



Water, Boat and Tower in Shen Congwen's Works: a Poetic Picture of Western Hunan

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Abstract: Shen Congwen's literary works vividly depict the unique style of western Hunan with his delicate and subtle brushstrokes. In his creation, water, ship, tower and other images occupy a very important position, they contain rich and diverse connotations and unique charm. On the one hand, these images vividly present the natural landscape of Xiangxi, such as the vivid water flow, simple ships, solemn towers, etc., making people feel the unique charm of Xiangxi as if they were there; On the other hand, it profoundly reflects Shen Congwen's deep love for the land of western Hunan, as well as his profound thinking of human nature and profound perception of life. The flow of water seems to tell the ceaselessness and change of life, the drift of the ship symbolizes the impermanence and tenacity of life, and the standing of the tower represents the persistence and pursuit of a spirit. This paper aims to carry out a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the images of water, ship and tower in Shen Congwen's works, and probe deeply into their unique artistic characteristics and profound cultural values, in order to understand Shen Congwen's literary world and his profound thoughts more comprehensively.

Keywords: Shen Congwen; The image; Water; Boat; Tower; Western Hunan

1 Introduction

Shen Congwen is an important writer in the history of modern Chinese literature. His works are full of strong local colors and national customs. Western Hunan, the land that Shen Congwen dreams about, is the source of his creation and the treasure house of inspiration. In his works, the landscape of western Hunan is full of spiritual beauty, with clear streams and undulating mountains, which seem to be the most outstanding masterpiece of nature. The human feeling in Xiangxi is warm and sincere. The harmonious coexistence between neighbors and the pure love between men and women make people feel the beauty of human nature. The customs of Xiangxi are also unique. The unique festivals and traditional handicrafts show the wisdom and diligence of Xiangxi people.

The three images of water, boat and tower appear frequently in Shen Congwen's works. They are an important

part of the natural landscape of western Hunan, and also an important carrier of Shen Congwen's expression of emotion, thought and culture. Water, or galloping ceaseless, or calm as a mirror, symbolizes the flow and change of life, and also represents Shen Congwen's love and reverence for life. The boat, shuttling back and forth in the river, carries the life and dreams of the people of western Hunan, and also reflects Shen Congwen's thinking and exploration of life. Tower, towering into the clouds, solemn and solemn, it is the symbol of Xiangxi culture, but also reflects Shen Congwen's respect and inheritance of traditional culture.

Through the in-depth analysis of these images in Shen Congwen's works, we can have a more comprehensive understanding of his creative intention and artistic style. He painted the beautiful scenery of western Hunan with delicate brushstrokes, expressed his love and attachment to his hometown with sincere emotions, and explored the meaning and value of life with profound thoughts. At the same time,

we can also feel the unique charm of Xiangxi, its landscape, human feelings, customs and so on are intoxicating people, linger.

2 The Image Characteristics and Significance of Shen Congwen's Works.

Image features: Open the window of the unique charm of Xiangxi. Shen Congwen's works are well known for their unique image features. He is good at using delicate descriptions and vivid metaphors to depict the natural landscape and human customs of western Hunan in detail and vividly. The water is like a spirit jumping happily and playing freely between heaven and earth, the boat is like a rootless duckgrass floating in the river, lake and sea, and has no one to rely on. The simple tower is like the guardian of the years standing silently and quietly guarding. These images blend with each other and weave a unique charming landscape of Xiangxi. At the same time, the images in Shen Congwen's works contain profound symbolic significance. They not only reflect the natural features and humanistic characteristics of western Hunan, but also highlight Shen Congwen's deep thinking on the true meaning of life, the complexity of human nature and the diversity of the world.

A mirror reflecting the social life and cultural traditions of western Hunan. Shen Congwen's works take western Hunan as the creative model, and with the exquisite depiction of water, ships, towers and other images, he presents all aspects of social life in western Hunan in an all-round way. Water is the source of life that Xiangxi people rely on for survival, the ship is their main means of travel and transportation, and the tower is a significant symbol of Xiangxi culture. These images not only show the life mode and production mode of Xiangxi people, but also fully reflect their value orientation, aesthetic concept and religious belief. Through the in-depth analysis of these images, we can have a more comprehensive and in-depth insight into the social life and cultural traditions of western Hunan, and feel its unique charm and profound heritage.

