



COMMENT ON “A COMPARATIVE EVALUATION OF THE NARRATIVE THOUGHTS IN CHINESE AND WESTERN CLASSICAL LITERATURE”

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COMMENT ON “A COMPARATIVE EVALUATION OF THE NARRATIVE THOUGHTS IN CHINESE AND WESTERN CLASSICAL LITERATURE”

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In the tide of globalization, cross-cultural communication and understanding is particularly important. As an important part of culture, the narrative mode of literature not only reflects the thinking habits of a nation, but also is the key to understanding different cultures. As we all know, narrative is an indispensable part of literature in both China and the West. Narrative is not only a simple description of events, but also a kind of art, a way to construct the relationship between time and space through language. Although the form of expression and emphasis may vary, this point is reflected in both Chinese and Western literature.

The narrative time in *Dream of the Red Chamber* is not a simple linear time, but a recurring characteristic (Yang, 2010). The reincarnation of stones and Jia Baoyu's dreams both reflect the cycle of time. In addition, the time processing in the *Romance of The Three Kingdoms* also reflects the cycle of time. The novel starts from the spring of “Oath of Peach Garden”, after the transformation of the four seasons, and finally ends with the winter of “Three Kingdoms returning to Jin”, forming a complete cycle. Another example is that in “The golden lotus”, “[...] the rise and fall of Xi Menqing family shows the process of a life, which is an organic whole formed by a main narrative clue running through and natural circulation” (Zheng, 2009, p. 37). This characteristic is mainly influenced by ancient philosophy, such as Yin and Yang and the five elements, emphasizing the correlation and

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interdependence between all things in the universe, which gives these classical novels more profound significance and philosophical thinking (Chen, 2024).

In contrast, the western concept of time is more linear and logical, emphasizing the causal relationship between events. *Hamlet* unfolds in chronological order, from the murder of Hamlet's father to a series of actions for revenge, each event directly leads to subsequent events, forming a clear causal chain. The recurring lines like "The time will come" emphasize the irreversibility of time and the inevitability of events. Similarly, Kafka's *Metamorphosis* shows the cycle of time and the complexity of the causal relationship through its absurd plot and profound description of the hero Gregor Samsa. The transformation of Gregor triggers a chain reaction in the family and society.

These differences in narrative are also reflected in the spatial categories. In *Dream of the Red Chamber*, the Grand View Garden is the most important narrative space, which is the main place for the life and emotional entanglements of the main characters such as Jia Baoyu, Lin Daiyu and Xue Baochai (Lin, 2016, 178). Every corner of the Grand View Garden is full of symbolic meaning, reflecting the inner world and social relations of the characters. Besides, as the background of the story, the social environment and customs of Qinghe County have been described in detail in the *Romance of The Three Kingdoms*, reflecting the reality of the Ming Dynasty society (Ge, 2017). So, as Chen (2024) describes, the narrative space in classical Chinese literature is often related to the grand spatial-temporal context.

Western classical literature pays more attention to the specific geographical space and personal space. In the story of *Hamlet*, the corridors, rooms and walls of the castle become the stage for the characters' action and psychological change. Similarly, specific narrative space in the *Metamorphosis* has multiple meanings and profound symbolic meanings. For example, Gregor Samsa's bedroom is not only the place where he is deformed, but also the place where he is trapped most of the time. The closure and isolation of the bedroom symbolizes Gregor's loneliness and helplessness; Another example is the door and the threshold in the novel, which are not only the physical separation, but also symbolize the psychological and emotional estrangement between Gregor and his family members. The switch of the door became a symbol of the changing attitude of the family members towards Gregor.

Obviously, this is the influence of cultural differences on narrative thinking. The narrative in Chinese literature often pays more attention to the integrity and harmony, and emphasizes the relationship between the characters and the society and nature. Western literature, on the other hand, is more individual and analytical, focusing on personal experience and the inner world. Through comparative analysis, Chen (2024) provides us with a new way to understand the narrative styles of different kinds of culture.

It is worth noting that is the narrative difference between Chinese and Western classical literature in time and space absolute? In the context of globalization, the concept of time and space of different cultures may influence and integrate with each other, forming a more complex narrative structure.

Taking Hajin’s *Waiting* as an example, it uses a nonlinear narrative to interweave events at different time points (Zhang, 2022). Although the story is set in China, the author shows the collision and integration of Eastern and Western cultures through the inner world and behavior of the characters. In the face of personal emotions and social norms, the hero Kong Lin’s inner struggle and choice reflects the conflict and integration of Chinese and Western values, which breaks the traditional linear concept of linear time and reflects people’s new understanding of time and space in the era of globalization. Similarly, Tan’s *Happiness Meeting* is a novel depicting the cross-generational relationship between Chinese immigrants and their American-born daughters. By telling the experiences of mothers in China and the lives of their daughters in the United States, the novel constitutes a cross-cultural narrative perspective that embodies the complexity of family relationships in the era of globalization.

Through their unique narrative techniques and profound themes, *Waiting* and *Happiness Meeting* not only break the traditional boundary of time and space in the narrative structure, but also reflect the integration and collision of culture in the character image and emotional experience. They provide us with a perspective to understand and analyze the integration of time and space concepts in literary works in the era of globalization, and help us to more deeply explore the impact of globalization on literary creation and cultural identity.

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