Aphasia and Breakout of Women in Patriarchal Society—From Joyce Carol Oates's the Little Bird of Heaven

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Abstract: The Little Bird of Heaven is written by Joyce Carol Oates, a famous contemporary American writer. The text aims to unfold the female situations from the novel and to reveals the loss of women’s right to speak under the domination of patriarchy in the real world. And the text discloses the rebellious spirit beneath the women from the novel with the feminist theories merging and developing these years, including the views held by Juliet Mitchell.

Keywords: Joyce Carol Oates, The Little Bird of Heaven, Women’s Aphasia, Feminism.

1. Introduction
Joyce Carol Oates, a renowned contemporary American novelist, is known as "Female Faulkner". Oates is a prolific writer who has been active in American literature since her first short story collection, By the North Gate. She has been writing diligently and continuously, and has published more than 40 novels to date, encompassing Them, A Garden of Earthly Delights (1966), Blackwater, the Fall and so on. Thanks to her extraordinary literary achievements over the years, Oates has been nominated twice for the Nobel Prize in Literature. Her work concentrates on "rape, incest, murder, molestation, cannibalism, torture and bestiality in every imaginable form of physical, psychological and sexual abuse", which reflects the reality of the contemporary American society and female situations as well as the gender inequality shrouded in these situations.

The Little Bird of Heaven is a story set in the mythical small city of Sparta, New York. The death of Zoe Kruller, "my" father's lover makes him become the suspect murder and the disintegration of the family. Is man a bird falling from heaven? The passion under violence, the interweaving of cruelty and beauty in human nature, and the aphasia of women under the contemporary patriarchal society are vividly reflected in this novel.

2. The Loss of Women’s Right to Speak
The first half of the 1950s was an era filled with male violence and the absolute dominance of male discourse, and women were deprived of their right to speak and were in collective silence. During World War II, with large numbers of young men going to war, the demand for labor in the entire American society increased dramatically. Under the call of the government and the oppression of The Times, women have to go out of the house to participate in social production and become an indispensable part of American social and economic life. However, after the end of the war, the American government, contrary to the propaganda tone of the war, propagated traditional feminist values in public opinion and called on working women to return to their families and take their families as the focus of life. The extremely conservative social atmosphere makes women put on the old coat of the 19th century and has to return to the family to play the role of good wife and good mother.

Millett, in her world-acclaimed doctoral thesis, The Politics of Sex, introduced the concept of "masculinity." First of all, it should be made clear that the concept of masculinity was not invented by Millett, she merely injected new meaning into it: first, it refers to the domination of men over women; Second, it refers to male elders dominating the younger generation. It also refers to "those relations and combinations of power structures used by one group of humans to dominate another." Since the essence of politics is power, so long as there is domination of one power group over another, this relationship has political significance. Zilla R. Eisenstein combined the patriarchal system with capitalism, arguing that women are oppressed because they are in a position of powerlessness, and as the opposite of oppression, power comes from sex, race and class, which is embodied in the material and ideological aspects of patriarchy, racist ideology and capitalism. In Pierre Bourdieu's Male Domination, the author also exposes the domination relations that exist in the social sphere: the rulers impose their values on the ruled, and the ruled unknowingly participate in their own domination. This includes the "gender domination" lurking in the unconscious of both men and women. The long-term dominance of patriarchal society has led to the long-term suppression of women's right to speak, and women are often labeled as "irrational" and "easy to be emotional". The deep-rooted ideology of male dominance and the widespread acceptance of the prejudice that men are inherently superior ensure the superior status of men and the inferior status of women. In the case of temperament, it refers to the formation of personality along fixed and unchanging lines, and the basis of all is the needs and values of the gender which governs; It is also the standard which this sex value applies to and which are more conveniently found in the members of the subordinate, namely, the initiative, intelligence, strength, and efficiency of work in men, and the passivity, ignorance, meekness, ‘virtue,’ and inefficiency of work in women, that are used as the criterion.” When male domination is established and legitimized, which in turn reinforces the "natural" characteristics of both genders, the institutionalized effects of this cultural bias become entrenched and difficult to change. From the point of view of feminist writers, 'traditional' or 'mainstream' Western thought
(which includes a wide variety of thinkers from Plato and Hobbes to Sartre and Habermas) is better described as 'malestrcam'. The specific manifestation of female aphasia is silence and imitation of male speech.

In the Bird of Heaven, "my" mother's description of her relationship with "my" father was that she had never really understood "my" father, and she never allowed us to ask about our father's events in World War II, whether it was for fear of touching "my" father's difficult spiritual pain after the war or that there would be a layer of estrangement between husband and wife in American society at that time. It wasn't until my father's lover was murdered that my mother learned of his betrayal and never allowed us to interact with him again. According to the psychological description of the father, we can learn that the singer is not the only lover of the father, which shows the inequality between men and women in post-war family relations, as well as the reality of male derailment and moral degradation, and the status quo of women playing aphasia and chaos in the family.

