THE STYLISTIC AND EXPRESSIVE ROLE OF CONTRAST IN CHINESE MISTY POETRY (THE END OF THE 20TH CENTURY)

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Abstract

The usage of different literary techniques in Chinese Misty poetry expresses the poets' reflection on human nature, self-value and their longing for spiritual freedom. Such artistically stylistic device as contrast is often used in Chinese contemporary poetry, it is mostly implemented by means of antonymic and reverse images, colors, feelings and actions. The contrast as a semantic and contextual device helps to influence the reader's perception and imagination, and as a stylistic device it gives more expressiveness to verses. Misty poets often used semantic contrast as well as stylistic techniques and figures built with the help of contraposition and antonymy.

Keywords: misty poetry, contrast, parallelism, antithesis, antonymy, contraposition

1. Introduction

Misty poetry became a real novelty in style and expression of poets in Chinese contemporary literature. In order to create their specific style Misty poets took as an example the modernist poetry of Western countries combining it with achievements of Chinese new verses of the beginning of the 20th century.

Poetry, which emerged in China in the late 70's of the 20th century as a reaction to the 'cultural revolution' (1966-1976), is called Misty poetry. The 'Cultural revolution' was a political movement directed against writers, actors and scientists who were killed, imprisoned, humiliated or excluded from the country. Despite the name, that movement had nothing common with culture, but at the end of it Chinese culture and literature were almost destroyed.

Misty poetry has emerged as a late protest of destroyed literature, caused by Chinese 'Cultural revolution'. After decades of silence, the large number of literary works was poured out. Different poems written already in the late 70's and 80's tried to describe the period of terror and to embrace the issues of modernity at the same time. Such transition from complete destruction of literature to its gradual

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flowering induced the usage of ambiguous and contrasting images. Misty poetry as a literary term appeared in critical works in 1979. The reason for such a name was the usage by young poets of obscure, unusual and ambiguous images and uncertain content in there verses.

Misty poetry was containing new ways of expression and symbols, the emphasis on subjectivism and intuitive principle was clearly defined. Chinese poems of the second half of the 20th century are characterized by motifs of loneliness, sometimes depressive mood, which was caused by the loss of ideals and faith in the future (Yan Dao, 2010). At the same time, poets were trying to find the lost values, that is why among the criticism and discontent some pieces of hope can be found, which were covert by bright colors and images. Therefore, Misty poetry is full of contrasting moods.

Misty poetry absorbed sad mood of tragedies experienced by Chinese people as well as notes of optimism and hope for the future. Misty poets have expressed themselves through straight reproaches of society, covering at the same time their feelings and emotions, conveying their mood by using shades of colors, sometimes terrifying or incomprehensible images, and sometimes by using clear and detailed description of environment. That is why, in our opinion, the main feature of misty poetry was the representation of contrasting images and colors, which was promoted by the transitional period in the history of Chinese literature.

2 The theory of contrast on the examples of Chinese poetry

Considering the contrast as an artistic device, it should be noted that the contrast is the compositional and stylistic principle of speech deployment, which is based on the dynamic development of both content-logical and structurally stylistic statements. As one of the types of semantically stylistic text, it can be reproduced on the phonetic, morphological, lexical and syntactic levels (Grynia, 2012:87). Contrast is an expressive opposition, which is realized through opposite signs. In literature the contrast is based on the aesthetic oppositions. In verbal art different oppositions contain varied aesthetic reverses. Such well-known universal oppositions as life-death, good-evil, love-hate etc. are the basis of many famous art works of the world literature (Grynia, 2012:88).

Antithesis and antonymic units in the text are two varieties of contrast. There are antonymous images, expressions and phrases, which authors often use in their works. In our opinion, the concept of contrast, antithesis and antonymy should not be differentiated edgily but there are some differences between them. Contrast is a general concept that goes beyond stylistic device and approaches to contextual expressive system (Grynia, 2012: 91). The antithesis is the artistic and stylistic device, which represents the contrast, and is built on its principles. Antithesis, in its turn, is based on the antonymy. Antonyms are direct markers of contrast. "In the

text they acquire the necessary expressiveness, also they implement the author's ideas in contrast representation of reality" (Grynia, 2012:89). Antonyms, which are the building materials of antithesis, can be expressed by any part of speech: noun, adjective, verb, preposition, adverb, numeral etc.