The carrier to express Shen Congwen's emotions and thoughts. Shen Congwen has deep and ardent feelings for western Hunan, and his works are full of love and sentimentality for western Hunan. Water, ship, tower and other images became the key carrier for him to pour out his feelings and convey his thoughts. With his sincere praise for water, he expressed his value and love for life and his respect

and fear for nature. Through the detailed description of the ship, the author expresses the helpless feeling of life's drifting and fate. With the vivid depiction of the tower, it conveys the persistence of traditional culture and profound reflection on modern civilization. These images not only give Shen Congwen's works deep emotional connotation, but also make his thoughts more diversified and profound.

3 The Concrete Image Analysis of "Water, Ship and Tower"

3.1 Water

The source of life and emotional sustenance. Water is undoubtedly one of the most important images in Shen Congwen's works. The water of Xiangxi is clear, lively and full of vitality. It is not only an indispensable necessity in the daily life of Xiangxi people, but also an important sustenance of their inner emotions. Under the brilliant writing of Shen Congwen, water is like a gentle and kind mother, carefully nurturing everything in Xiangxi and nourishing the hearts of Xiangxi people. At the same time, the water is varied and mysterious, it is sometimes calm like a mirror, reflecting the surrounding mountains and sky, quiet and beautiful; Sometimes the waves surge and rush endlessly, displaying great power and unpredictability, symbolizing the ups and downs of life and the vagaries of the world.

In "Border Town", the love story of Cuicui and Nuo send is closely intertwined with water. They met at the edge of the clear stream, each other's eyes met in the water, the heart is also quietly close at that moment. Water has become the bridge of their emotions, Nuo sent in the water for Cuicui singing, Cuicui listening to the water, their love in the witness of the water gradually sprouting, growth. However, fate makes people, Exorcise finally leave, leaving Cuicui alone at the water's edge. Cuicui often sat quietly by the water, looking at the long river, the flowing river seemed to take away her thoughts, and it seemed to carry her endless waiting for Nuo to send, the water became her emotional outlet and spiritual comfort.

In The Long River, water also plays an important role. The people in the story lived by the water and lived on it. They work on the water, driving boats on the river, water is the stage of their life. When it comes to flooding, water shows its merciless and destructive power, bringing disaster and suffering to people. But even so, people are still full of reverence and dependence on water, and they show their

tenacious vitality and dedication to life in the struggle and symbiosis with water.

In addition, in Shen Congwen's other works, water often appears in different forms, such as Yuanwater in Xiang Xingsanji, which is the companion of the author on his way back to his hometown, witnessing what the author saw and heard and the emotional changes in his heart. The flow of water is like the passage of time, slowly moving forward with the author's memories and thoughts.

Through his delicate depiction of water, Shen Congwen vividly displays the deep emotion between Xiangxi people and water, making readers deeply feel the significance and unique charm of water in the land of Xiangxi.

3.2 The Ship -- a Symbol of Life and Destiny Wandering

As the main means of transportation of people in western Hunan, boat is a very common and profound image in Shen Congwen's works. Its drifting on the water is just like the ups and downs of life and the fickleness of fate. In Shen Congwen's delicate description, the boatmen work hard on the river, their life is full of hardships and dangers, but they always face with a strong and optimistic attitude. The boat is not only their means of subsistence, but also a key link between them and the outside world. With the help of the boat, they can know the wonderful outside world, but also spread the unique culture of Xiangxi to a wider world.

In *The Long River*, the scene of boatmen sailing on the Yuanwater is impressive. They fought against the wind and rain, pushing their way through the waves, swaying with the current as if they might be swallowed at any moment. However, with their skillful skills and tenacity, they survived the danger again and again. Their experiences bear witness to the transformation of Xiangxi, from a quiet village to a gradual process of outside influence. For them, the boat is not only a means of making a living, but also their spiritual sustenance. During their long years on the boat, they developed a deep relationship with the boat and it became an integral part of their lives.

For example, in the *Border Town*, Cuicui's grandfather is also a boatman. He supported the ferry every day, picking up the villagers on both sides of the river, and the boat became a bridge between him and the villagers. Despite the poor life, he still sticks to his post and provides convenience to the villagers. His ferry witnessed the growth of Cuicui, but also witnessed the warm and cold Xiangxi town.

