

‘LITERATURE AND CRITICISM: MEANS WEIGHS MORE THAN CONTENT’

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Michel Foucault once pointed out that, “the truthfulness not only lies in the content, but also in the expression techniques.” With respect to literature composition, how to say is even more important than what to say. The conclusion of this paper is based on the close reading of these three classical works: ‘My Name is Red’, Orhan Pamuk, Turkey; ‘Fortress Besieged’, Ch’ien Chungshu, China, and ‘Gentle Breath’, I·A·Bunin, Russia. This paper discusses the crucial role of the expression techniques in highlighting, delivering, conquering the content of the discourse.

Refer to literature composition, people usually consider that discourse content determines the vitality of literary works, and expression techniques are inessential. Is that true? This paper try to discuss the relationship of discourse content and expression techniques in literature composition by analyzing three novels thereafter.

‘My Name is Red’: Expression Techniques Highlight the Content

How could Orhan Pamuk’s ‘My Name is Red’ win the Nobel Prize? Did it win by its discourse content or by its expression techniques? What did Pamuk want to tell us in his novel? The novel’s character told us that: A drawer should draw the image in his mind without worrying which style to choose, oriental or western one, in another word, oriental art and western art are not opposite but mixed. Well, it is obvious that the content of this novel is so simple that all readers maybe disappointed. But this simple content truly was highlighted by the attractive expression.

The expression technique for the novel is very unique and attractive. “Now, I am a dead, a dead body lay in the bottom of a well. Although I was dead long times ago ,no one know about it expect the murder. ” First a very abrupt beginning about some dead people talking is really weird and exciting, then frequent change of the narrators, including all existing being: live and dead people, men and women, old and young and even

objects like colors. No two consecutive chapters share the same narrating approaches. Such diversity and solidity of the means of describing the story add much penetration and focus to what the author what to express. Besides, setting suspense is another feature. The answer is given at the end of the story about a murder and a difficult detection. The story is developed in the background of magnificent royalty, with a puzzling triangle relationship and mysterious royal history, making the novel so fascinating and interesting.

Dick· Davis pointed out that, “ Pamuk’s technique is developing a story synthesizes both eastern and western techniques, but also is creative..... The organization is fine, wording skillful, plots attracting.....It features an expression that shows it self by integrity and persuasion. ”¹ Pamuk’s novel stories keep the charming Eastern elegance in the highly influence of western narrative literature. On one side, they contain history, detection, love, art, religion and many western elements, on the other side, beautiful poems, citing, stories and Scheherazade’s suspense. When I first read ‘My name is red’, I could not stop reading it. I am so engaged in its expression technique.

Expression technique can also fail literature productions. The movie ‘Wu Ji’(‘the Promise’) is a typical failure of this kind. The word “Wu Ji” has many meanings: the universe, the world, the origin, the transmigration, the empty, etc. Which is the content of “Wu Ji” ?There is a character in the movie called “numan”, which is to help deliver the meaning the word “Wu Ji”. However, the “numan” has so many to express: commitment and lie, obligation and revenge, conspiracy and love, universe and life, childish and sophisticated etc. Audiences still do not understand the meaning of “Wu Ji” because the movie fails to find a suitable expression technique. To evaluate the expression technique of a work depends heavily on whether this work can highlight its main theme. From this observation, ‘Wu Ji’ fails due to its expression technique, even the luxury super stars team and special effects can not help.

‘Fortress Besieged’: Expression Technique Helps Deliver the Content

The content of Mr Chian’s ‘fortress besieged’ is clearly stated by its title: “people inside want to get out of it, while people outside want to move into it.” This is a metaphor, it symbolizes the marital status and paradox of mankind in aspect of life and its process. Well, it seems like a very simple and ordinary point, and to express directly would be really boring, therefore the theme needs an expression technique to make it more

¹ *Times Literary Supplement, UK*

attractive. The whole novel is full of humorous expressions, acrid writing, sarcastic language and a lot of other expression techniques, which gives this novel an outstanding charm. It would be unimaginably dull if we turn every interesting expression of this novel into a direct narration, the novel would forever lose the elements that makes itself wonderful.