The contrast in the Chinese poetic tradition was often expressed by means of antithesis and antonymy. Chinese poets used antithesis as an effective device that helps influence the reader and listener and also appeals to the senses of recipient. In Chinese poetry of different epochs there were very popular locutions and phrases, where thoughts, moods, events, character traits, images, colors were edgily opposed. Antithesis is based on the usage of antonymy and parallelism of language construct.

Antonymy and opposition in Chinese traditional poetry well represented in the forms of parallelism, which played one of the most important roles in poetical verse structure. Chinese poetry of different ages had strict rules of verse line structure and fixed line length. One of the most often used stylistic figures in Chinese traditional poetry was strict parallelism, which required precise grammatical symmetry of poetical verses lines. Parallelism is a literary device in which parts of the sentence are grammatically the same, or are similar in construction. "The strict parallelism of Chinese classical poetry was built on opposition of main or auxiliary words arranged in two poetical lines. These words had to belong to the same lexical systems and groups that unite a class of objects, events, concepts, actions etc. (Kostanda, 2007:49).

In the 20th century Chinese poetry changed its writing style and form. The freedom of form and expression came to literature instead of traditional poetry, which was based on strict rules. Free verses prevailed, almost devoid of strict parallelism. However, in general parallelism has not disappeared, but it has been aquired by another stylistic means of contradistinguishing images. The contrast in contemporary poetry is preserved in the form of antithesis and antonymy. Also, in order to create contrast and contraposition poets of modern time often use syntactic parallelism, it means symmetry in syntactic structure of poetic lines.

Poets of 'May fourth movement' (20's 30's of the 20th century) often were applying contrast, they were using it not only in stylistic devices, but also were making simple contraposition of moods and images. Different semantic oppositions were used by Chinese symbolists (30's of the 20th century) in there verses. Their favourite binomials were life and death, birth and death, that can be explained by their extraordinary interest to the topic of death. Symbolists applied mostly semantic contrasts, using antonymic and oppositional images, colors, feelings and actions.

3. The role of contrast in Chinese Misty Poetry

Misty poetry has emerged later and absorbed the experience of 'May fourth movement' poetry and the experience of war time verses. Misty poetry was full of semantic contrast as well as stylistic devices and figures, which were constructed with the help of contraposition and antonymy.

Considering one of the most famous poems *The Answer*, written by Bei Dao, we can see contrast. The poem begins with the following lines:

卑鄙是卑鄙者的通行证，
高尚是高尚者的墓志铭，(Bei Dao, 2015:89)
Meanness evidence of rascals,
Generosity - the epitaph on the grave of a decent man.

At the beginning of the poem Bei Dao uses binomials "meanness- generosity", showing strict contrast between these concepts. Moreover, the author points out that generosity is appreciated only after the death on the honoring epitaph of decent person.

Bei Dao's poem is a strong angry appeal to the world, which was so unfair to humanity, it is also a protest against all that was and is happening around. Describing the terrible pictures, the author describes the environment, his images are converted into big sketches, such as "shadows of dead people are floating in the sky" (天空中，飘满了死者弯曲的倒影), "in the sea of death compete thousands of sails" (死海里千帆相竞). The author almost does not use separate images, he joins them into full storylines. Bei Dao speaks not only on his own behalf, he shows the cry of the soul and the insult of all the victims of the 'cultural revolution'. The poem *The Answer* is a declaration of his disappointment and distrust.

