

An Analysis of Peter Barry's Poetry Appreciation Method of Close and Distant Reading from the Perspective of Deconstruction

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Abstract

Deconstructivism, which began in the 1960s, is an anti-traditional, fixed and stereotyped thought, and it came into being because of the negation of structuralism. Peter Barry, author of *Reading Poetry*, has put forward his personal approach to appreciating poetry, close and distant reading, with the aim of encouraging more people to understand the beauty of poetry. In this paper, the deconstructionist approach of eliminating binary opposition, the Divergence and Transmission of language texts, and the views of language texts' interrelatability are adopted. From the perspective of deconstructionism, the author takes Keats's *Chapman's Homer* analyzed by Peter in the book as an example to analyze Peter's method of reading poetry in four stages. Finally, it can be concluded that as one of the readers of poetry, the reading method provided by Peter is only a reading habit and steps from a perspective, which can not be fixed as the reading mode of poetry. At the same time, deconstructivism is a kind of everything is inconsistent with the norm, deviates from the law, may be illogical, and even extreme, but it can provide a rich perspective and method for appreciating literary works. Therefore, using deconstruction to break all inherent thinking and preconceived perspective to look at Peter's poetry reading method, close and distant reading, can neutralize his shortcomings and better dialectically look at Peter's poetry reading method, close and distant reading.

Keywords

Deconstruction, poetry appreciation, close and distant reading, Peter Barry.

1. Introduction

In the 1960s, the French philosopher Jack Derrida (1930-2004) first proposed a concept against traditional thought - deconstruction. This idea was formed after questioning Saussure's structuralism and criticizing the Western tradition of metaphysical philosophy. Deconstructivism, that is, adopts the method of dispelling "binary opposition", breaks the centralism, disassembles the binary opposition, and thus emphasizes pluralism. Derrida deconstructs the hierarchical deconstruction of the dualistic opposition centered on the presence of the Logos. The so-called presence is actually the presence of the original, essence or essence of things relative to consciousness and language, that is to say, the direct identity of the essence of things, human thinking and human language.^[1] Therefore, this identity of presence is called "logocentrism" by Derrida. Deconstructionists taking Derrida as an example aim to eliminate "logocentrism", remove structuralism and dualism that emphasize "structure", break the inherent mode of traditional thinking, and help literary works to show more possibilities. In addition, Roland Barthes (1915-1980), who turned from structuralism to deconstruction, argued from the perspective of eliminating Saussure's sign theory that the signifier and signified of text language could not constitute the complete and fixed sign called by Saussure.^[2] In other words, Barthes believes that a word symbol in a text is not fixed to a

certain meaning, but can represent the signifier of symbols with infinite possibilities, which also represents that deconstructionism can deconstruct in the small direction of word symbols to understand the text when reading and appreciating a text. In addition to the impermanence of symbolic signifier, Barth also believes that texts can refer to each other, interweave and overlap, a kind of freedom of text meaning, "all literary works have intertextuality." That's one of the points of deconstruction. Therefore, in general, deconstructivism advocates a thinking method that opposes the inherent mode, liberates the possibility of literary works, and provides readers with more thinking space.

In *Reading Poetry*, prepared by Peter Barry for scholars seeking new ways to discuss poetry, he introduces in detail the key elements of poetry from three perspectives: meaning, imagery, close and distant reading, text and emotion, time and place, etc., from the lines themselves, between lines, and beyond. The close and distant reading proposed by Peter in the book is specifically analyzed and discussed in this paper. Distant Reading and Close Reading are proposed as ways to encourage poetry reading and discussion. In fact, such fixed reading methods run counter to deconstruction's view of opposing the inherent mode of reading. At the same time, I think that the method of encouraging poetry reading proposed by Peter prevents readers from giving full play to their subjective initiative to understand poetry, which is not conducive to the richness of the meaning of poetry. However, Peter divided this reading method into four stages, including the combination of distant reading and close reading, which reflected the characteristics of deconstruction from various angles, and broke the fixed structure under the fixed reading steps to appreciate the beauty of poetry. Therefore, the next part will specifically analyze Peter's four stages of poetry reading, Close and Distant Reading, from the perspective of deconstruction.

2. Peter Barry's Poetry Appreciation Method of Close and Distant Reading

First of all, Peter Barry put forward the steps of "close and distant reading" in poetry reading, which is divided into four stages, composed of "distant reading" and "close reading". The first stage is to observe the rhythm of the poem from a distance. In the form of stages, it is a general understanding of the development trend of the poem before reading. The second stage is the study of the specific parts of the previous stage from close reading observation, those that show up in the whole in particular, strange points. The third stage is to return to the mode of reading and thinking about poetry at a distance, which Peter emphasizes the diversity of modes, but must break the fixed mode and analyze concretely by observing the characteristics of the poetry. Finally, in the fourth stage, we observe the specific parts of the poem closely again, and find the specific parts that are more obvious in the whole, such as the words or phrases of the poem, for more specific analysis.