As far as I am concerned, ‘fortress besieged’ should be read at least 3 times: the first time read the story; read the characters for the second time; read the language for the third time, to taste the delicate metaphor and humor and to taste the narrative technique behind. ‘Fortress Besieged’ is a novel that you can definitely enjoy while taking your time, that you can read any time you want while find something attractive. For instance, about character’s looks, “eyes are eyebrows are so far apart that they are going to miss each other”; about character’s raiment, if a naked person has global truth, then she only has partial truth because she at least has something on her; about the superior’s rein over the subordinate, the novel mentions putting a carrot in front of the mouth of a duck, such that the duck would go faster in pursuing the carrot. All of these depictions are so wonderful!

Expression techniques, delivering the content, can be used in literature and also literature criticism. We just talked about the how the expression techniques fails the movie ‘Wu Ji’, now we are going to talk about how the expression techniques make one criticism of ‘Wu Ji’ successful. The creator of this criticism uses a shorter movie as a narrator to criticize the movie ‘Wu Ji’. This criticism, named ‘one murder case caused by a steamed bread’, is so interesting in that it uses the images from ‘Wu Ji’ to produce a shorter version movie. This approach does not adopt any judgment or narrations, but uses the same expressions as the object criticized, which could fully disclose the flaws and absurdity in a very sarcastic way. In short, expression techniques help deliver the content.

‘Light Breath’: Expression Techniques Conquers the Content

‘Light Breath’ is a short novel, whose author is Buning, a writer from Rassia, the recipient of Nobel prize. Although the title of the novel is poetic, the content is actually about a dull, humid and even ugly story. To put it simple, it is about a short degeneration of a young girl in town of Russia. How is the story developed? The author does not narrates the events happened to her according to the life order. In the beginning, the author just set up a very sad scenario, a chilly spring morning, pacific graveyard, wreath made of china, the beautiful portrait of the deceased girl.....desolate and mournful. In the end of the novel, the author just leads readers to the graveyard, Olia’s teacher mourning for her student,

the language is beautiful: “light breath dissipates on earth, into the sky and chilly spring breeze...” Although gentle as it is, this novel does involve pain and ugliness but in a very harmonious way, consistent with the style of the novel, such as the seduction and murder of the main personae. The whole novel is based on the “light breath”, beautiful girl, unfortunate life just passed away during this “light breath”. This is a typical example adopting the expression technique to overcome the dullness of the content.

Literature comes from life. All the elements, beauty and ugliness, nobility and ignominy, integrity and depravity, pure and dirty, should not be overlooked by literature. “Writers love tough materials, writers endue form to materials.conquer their original peculiarity”, “Forms fight with the content, the inconsistency of forms and content is the real psychics connotation of our aesthetic reaction ”². Chinese famous contemporary writer Mo Yan once said, “writers should pursue expression techniques in novels. They are art of language. Language stands as the utmost metric to evaluate the quality of a writer.”³ The process to create a novel can be regarded as a narration process, it is not a simple fiction or even a fabrication. It uses every artistic approach to make up a story and make it fantastic. Novels and any other forms of creations actually needs to find a suitable technique to express the content. “light breath” adopts poetic expression technique to overcome the ugliness of the content, purifying and subliming the dreadful within the “Light Breath”.

Western linguistics has already regarded language as a noumenon instead of a tool, which means the expression techniques equal to the content. It is extremely important for writers. Similarly, it matters very much to master the form in any form of literature. Painters need to master colors, sculptors need to master lines, players need to master acting, etc. How can we talk about artistic creations without these basics? Foucault points out that: “the truthfulness not only lies in the content, but also in the expression techniques.” For literature compositions, the expression techniques are more important than the content, as shown by the three abovementioned examples. But, why current literature is so badly castigated? The main problem lies in the expression technique, lies in the formatting and similarity of all the expressions, and more importantly, the scientism and utilitarianism behind. Literature that obeys this way of creation is lacking in individuality and lively descriptions. Under such situation, it is by all means significant to study seriously and reevaluate the expression technique of literature, for the sake of its rehabilitation later.

² Л.С.Вьготский (1985) ‘Art Psychics’, translated by Zhou Xin, Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi ,213 .

³ Mo Yan,(2006) ‘Writer’s Charm Lies in the Delivering of Novel’ *Explore and Contend*,8.