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## A Critical Study of Mo Yan's Life And Death Are Wearing Me Out

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### Abstract

The paper attempts to analyze the polyphonic voices of animal in one soul, through which Mo Yan unravels the history of China in Life And Death Are Wearing Me Out. The heterogeneous platform created by the author gives us a clear picture of how the Land Reform Act impacted the lives of civilians in then China. Through, the helm of transmigration, the novel discusses various problems faced by a human in the form of animal. The character Xiamen Nao, reborn as donkey, ox, pig, dog, monkey and finally as a human, manages to live an independent life in all reincarnation.

**Key words:** Mo Yan, China, history, animal, reincarnation,

### Introduction

The writings of the Chinese author Mo Yan, who was awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize for Literature in 2012, can be brought under Root Seeking literature His works always addresses the rural life in China. The love for his native soil makes his works unique in its own way. The social and political havoc are the backdrop of his works. Keeping the past history of China as the milieu, his provides a vivid glimpse of the political and social life of rural Chinese people. Mo Yan takes the stance of patriotism in his works and endorses rural life of China.

The novel *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* revolves around the life Xiamen Nao. He was tortured to die because he was an independent farmer. Why was he killed?). Fought with Yama, he reborn as a variety of animals in the same family. In each of his incarnations, his wish to be independent leads him to suffer. So he felt shame on each birth but provides immense peace when he dies. All his reincarnation forms are tortured to join the commune and are forced to become a part of collectivization. But, all the reincarnation animals refuse to join Communism at any cost. In addition to disobeying the State, Xiamen Nao was particular about being independent and free. Thus, both life and death consecutively gave him no relief rather but pain.

### **Life of Xiamen Nao**

Lord Yama was surprised by the questions of an independent farmer, Xiamen Nao in Hell. Ximen Nao argues with Yama that he should be sent back to Earth and be allowed to live in the same house.

“I am innocent! Me, Ximen Nao; in my thirty years- in the land of morals I loved manual labor and was a good and thrifty family man. I repaired bridges and repaved roads and was charitable to all. The idols in Northeast Gaomi Township temples were restored thanks to my generosity; the poor township people escaped starvation by eating my food. Every kernel of rice in my granary was wetted by the sweat of my brow, every coin in my family’s coffers coated with painstaking effort. I grew rich through hard work; I elevated my family by clear thinking and wise decisions. I truly believe I was never guilty of an unconscionable act. And yet a compassionate individual like me, a person of integrity, a good and decent man, was trussed-up like a criminal, marched- off to a bridgehead, and shot!” (Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out 4)

Despite being good to the society and to his family, Xiamen Nao wonders why he died. His wish to live again was revealed from this argument with Lord Yama.

*Ximen Nao* explains how sincere he was in his farming. He is very particular about independent farming and living. He never wants to be modern and turn to industrialization. With the rapid fire questions to Lord Yama, he wish to reborn in the same family.

On hearing his defense, Lord Yama decided to send him back to Earth and to reborn in the same family. But, Lord Yama wanted Ximen Nao to forget all his worries when he goes back to earth. So, the attendants of Hell gave a drink that would make him forget his past. Ximen Nao denied and said “No, I want to hold on to my suffering, worries, and hostility. Otherwise, returning to that world is meaningless” (Life and death are wearing Me out 6). He desired to hold back the memory so as to live with an aim of independent farmer in the incarnation.

### **Lan Lian, the servant of Xiamen Nao**

Like his master Xiamen Nao, Lan Lian followed the footsteps. Lan Lian follows independent farming in the same plot which was inherited from his master. When the Chairman Mao Zeodong died, as a committed independent farmer Lan said “he is dead but I have to keep on living. There’s millet that need harvest” (Life and Death Re Wearing Me Out 333). He can think only in terms of independent farming. When everyone in the country followed communism, Lan Lian was the only farmer to get permission for the Chairman to do his own farming. This incident proves that, he never opposes Chairman Mao or communism, rather he yearn to be independent till he dies.

### **Xiamen Donkey**

Lan Lian, the servant sensed the resemblances of his master Xiamen Nao from the eyes of Xiamen Donkey. With the human mind and donkey body, Xiamen Nao was haunted by the past memories. It was a continuous call from commune to every citizen to join the collectivization. But even after the high pressure from the party officials, Lan Lian and Ximen donkey stubbornly denied. Thus, he is viewed as “a black model” (Life and Death are Wearing Me Out 84) for the entire nation. Xiamen Nao’s death and Xiamen Donkey’s life became insignificant. The collectivization which killed him then made his whole family to suffer still now. Xiamen Donkey said “there are too any things I don’t understand which makes me uncomfortable, so dying is better” (Life and Death are Wearing Me Out 47). It was the time of the great famine in the country, Lan Lian protected Donkey from it. Lan Lian provided good food, but there was very difficult of being protected from the hunger humans surrounded by it. Finally, it turned to be a meal for the

hunger pangs of the villagers. Ximen Donkey heard itself “...take it...kill! kill the independent farmer crippled donkey” (Life and Death are Wearing Me Out 105). Thus his life on earth as a donkey came to an end.