3. Peter Barry's Poetry Appreciation Method of Close and Distant Reading from the Perspective of Deconstruction

In *Reading Poetry*, Peter takes Keats' sonnet "Chapman's Homer Epic" as an example to carry out reading appreciation and analysis from the four stages he proposed. First seen in the first stage, Peter focuses on the whole to develop appreciation, and identifies the stages the poem contains. Keats's poem is a sonnet, usually divided into sections in the classical form, in which Italian poetry is divided into two sections, the first consisting of two quatrains and the second consisting of two triplets, which are arranged in four, four, three and three. But in this poem, Peter breaks with the conventional form of appreciation. The first four paragraphs are the first stage, in which "I have been to many golden countries", which indicates that the poet has read a large number of literary works extensively, indicating that the poet is very confident of his own profound literary knowledge and broad knowledge. Then came the second stage, in which

"I have often heard of a vast world which the learned Homer ruled as his domain." There is, however, one major field of literature that he did not read: although he had heard of Homer before, he had not read his original works. Finally came the major twist or development, "but I never breathed its purity and serenity until I heard Chapman say it loud and bold." Then, having met George Chapman and read his translations of Homer, the poet felt that he had discovered a new literary continent, as if his golden kingdom had been expanded. Therefore, from the perspective of deconstruction, this poem does not follow the inherent classical form to divide the stages, which is in line with the concept of deconstruction to break all the inherent patterns. Secondly, the main method of deconstruction analysis is to look at the binary opposition in a text (for example, good and bad, man and woman). And to show that these two opposing sides are in fact completely separate from flow and impossibility, rather than two strictly separated categories.^[3] Of course, the classification of the two faces of binary opposites does not exist in any fixed or absolute form.

3.1. The First Stage for Appreciating Keats's Chapman's Homer

In the first phase of Peter's division, reading the poem from a distance, we can also see that in the overall phase, there are two opposites in the poem, namely, before reading Chapman's translation of the Dutch epic and after reading Chapman's translation of the Dutch epic. Such a comparison can clearly reflect that Chapman's translation is innovative, even to a degree that others have not yet reached. At the same time, Peter also revealed a less formal nuance in this stage, that is, the change in the frequency of use of "I" and "he" in the poem. From the perspective of deconstruction, "I" and "he" are regarded as two opposites. At the beginning of the poem, "I" is used frequently, and with the development of the poem, the appearance of "I" is gradually reduced and replaced by "he". Peter also points out in the book that this is a kind of poet's tone from confidence to humility.

3.2. The Second Stage for Appreciating Keats's Chapman's Homer

The second stage is to read the poem closely, to observe the various parts of the poem as multiple individuals, and then to find that there is a more complex, intense or special part of the poem than the others, and then to focus on it. For example, in the third stage of the poem, divided according to the previous stage, there is a prominent part of the description of dynamic scenery, after describing the exploration of land geography, suddenly switched to the exploration of celestial bodies. From the perspective of deconstruction, this is a kind of structural analysis of environmental scenery. On the one hand, the environment is divided into land and sky, and on the other hand, the poet actually describes astronomical geography. The sudden conversion of these two images is very effective in this poem, and it is also considered the most unforgettable in this poem. But they seem to disturb the poem's otherwise tenacious grasp of the concept of land exploration. The celestial body mentioned in the poem refers to Uranus, the first newly discovered planet that was unknown in classical times. The discovery of this new world revised the old world view, just as Chapman's Elizabethan translation of Homer's epic shocked people, surprised the poet, and even changed his own self-confident attitude. Including the corresponding "watchers in the sky" may also shift the momentum of the poem by adding an image, but this image interrupts the flow of other images and imagery in the poem. Deconstructivism believes that the language of a text is "divergent" or "propagated", that is, the language of any text is not fixed, and the meaning of the text is only revealed in the process of transmission.^[4] Therefore, in fact, the description of this image expresses the shock of the poet reading Chapman's works in the poem and the expansion of his literary field like heaven and earth, so this meaning requires readers to use their own subjective thinking ability on the basis of interpreting the poetry to obtain the meaning that the text poetry wants to convey.