In addition, in the "Xiangxing Prose", Shen Congwen himself also took a boat to travel on the Yuan water many times. Through the description of what he saw and heard in the course of the boat trip, he showed the natural scenery and cultural landscape of Xiangxi. In his works, boat is not only a means of transportation, but also an important medium for him to explore western Hunan and feel life.

Through his vivid depiction of the image of the boat, Shen Congwen deeply reflects the living state and spiritual world of Xiangxi people, so that readers can have a deeper understanding of the culture and history of Xiangxi.

3.3 Pagoda - Adherence to Traditional Culture and Reflection on Modern Civilization

The pagoda, as a prominent symbol of Xiangxi culture, bears the persistence of Xiangxi people to traditional culture. Under Shen Congwen's brilliant writing, the pagoda often stands on the top of the mountain or by the river, its tall and simple posture, exudes a solemn and sacred atmosphere. It is not only an ordinary building, but also a kind of spiritual sustenance, representing the ardent yearning and unremitting pursuit of the people of Xiangxi for a better life.

In many of Shen Congwen's works, the image of the tower appears frequently. For example, in the background description of the *Border Town*, the distant white tower stands quietly, as if it is a silent guardian, witnessing the changes of the Xiangxi town over the years. It sets off with the surrounding landscape and people, forming a harmonious and beautiful picture, highlighting the unique charm of the traditional culture of western Hunan.

At the same time, Shen Congwen, with his keen insight, deeply expressed his reflection on modern civilization through the detailed description of the pagoda. With the rapid impact of modern civilization, the traditional culture of Xiangxi is gradually on the verge of disappearing, and the pagoda is also facing the crisis of being destroyed. Through the description of the pagoda, Shen Congwen issued a strong appeal to people, hoping that people can pay attention to the protection of traditional culture and cherish these precious historical heritage.

In *The Long River*, there is also a description of the tower. When the tide of *The Times* is rolling in, some ancient towers seem to be out of place in the modern buildings, their existence seems to remind people not to forget the history and culture. Through these descriptions, Shen Congwen

expressed his concern about the gradual decline of traditional culture under the impact of modern civilization and his deep concern about the inheritance of traditional culture.

The pagoda under Shen Congwen's works is not only an important symbol of traditional culture in western Hunan, but also an important carrier of his thinking on the relationship between modern civilization and traditional culture, which prompts readers to think deeply about cultural inheritance and development.

4 The Blend of Emotion and Nature: the Interaction of Characters and Images

Under the brilliant writing of Shen Congwen, water, boat and tower are not just simple natural landscapes and cultural symbols, they have sublimated into deep sustenance and vivid expression of characters' emotions. Characters and images blend with each other to create a unique artistic realm.

Take "Border Town" for example, the image of Cuicui is closely related to water. She is just like the clear and agile water in Xiangxi, pure and flawless, good and beautiful. She often plays and sings by the water, and water has become an indispensable part of her life. When her love suffered setbacks, the water became her emotional outlet, her tears into the river, incisively and vividly express the pain and helplessness in her heart.

In *The Long River*, the image of the boatmen is closely linked to the ship. They are like Xiangxi ships, brave and resolute, optimistic and open-minded, adrift on the river, not afraid of difficulties and dangers. The boat is their life and their pride. They worked hard on the ship, lived a daily life, and established a deep relationship with the ship.

Another example is Shen Congwen's description of Yuanshui on his journey in *Xiang XingSanji*, which also reflects the blending of characters and water. He looked at the Yuan water flowing, the heart of thousands of thoughts, both the miss of hometown, but also the emotion of life. Water became an important medium for his emotional expression.

In Shen Congwen's other works, such as *SAN SAN*, the character is integrated with the natural environment of the countryside. The landscape, flowers, trees and other natural elements in the garden have become part of the emotional world, and her happiness and sorrow are closely connected with this nature.

Through this kind of clever interaction between characters and images, Shen Congwen perfectly integrates

emotion with nature, making the works full of poetry and appeal, so that readers can more deeply feel the emotional power and artistic charm contained in the works.

5 The Collision of Tradition and Modernity: the Change of Times in Imagery

Shen Congwen lived in a period when Chinese society was in a critical period of rapid transformation from tradition to modernity. In his works, we clearly witness the fierce collision between tradition and modernity and the complex situation of mutual integration. Water, ship, tower and other images are also quietly changing in the tide of this era.