### **Xiamen Ox**

Lan Lian was in need of a chivalry animal to plough the field against the collectivization. He bought an ox from the market. Lan Lian identifies the ox eyes as “an exact replica of our donkey’s eyes” (Life and Death are Wearing Me Out 115). The understanding between Lan and Xiamen *ox* was never flawed by the collectivization system. The party officer in the village made use of every chance to whip it to join the commune. He “grabbed ears and pinched the nose...” (Life and Death are Wearing Me Out 126). Yet, it never turn back to party command. The red guards advanced to take over the ox to the commune but Lan furiously shouted “you have to kill me to get to this ox” (Life and Death are Wearing Me Out 178). *During* the fight between Lan Lian with his son Jiefang, ox was severely injured. But “step by agonizing step ox landed belonging to the last independent farmer in the nation, died.”(Life and Death Re Wearing Me Out 215)

### **Xiamen Pig**

The third reincarnation of Ximen Nao was a pig in the Ximen compound. Once again, he wished to live as independent pig. The “three marks of a good pig .....big eater, deep sleeper, fast grower, I mastered all three” (Life and Death are Wearing Me Out 228). Xiamen pig was called as Piglet 16. Compared to the previous reincarnation, the life of being pig was little satisfactory. This time Piglet 16, was with “extraordinary intelligence... concern was self-protection” (Life and Death are Wearing Me Out 241). In the Xiamen Village pig breeding station, Piglet 16 became the model pig. So it “had bath and a haircut....looked handsome....set a good example” (Life and Death are Wearing Me Out 254). Even at a devastating epidemic that caused more death among pigs, it survived. At an occasion, it fought with wild boar to protect the other pigs in the farm. With the chivalry act, Piglet 16 injured and suffered death pain. Piglet 16 remarked that “my legs carried me to the apricot garden pig farm” (Life and Death are Wearing Me Out 346) where it died.

## **Xiamen Dog**

Little Four was the name given to the next reincarnation of Xiamen Nao as a Dog. Soon after reaching the family compound from the Hell, Xiamen Nao felt the Dog's body and human mind of him. Little Four accompanied the grandson of Lan Lian. Little Four thought "when you come to a new place, learn the local custom and follow them" (Life and Death are Wearing Me Out 384). With better understanding after three transmigration, Xiamen understood the nation and commented in the form of dog as "1950 people were innocent 1960 they were fanatics 1970 afraid of their own shadows 1980 they carefully weighed peoples words actions 1990 they were simply evil" (Life and Death are Wearing Me Out 266). Till it died, it managed to live in the world of modernism.

## **Xiamen Monkey**

In all the reincarnation, Xiamen Nao felt the torment of being animals and confused and suffered between life and death. Therefore, he wished to be an animal which is very close to human. Xiamen monkey was bought up by Fenghuang, one of the grand daughters of Lan Lian. When Fenghuang danced before the crowd, Xiamen monkey collects the "tossed money into the platter" (Life and Death are Wearing Me Out 524). The hard times of the monkey reincarnation made Xiamen Nao more draining. Unable to live the life without food and shelter is hopeless. Xiamen monkey never obey the orders and always unstable of being in the modernization world. This made it incapable of being independent faced the life very worse. With the senseless life, it was died by a car accident.

## **Xiamen as human**

Lan Lian grandson Kiefeng gave birth to a boy who is the last reincarnation of Xiamen Nao. His name was Lan Qiansui. Lan Qiansui 's parents marriage was a failure, so his father committed suicide and mother died during the delivery. Therefore, Lan's son Jiefang pampered him. Lan Qiansai is "born with a strange bleeding disease, hemophilia" (Life and Death are wearing Me Out 539). He is born in the new millennium with extraordinary language skills, which made him to listen to his grandfather Jiefang narrating the entire

history of Xiamen Nao. The fifty years of life and death on earth as different animals gave him no purpose but, in each reincarnation Xiamen Nao never compromised on being an independent farmer.

## Conclusion

Xiamen compound had become a splendid tomb as all died animals were buried and made to rest in peace. Xiamen Nao's with worries and memories of human and animal, torched by the political disorder. Death was the destination for peace, rather a meaningless life on earth. None of the animals want to live the life of an ordinary being following communism rather always want to be free. Xiamen Nao never dreamt of living for the sake of living. As he always has strong desire to be an independent animal even if were to born many a times. The oppression of government sucked not only the life of human but also the animals.

The structure of the very society became a lockup for animals not to be independent. The human and animals are caught up in the system, from which they can never come out. If a being wish to be independent in the country, then it can only be achieved by death. The death became the way to serene life. This plot stresses that animals are also significant creature on this earth. Therefore, it has to be respected and given place to live as one among us. The novel sketches the impact of society and politics on animals. The dominant class suppresses the ruling class as well as their animals. The State handcuff never left even the animals. Thus life and death became nonsensical and absurd. Through the miseries of animals, the freedom from the dominant class and corrupted officials can be well understood. At one instance Lan Lian said "the people's commune and I are like well water and river water ...we don't mix"( *Life and Death are Wearing Me Out* 104). So, the life on earth was lifeless without being independent. The shame of birth and the pride of death was the only solution till they attain independence.

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