3.3. The Third Stage for Appreciating Keats's Chapman's Homer

The third stage of the approach proposed by Peter is to take a step back again, to look at the rhythmic development of the whole poem from the previous step to the distance, to look for patterns, and then to identify a pattern, to look for a particular part of the main pattern or a specific point. This is what Peter wants to do in step three. So he observed a particular feature of the poem, the naming of nouns, which is not observed in the pattern of poetry, and he deconstructed the nouns in the poem and found that kingdoms, countries, islands, bards who venerate them, and vast Spaces are not given specific names, but the names in the poem can be divided into people and places, Among the people named are Apollo, Chapman, Homer, and Cortez, and the places named are the Pacific Ocean and Darien. From this deconstructive classification of names we learn that the Mediterranean classical world is evoked, but its specific geography is completely omitted, so that the specific geography recognized in the poem is actually the New World rather than the old World. In addition, Peter also pointed out that the inverted distribution pattern of this poem is also special and prominent from the overall long-distance reading. At the same time, from the perspective of deconstruction, this inversion reverses and breaks the fixed order between the usual word symbols in prose or idiomatic expressions. For example, the sentence "Much have I travell'd in the Realms of Gold" should be "I have travell'd much in the Realms of Gold" in the prescribed order. Starting with the adverb of degree "much" would emphasize the sheer number of golden kingdoms the poet traveled through. Peter also points out another contrast in the pattern that appears in the poem, which is the division of the sonnet into two parts, the first emphasizing the voice, such as the high and fearless voice of Chapman mentioned in the poem, and the second emphasizing the silence and contemplation, such as the silence of the sky watchers, and the silence of those who are full of wild speculation.

3.4. The Forth Stage for Appreciating Keats's Chapman's Homer

In the final reading phase, the attention is again shifted from far to near, back to the details, but Peter's step is closer than before, more focused on finding and observing the more unusual and strange words or phrases. The specific method is to locate these words, replace them with some ordinary words, and observe what effect is lost, so that you can learn what effect these special words have and how they affect the poem as a whole. In fact, Peter also analyzed these words or phrases from a deconstructionist perspective at this stage. For example, Peter used the word "serene" in the sentence "Yet I did never breathe its pure serene." and tried to change "serene" to a simple and ordinary "atmosphere" to feel the difference. So, Peter emphasized the importance of the reader in a poem, and today's mainstream view emphasizes the active role of the reader as a meaning builder, even likens reading to a picnic, where the writer provides the words and the reader brings the meaning. In addition to the scholar Ma Chi's views on the meaning of language mentioned above, scholar Lu Yang also proposed that due to the limitations of language, the meaning of text always develops, transforms and disappears, and constantly spreads the meaning of text itself.^[5] All these indicate that the content that language can express is relatively limited, but there is no ultimate meaning of meaning, so readers need to add and expand the literal meaning of their texts. For example, the phrase "wild surmise" is mentioned in the poem, but the poem does not tell what is being guessed, so it is impossible for the reader not to guess. According to deconstruction, "all literary works are interwoven with other literary works" and "all literary works are intertextuality."^[6] The poem deals with the literary Odyssey, and this "wild speculation" refers to their way home.

4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of Keats' poetry from the perspective of deconstruction, it can be seen that Peter conforms to deconstruction in the overall or specific analysis of each stage. But it is

important to know that the stereotypical division of any literary work into certain steps to be read and appreciated is not in line with the anti-all inherent patterns advocated by deconstructivism. Therefore, in combination with the concept of deconstruction, Peter is only one of the readers of poetry, and he provides a personal perspective of appreciating poetry from his own perspective, rather than a specific reading method.

5. Discussion

The book "Reading Poetry" introduces the elements of poetry and the methods of reading poetry, which is also the work of the author Peter Barry, who wants to let more people know about poetry and encourage people to learn poetry. As one of the many readers of poetry, Peter provides his own perspective and method of appreciating poetry. Thus, we can see from his point of view what poetry was like in his eyes. Then deconstructivism, as an anti-traditional and anti-authority ideological system and a mode of reading and criticism, combined with deconstructivism, readers can not only adhere to the inherent structure and mode of the text, but also cannot fix a certain reading method. Therefore, the steps of reading poetry provided by Peter should be viewed correctly. Then deconstruction should also be treated dialectically. Deconstructionists emphasize that deconstruction is not demolition or destruction, but a kind of thinking. However, it is undeniable that when deconstruction is used in practice, readers can easily go to the other extreme. This is the downside of using extremism, but the way the poetic text is interpreted offers the reader a different perspective.

6. Research Significance

Although the poetry appreciation method of "close and distant reading" provided by Peter only represents his personal learning habits and perspective, it can give readers the possibility of seeing new ideas and new inspirations from a new perspective outside of themselves. Although deconstructivism may lead readers to the extreme, its interpretation of poetry provides readers with a different perspective, prompting them to reflect on their previous reading behaviors, breaking the fixed pattern that readers sometimes have when reading poetry or other literary text types, and accompanied by a change in the way of reading. people often say, "There are a thousand Hamlets in a thousand people's eyes." Deconstruction is used to give readers more ways to appreciate literary works and provide more space. That's what good reading means.

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