)* and his famous work *Red Sorghum Family* are full of feelings of nostalgia and resentment, and are classified as root-seeking literature writers. In his literary creation over the past 20 years, Mo Yan has not only reflected the great changes of Chinese society, but also experienced the development and evolution of Chinese literature and even world literature, trying almost all styles, even in the fields of film, television and drama. He not only inherits and draws lessons from the writing technique of Chinese traditional culture, but also combines the Chinese native creative method with the world, and forms a unique Mo Yan Style novel paradigm in the composition of style such as expression technique, theme nature, structure type, language style and form format with his own excellent creation and unique style, which occupies an important position in the contemporary literary world at home and abroad.

As a cultural root-seeking movement and literary trend of thought, root-seeking literature took place around the 1980s. During this period, with the introduction of a large number of western modern cultural thoughts, including various philosophies, literary

theories and natural science trends, a wave of cultural root-seeking has risen in the Chinese literary arena. The upsurge of cultural root-seeking makes Chinese writers begin to excavate traditional consciousness and national cultural psychology. They mainly explore the relationship between literary roots and culture from the creation of poetry, fiction and prose, which is called root-seeking literature. It is particularly noteworthy that the development trend of root-seeking literature in that period was theory first, then practice. Based on this theory, the writers began to create, and the theorists called them root-seeking school. It is worth pointing out again that the emergence and development of root-seeking literature is not only due to the absorption of modern western culture, but also due to the requirements of the times. In other words, before 1985, the main trend of literary and artistic creation was to return to humanism. Trauma Literature, Reflective Literature and Reform Literature are all carried out around the political axis, and the emergence of root-seeking literature makes literature turn from paying attention to social politics to discovering the deep cultural psychological structure, which is an important symbol of literature's inward turn.

Root-seeking novel is the most important branch of root-seeking literature. In 1985, Han Shaogong, Acheng, Zheng Yi, Zheng Wanlong and Li Hangyu put forward the banner of root-seeking one after another, opposing the tendency of blindly pursuing the creation of Western modernist literature and advocating the root of literature in the rock strata of their own nation. At the same time, influenced by the cultural fever in academic circles, it aims to trace back to the origin of national culture, examine, analyze and inherit traditional culture, which is called root-seeking novel in literary history. This upsurge reached its peak in 1985-1988 under the background of the internal cultural fracture and the collision of external ideological trends. Generally speaking, an important significance of root-seeking literature in literary history is to promote the transformation of the artistic concept of fiction in that period. This transformation is mainly reflected in two aspects: first, the formation of cultural consciousness has changed the single political vision of modern Chinese literature; Secondly, the integration of romanticism and modernism in root-seeking literature breaks the single pattern of realism in novel creation, and innovates in language and style, metaphor and symbol, narrative mode and work structure, which shows the consciousness of literary creation.

In fact, the relationship between root-seeking and Mo Yan cannot be separated from symbolism. Generally speaking, foreign literature, including the introduction of a large number of modern symbolist works and theories, the symbolist tradition of Chinese fiction, and the inherent requirements of the development of fiction itself in the 1980s all constitute the local resources for the prosperity of symbolism in root-seeking fiction.

"During the May 4th Movement, Chinese writers translated and introduced a lot of Russian symbolic novelists, which inspired modern novelists to renew their style. Since the mid-1980s, with the great emancipation of the mind, the continuous translation and introduction of Western modernist literary trends, such as symbolism, expressionism, existentialism, stream of consciousness fiction, absurdity and black humor, and the success of Latin American magic-realist literature based on national cultural traditions in the world, Latin American magic-realist literature has become a great success. All these have strengthened the self-renewal consciousness of Chinese contemporary novelists in



their creative concepts and methods. In addition, the long tradition of Chinese classical symbolism and modern symbolism mentioned above, from a pure technique of expression to an independent creative method, also provides a good hotbed for the formation of the symbolism art of root-seeking fiction. Literature and art, including fiction, as a mirror reflecting social reality, should also develop in line with the political and economic changes of society. The changes at home and abroad have led to the transfer of the creative thinking center of root-seeking novel. In this transformation, the root-seeking writers further embarked on the road of exploration from the critical requirements and performance requirements of the May 4th era. They realized the historical requirements of social criticism, ideological criticism and cultural criticism of the May 4th Literature, and the political tendencies of scar literature, reflective literature and reform literature, all of which made Chinese literature intentionally or unintentionally neglect the deep connection with national culture in the process of development, criticizing bureaucratic local righteousness, privileges and exposing scars. But politics and revolution cannot solve the problem of human nature (Han Shaogong 120). Writers have realized that finding the root of their own national culture is the way for the development of Chinese literature. As Zheng Yi said in *Across the Cultural Fracture Zone (Kuayue Wenhua Duanlie Dai)*: “Whether a work is literature depends on whether it can enter the national culture. Cannot enter the national culture, again lively, is also a time, rely on, I am afraid or non-literary factors” (Zheng Yi 1985). Thus, the exchange and dialogue between culture and literature became an important trend in the development of contemporary Chinese literature at that time. In addition, the situation of realism in Chinese literature at that time seriously hampered the writer's creative thinking and enthusiasm. The creative techniques of the novel should be flexible and diverse. Based on this, in order to break the deadlock of Chinese literary creation thinking and techniques, and get rid of the one-way thinking mode in the past, the diversified development of literature has become a necessity at that time. Symbolism has become a new narrative way to realize the transfer and development in the creation of root-seeking novels.

The change of narrative discourse is the most prominent evolution of root-seeking novels. In the way of narration, a large number of symbols, metaphors, fables, magic and other expressive techniques are used to enrich and deepen the cultural connotation of the works, and then to achieve the integration of realism and modernism creative techniques. Based on the cultural tradition, the root-seeking writers integrate the absurdity, symbolism, stream of consciousness and existentialism of the western modernists, so that the novels convey profound national implications in an aesthetic way. They intentionally or unintentionally incorporate symbols to show the current situation of national survival and to think about the root of national culture and national spirit. In a sense, symbolism has become a particularly effective way of expression for root-seeking writers to show a stronger cultural consciousness. Root-seeking Novels fully applies the symbolic techniques of the development of Western modernist magic realism to its own creative practice, and expresses a certain depth of cultural thinking with various symbolic images. For example, in Han Shaogong's *Dad Dad Dad (Ba Ba Ba)*, a baby has become a symbol of Chinese feudal culture; In Zhang Chengzhi's *Northern River (Beifang de He)*, Northern River as a symbolic image, it is the symbol of the spirit of the whole

Chinese nation, and so on. Color symbols are also widely used in root-seeking works. For instance, the red color in Mo Yan's *Red Sorghum* is a symbol of tenacious progress; the white color in Zhaxidawa's *Tibet, Hidden Years (Xizang, Yinmi Suiyue)* is the symbol of the purity and sanctity of Tianshan Mountain and Holy Lake. In a word, inspired by Latin American magic realism literature, root-seeking writers use myths, fables and magic realism, which can embody symbolic thinking, to find the foundation of literature and the code of culture. In them, symbols have been explored and innovated.

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