In general, the whole poem *The Answer* was built by means of various effects of strengthening ascendant on the reader. The author uses a lot of turns of speech and literary devices such as anaphora, syntactic parallelism, rhetorical questions, words' and phrases' repeats, also there are a lot of exclamations. In some lines of the poem we can also see the construction of parallelism and contraposition:

如果海洋注定要决堤，
就让所有的苦水都注入我心中，
如果陆地注定要上升，
就让人类重新选择生存的峰顶。(Bei Dao, 2015: 89)
If the seas are doomed to break the dam,
Then the bitter water will pour into my heart,
If the land are doomed to bound up,
Then mankind will choose the peaks that survived.

There is the syntactic parallelism in this example, which is based on the same types of syntactic construction of several adjacent units of language that creates a sense of their symmetry (Galych, 2008: 232). Due to that symmetry, the author depicts antonymic images such as "sea-land" and "water-peaks". This introduction of contrast not only stylistically decorates the verse, but also creates figurative and psychological comparison, that helps to understand better the spiritual experiences of the author. By using contrast of land and sea author also shows the possibility for escaping from misery and adversity.

Another contrast we can see in verse of Bei Dao *Love Story*. The author reflects on the phenomenon of life and personality, moral standards and behaviour of people. There is an example:

毕竟，只有一个世界
为我们准备了成熟的夏天
我们却按成年人的规则
继续着孩子的游戏
不在乎倒在路旁的人 (Bei Dao, 1987: 39)
anyway, there is only one world,
which has prepared for us ripe summer.
but we still live according to the old laws,
continuing to play children's games,
and don't mention that we are already on the roadside.

With the help of antonymous concepts such as "adult laws children's games" (成年人的规则孩子的游戏) which characterize the human person in the context of social life, the author shows mistakes in behaviour of people. Life throws people on the sidelines, but no one cares about it.

The poetry of Shu Ting is very affectional and sensitive, where modern outlook and traditional images are intertwined. Many poetess' verses are built on the contrasts of feelings and behaviors. The poem *To the Oak,* which is considered to be very famous among Misty verses, can be a good example of this fact. The whole poem is built on the contrast of poetess' love and wrong, in her view, relations between lovers. For example:

我如果爱你—
绝不像攀援的凌霄花，
借你的高枝炫耀自己；(Shu Ting, 2015: 34)
If I loved you -
I'll never be like a clinging campsis,
Resplendent in borrowed glory on your top;

Poetess does not want to use her beloved man, and she does not want to depend on him, using his lifeblood as a clinging campsis, which life depends on the presence of a tall tree nearby. In her poem Shu Ting writes that the woman should not be "a spring, offering cool comfort all the year long" (也不止像泉源，常年送来清凉的慰籍), "nor lofty peak, enhancing stature and eminence" (也不止像险峰，增加你的高度，衬托你的威仪) (Shu Ting, 2015: 34). In contrast, the poetess herself shows her comprehension of love. It should not act as a means of glorification of one person by means of another, love requires no victims. From the contents, it is clear that the basis of ideal love are strong independent personalities, who understand, respect and support each other.

Poetess depicts herself as a kapok, the image of a tree standing together with the oak, which represents the man. The images of those two trees are not antonyms, but their looks are slightly opposite. These trees are both stout, tall, well-known for their long life. But the kapok, as opposite to oak, blooms extremely lush with red and huge flowers. The image of the kapok is opposed to the image of oak. The difference between them is seen in the example:
你有你的铜枝铁干，
像刀，像剑，
也像戟，
我有我的红硕花朵，
像沉重的叹息，
又像英勇的火炬 (Shu Ting, 2015: 35)
You have an iron trunk and copper limbs,
Like a knife, sword and halberd,
I have big red flowers,
Like sighs, like heavy torches ...

The image of the oak is compaired with strong and brave man; depicting herselfe as a kapok poetess means that she is beautiful, gentle, spiritually rich woman who is simultaneously very strong. It is due to contrast, the author shows the difference between man and woman, and the same contextual and stylistic device she uses to show their equality:

根，紧握在地下，
叶，相触在云里。 (Shu Ting, 2015: 34)
Our roots are holding the ground,
Our leaves are touching the sky.