Describing the state of the father lover, Zoe lamented that if I had first considered a career as a professional singer and then had children at the age of 30, everything would have been fine for me, you have your own children while you are still a child, you have another way of life. The novel is filled with a lot of Zitoyi's dissatisfaction with the real situation, as well as when she has to amuse the man, and the unwilling and loathing of places of debauchery or sensuality. At the last time, she roars out that "I quit!". It shows her deep hatred of this and her desire to get out of the mire. Both the role of housewives and the role of women as a professional reflect the status quo of women's right to speak in contemporary American society.

At the same time, "my" classmates' tendency to beat me, Aaron's sexual abuse of me made me mistaken it for the expression of male passion, Aaron's promiscuity with his much older teacher, and my encounter with Aaron after many years as an adult, still in the form of sexual communication, all reflect the pressure, physical violence, sexual violence, verbal violence and mental abuse of men on women in the social background.

3. Feminist Resistance and Breakout

Juliet Mitchell, the pioneer of social feminism, argues that the combination of production, procreation, sex, and the socialization of children constitutes the mechanism by which women are oppressed. Therefore, if the status of women is to be radically changed, it is necessary to change the four closely linked structures, not just one of them. For example, of the four factors contributing to the oppressive status of women, "the economic factor, while still the main one, must be accompanied by policies consistent with the other three factors, and these policies must continue to be consistent. The timing of the move may play a bigger role than economics." Mitchell also believes that the basis of patriarchy is primarily spiritual, in people's subconscious, and that social prejudices exaggerate the physical differences between the sexes, resulting in the lower social status of women. Therefore, any successful women's revolution must involve both capitalism and patriarchy, which are mutually reinforcing and interdependent.

In the Little Bird of Heaven, women's right to speak is deprived, but the novel also reflects women's dissatisfaction and resistance. For example, "my" mother insisted that we are not allowed to contact with our father, and when our father drove behind us just to find out if our life going on smoothly or called just to say hello, our mother's reaction was usually very intense and she wanted to call the police. Moreover, when my father asked me to stay with her as a threat just to get back together with my mother, and wanted to return to the family identity, my mother didn't make any compromise. Finally, my father was shot me when the police mistakenly thought that I had been kidnapped.

At the same time, my father's lover Zoe also reflects the rebellion against the low status of women in this society all the time. She thinks my father is handsome, but my mother is a woman who runs for the family without any charm. Her urgent pursuit of her love beyond the social secular values is also a radical rebellion against the patriarchal society and female aphasia. Zoe once said that if he had a child later, at the same time, he also hated the work of getting up early in the store with wine and laughter. Her hysterical rebel to quit her job, her indifference to her husband's saying that she is a bitch, and her acts against the secular values of society as well as the patriarchal society all reflect the rebellious spirit shrouded beneath her.

"My" experience was not spared from the prejudice and discrimination against women under the current social tide, what my mother did was actually called Ben and then Christa, my classmates always had a tendency to bully me, the campus was full of violence and marijuana that reflects everyone's pursuit of fantasy, and Aaron's physical violence and sexual abuse against me, I was deeply involved but also sought to find a solution. Finally, I became a lawyer when I became an adult, trying to help people who have suffered from family's troubles and hardships just like Aaron and me. At the same time, the fact that I met Aaron again as an adult, and that I chose to leave after sex, reflects my mature feminine values and my desire not to repeat the dysfunctional family relationships and moral chaos of the previous generation. As depicted in the book of birds in heaven, not far away there is a bird in joy, singing the happy melody of the water, intoxicating, wonderful to my heart. Through the ice hanging from the evergreens, I saw cardinals with bright red feathers and black crowns. This is a male bird. A female bird with blue feathers and a black crown was at his side, and I looked at the sight and said, "Think that's the little bird of heaven"—right here? In our tree?" But my brother Ben was not impressed. And female's rebellion could also be seen in Joe's song

Well love they tell me is a fragile thing
It's hard to fly on broken wings
I lost my ticket to the promised land
Little bird of heaven right here in my hand.
So toss it up or pass it round
Pay no mind to what you're carryin' round
Or keep it close, hold it while you can
There's a little bird of heaven right here in your hand.

The psychological description of women in the book reflects the desire of women to break the shackles and bonds, and they yearn for freedom, beauty, and an equal and stable society.
4. Conclusion

Joyce's realistic writing reveals that women suffer from the real society, incest, murder, molestation, cannibalism, torture and bestiality in every imaginable form of physical, psychological and sexual abuse and so on. The idea that female are inferior to male in a patriarchal society has a long history, and women constantly break and reshape these concepts in this process. In the 1960s, under the social environment of long-standing oppression in a patriarchal society, the women's movement rose again, and many feminist writers emerged. Like The Second Sex from Simone Beauvoir, Sexual Politics from Kate Millett, Pilgrimage from Dorothy Richardson, The Ballad and Source from Ivy Compton Burnett, Gone with The Wind from Margaret Mitchell and so on. Women have been deprived of their right to speak for a long time, including contemporary times. Joyce's "Birds in Heaven" reveals in his realistic depiction that women in contemporary American society are still oppressed by society and men, and at the same time, they constantly resist with their own reason and talent. It shows the possibility that women can be rational, have responsibility and mature values that are no different from men.

References