In "Border Town", the water of Xiangxi still maintains its clear and flexible characteristics. However, with the gradual invasion of modern civilization, the stilt houses with strong traditional characteristics along the waterfront are gradually replaced by new buildings, and the traditional way of life is also changing unconsciously. Although the ship is still the main means of transportation for the people of Xiangxi, the emergence of the motor ship has undoubtedly brought a huge impact on the lives of the boatmen. As a symbol of traditional culture, the pagoda still stands high on the land of western Hunan, but its surrounding environment has undergone earth-shaking changes, and the atmosphere of modern civilization is increasingly strong.

In *The Long River*, we can see a similar change. Traditional wooden ships have gradually lost their advantage in the competition with modern ships. Their way of life and financial resources have been seriously affected, and they have to face new challenges and choices. At the same time, the countryside of western Hunan is no longer the closed and quiet state in the past, and modern ideas and lifestyles begin to penetrate into the countryside, and the traditional rural order and values are impacted.

Through the delicate description of these image changes, Shen Congwen deeply expresses his deep attachment to tradition and his worry about modern civilization. He sincerely hopes that in the process of the continuous advancement of modern civilization, the traditional culture and national characteristics of western Hunan can be properly preserved, so that the beauty and simplicity of western Hunan can be passed on forever. With his works as the carrier, he conveyed to readers the value of traditional culture and the reflection on modern civilization, which triggered people's deep thinking on the relationship

between tradition and modernity.

6 Shen Congwen's Combination of Language Style and Image: Fresh, Natural and Poetic Expression

Shen Congwen's language style is fresh and natural, simple and smooth, and has a strong local color and national customs. He is good at using the dialects and colloquial sayings of Xiangxi to make his works more vivid, vivid and full of life. At the same time, his language is very poetic, and he frequently uses metaphors, personification, parallelism and other rhetorical devices to describe the natural landscape and human customs of western Hunan as picturesque.

In the description of water, in addition to "the source of the White River, from the Sichuan border, from the boat up the white River, the spring water can go straight to the Xiushan of Sichuan", and "the water in the pool is so deep and so clear, reflecting the clouds in the sky and the mountains on both sides, like a beautiful picture scroll", vividly showing the clarity of the water and the beauty of the surrounding scenery.

When describing the ship, in addition to "the boat is like a reed, floating on the calm river", there are "the ship slowly moving forward in the water, just like a flexible fish in shuttle", which shows the lightness and flexibility of the ship.

When describing the tower, in addition to "the tower stands on the top of the mountain, like a giant, overlooking the whole land of Xiangxi", there is "the ancient tower standing there quietly, as if telling the history and stories of Xiangxi", which gives the tower life and emotion.

Through the perfect combination of his unique language style and image, Shen Congwen's works have a high artistic value, making readers feel the unique charm as if they were in the beautiful world of western Hunan.

7 The Embodiment of Era Criticism and Human Concern: the Deep Meaning of Image

Shen Congwen's works not only present the beauty and simplicity of western Hunan, but also deeply reveal the dark side of society and the weakness of human nature. The images of water, ship and tower have deeper meaning in his works, which become the powerful embodiment of Shen Congwen's criticism of The Times and his concern for humanity.

In Border Town, Cuicui's love tragedy is no doubt the helplessness of her personal fate, but also the reflection of

social tragedy. Xiangxi closed and backward, as well as the traditional moral concept of the heavy bondage, so that Cuicui's love can not be consummated. Water here not only represents the flow of life and emotion, but also symbolizes the darkness of society and the indifference of humanity. The seemingly calm river is hiding a lot of helplessness and sadness.

In "The Long River", although the life of the boatmen is full of hardships and dangers, they always adhere to the quality of kindness and integrity. However, with the impact of modern civilization, some people gradually become selfish and greedy, and the moral bottom line of society continues to decline. The ship here not only symbolizes the drifting of life and the impermanence of fate, but also symbolizes the changes of society and the degeneration of human nature. The ship fluctuates in the river, just as the society fluctuates in the tide of The Times, and human nature also changes in this process.

In The Husband, the image of water is again prominent. The husband sent his wife to the city to be a ship prostitute, and the water witnessed this helpless choice. Water not only carries the helplessness of life, but also reflects the miserable fate of the people at the bottom of society, which reflects Shen Congwen's deep sympathy for the people at the bottom of society and criticism of social reality.