Comparison of words opposite in meaning such as "rootsleaves", "ground-sky" form antithesis, which strengthens the idea of man and woman's equality and mutual intelligibility.

There are very colourful contrasts in the verses of Gu Chen (1956-1993). The author often uses syntactic parallelism for making an opposition to certain concepts. Many poems of Gu Cheng are small in size but it is due to the effects of contrast they are very accurate, concise and able to penetrate into our inner world, leaving notes of trial. For example we will take the poem *Generation*:

黑夜给了我黑色的眼睛
我却用它寻找光明。(Gu Cheng, 1987: 122)
Black night gave me black eyes,
I use them to search the light.

The author often uses the contraposition of light and dark. Here, in this poem we have black eyes, black night which are opposed to the light. Similarly, in the poem *I am a naughty child* there is an antithesis, which is based on the contrast of light and darkness:

我想在大地上
画满窗子
让所有习惯黑暗的眼睛
都习惯光明 (Gu Cheng, 1987: 94)
I want on the large land
to draw lots of windows
for the eyes used to the darkness
all become used to the light

Contrasts in the works of Gu Cheng are shown by means of colors that are not necessarily antonymous. For example, in a small verse *Feelings* the atmosphere of oppressive dullness and sadness is described: "gray sky" (天是灰色的), "gray road" (路是灰色的), "gray building" (楼是灰色的), "gray rain" (雨是灰色的). And among that melancholy two bright colors appear, that create contrast not on stylistic, but on the figurative and psychological level of context. This way of influence on the reader is very effective, because for us it is very easy to imagine colors, especially with the help of such a contrast. Here is the example of the last lines of the poem:

在一片死灰之中
走过两个孩子
一个鲜红
一个淡绿 (Gu Cheng, 1987: 127)
through the dead gray
two children were going
one is bright red
one is bright green

In verses of Gu Chen there is the place also for syntactic parallelism, which is built with the help of distinct antonyms. As an example we can take the poem *Far and close*:

你
一会看我
一会看云
我觉得
你看我时很远
你看云时很近 (Gu Cheng, 1987: 124)
you
sometimes look at me,
sometimes look at the clouds
I feel
when you look at me, you are very far
when you look at the clouds, you are very close

The philosophical implication is that sometimes the farther we are from our beloved person and family the closer we are to them. To be close to someone not necessarily means to think about him or her.

Another example that demonstrates the skillful use of stylistic parallelism and contrast at the same time, is shown in the poem *Poplar*:

我失去了一只臂膀
就睁开了一只眼睛 (Gu Cheng, 1987: 144)
I lost my hand
But opened my eye

This time, the contrast is achieved not by means of antonyms, but by means of content and contextual opposition of action. Structural parallelism, however, is lost in translated version, but in the original poem it is clearly visible. Structure of lines is grammatically quite the same. Words that are opposed – "lose and open" are not antonyms, but they have antonymous content. The author lost his hand, but opened his eye, that means by losing something he gained something instead.

4. Conclusions

The contrasts of different stylistic forms are often applied in Chinese poetry. Artistic devices and techniques which were expressed by means of opposition, were used in Chinese poetry even during the times of ancient literature, and still are very popular in contemporary verses. In the poetry of the 20th century the contrast acquired conceptual figuration, and served style building function.

Misty poetry was influenced by the 'cultural revolution'. Resonance in the society, which was reflected in poetry, was caused by severe violence against intellectuals and writers. Contrasts of different types that appeared in verse is a result of contrast changes in Chinese history.

Contrast in Misty poetry had already gone beyond stylistic device and is approaching the system of contextual expressions. Poets inject contrast not only for enhancing the moral and psychological influence on the reader, but also for self-expression and self-affirmation in their ideas. Misty poets were extremely sharp in expressing there opinion, especially when it was related to the criticism of society. That is why, the contrast has played such an important role, because the contrast itself is the sharp contraposition that helps to make ideas of the author more clear and explicit.

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