For example, in GUI Sheng, the image of the tower also has profound meaning. GUI Sheng's affection for Jinfeng is sincere and simple, but under the impact of traditional ideas and practical interests, it eventually leads to tragedy. The tower symbolizes the restraint and repression of the tradition. It stands quietly, but it cannot change the fate of the characters, reflecting Shen Congwen's helplessness to the repression of human nature and his reflection on the tradition.

Through elaborating these images, Shen Congwen expressed his profound criticism of social reality and his warm concern for human nature. With his works, he hopes to awaken people's unremitting pursuit of truth, goodness and beauty, and promote the development of society in a better direction.

8 Shen Congwen's Perception of Life: Exploring the Meaning of Life in Images

Shen Congwen's works are full of enthusiasm for life and meditation on life. Water, ship, tower and other images become the key ways for him to explore the meaning of life.

In Shen Congwen's eyes, life is like water that is clear, dynamic and full of changes. It never stops flowing, sometimes gentle, sometimes rapid, just as the course of life is full of unknown and variable. Life is like a boat drifting on the river, to go through the baptism of wind and rain and rough tribulations. The tower symbolizes the goal and pursuit of life, and is the spiritual support of people in the journey of life.

In "Border Town", Cuicui lives a strong life despite love setbacks. Water has become the source of her life and motivation, so that she can maintain an optimistic and positive attitude in difficult situations. She grew up near the water, accompanied by water, the spirit of water gives her a pure heart, so that she is full of hope for the future.

In The Long River, the boatmen love their work despite their hardships, spend their lives on board and find meaning in life. The ship is their life support, they feel the fullness and happiness of life in the drift. They are familiar with every part of the water as if they were familiar with their own life trajectory, and the rocking of the ship seems to be the rhythm of life.

Shen Congwen's own journey on the Yuanshui River in Xiang XingSanji also reflects his perception of life. He watched the river flowing and thought about the meaning of life. The rushing water of the river made him feel the power of life, and the scenery along the way made him realize the colorful life.

For example, in "A Passionate Sailor and a Passionate Woman", the life of the sailors is full of hardships, but their love for life and dedication to life are touching. Their drifting life on the ship is like the journey of life, although uncertain, but they are still positive.

Through the delicate description of these images, Shen Congwen deeply expressed his reverence for life and deep understanding of life. He reminds people that life is precious and short, we should cherish life, love life, and constantly pursue their goals and dreams on the road of life.

9 Summary and prospect

Shen Congwen skillfully uses water, ship, tower and other images to vividly and delicately outline a poetic picture of western Hunan for us. These images not only vividly present the natural landscape of western Hunan, but also vividly show the local humanistic customs, and profoundly reflect Shen Congwen's value and reverence for life, deep

insight and reflection on human nature, keen criticism and concern for society, and unique perception and reflection on The Times. Shen Congwen's works have unique artistic charm and immeasurable cultural value, which is undoubtedly a dazzling gem in modern Chinese literature and an important part of the world literature field.

Looking forward to the future, we should study Shen Congwen's works more deeply and carefully, and fully tap the rich cultural connotation and unique artistic value contained in them. We can analyze from multiple perspectives, such as discussing the traditional cultural elements embodied in the works, and the inheritance and development of these elements in contemporary society; To study Shen Congwen's delicate description of human nature, and to think about how to better understand and deal with interpersonal relations in contemporary society; This paper analyzes the depiction of social changes in the works and provides historical reference for the development of contemporary society.

At the same time, we should actively integrate Shen Congwen's works with contemporary society, and deeply explore its inspiration and reference significance to all aspects of contemporary society. For example, in the aspect of environmental protection, we can learn the wisdom of harmonious coexistence between man and nature from Shen Congwen's works, and provide useful ideas for solving contemporary ecological problems; In the aspect of cultural construction, learn from Shen Congwen's excavation and presentation of local culture to promote the prosperity and development of contemporary culture; In the construction of spiritual civilization, learn Shen Congwen's works to praise the beauty of human nature and the pursuit of truth, goodness and beauty, and improve the moral level of contemporary society.

Through our continuous efforts, Shen Congwen's works will shine more brightly in the new era, contribute more power to the cultural cause of mankind, and always occupy an important place on the stage of world literature, emitting unique charm and attracting more readers to appreciate and understand.

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