

The Entering of Ideology into the Literary Text Relating realism with hypertextuality

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Abstract—Hypertextuality is not confined to the characteristics of post-structuralism and postmodernism, it is also related to realism. By tracing the directing force of the entering of ideology into the text in the perspective of hypertextuality, this paper investigates the relationship between hypertext and “structure of feeling”. It forms a framework for the understanding of the relationship between ideology and literary text.

Keywords-hypertext; realism; ideology; history; structure of feeling

I. INTRODUCTION

The term of hypertext was coined by Ted Nelson in 1965. Hypertext provides access to the spaces of infinite possibility by way of nodes and links. Its relationship with post-structural and postmodern thought is pointed out by many scholars for their shared properties of anti-linearity. The notion of hypertextuality is often regarded to have some similarity with the ideas of Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes and Jorge Luis Borges. The genre of hypertext fiction is a good specimen of hypertextuality. It is, however, not only a quality associated with post-structuralism and postmodernism. It is also an intrinsic feature of literature itself. Even the enterprise of realism can be approached from the perspective of hypertextuality. By employing a hypertext-based model to relate the issue of realism, this paper aims to form a framework for the entering of ideology into the literary text.

II. THE PRINCIPLE OF REALISM AND ITS AFFINITY WITH HYPERTEXTUALITY

All of the descriptive statements including literary language move within a network of value-categories. The claim that knowledge should be value-free is itself a value judgment. Linguistic value is produced within “particular generic constellations of field, tenor, and mode”, and the lexical ‘core’ of a word is no more than an “aggregate or average produced by the interlocking and overlapping of genres of discourse at any point of time” [1]. Field, tenor and mode of discourse are generally grouped into the category of register. Field of discourse is about the purposive role of the language user in speaking (writing). Realism is a particular mode of signification. It is an ideologically incorporated form of novel writing, which is

intrinsic to a certain kind of ‘world view’ as well as a type of presupposition of the deep-rooted conviction to record the real world faithfully. There has been a binary opposition between realism and modernism (postmodernism). And the concrete expressions of this opposition are diverse. Some theorists hold that realism is content-oriented, whereas modernism (postmodernism) is form-oriented. Some think that realism is the imitation of the real, whereas modernism the artistic play. Roland Barthes makes a distinction between the lisible (readerly) text and the scriptible (writerly) text in his *S/Z* (1970) [2]. No matter in what way this starkly antithetical opposition is expressed, the underlying rules will not change. Realism seeks to illustrate a rich, localized and highly ideology-saturated history, whereas modernism (postmodernism) deals with a plane, indirect and ideology-diluted history. A typical realistic novel can be used as a “simplifying model of the social formation” for its “transparency” as well as a background for their further study of modernist and post modernist literature [3]. According to the textual view of the classical critical linguistics, ideology resides in texts, especially in the meaning of the text. Texts are open to all kinds of interpretations associated with other texts, which have the quality of a hypertext and may have different ideological implications.

It is a fairly drawn conclusion agreed upon by the critical community that history enters into a text through the medium of ideology [4]. Terry Eagleton puts forward a diagram of their relationships, which can be shown as in figure 1:

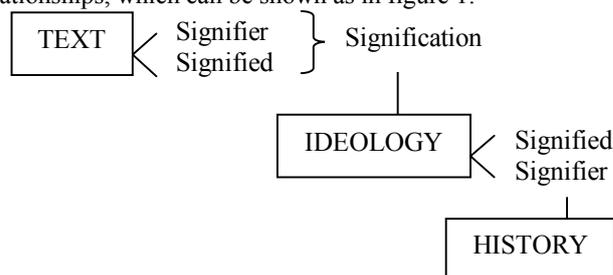


Figure 1. The diagram of the relationships (Terry Eagleton, 1996:309)

As for the interpretations of these complex relationships, the entering of history into the text and, in turn, the text into history, Fredric Jameson has brilliantly illustrated their complicated involvements in a new light in his *Political Unconscious*. In this book, Jameson advances his theory of three horizons of criticism: the level of narrowly political or historical immanent analysis, (coinciding with the individual

literary work, the text grasped as a symbolic act), the level of socio-discourse analysis (text reconstituted in the form of the great collective and class discourse), and the epochal level of historical reading (text as being embedded in a field of forces of the dynamic of various sign systems) [5]. It is true that ideology can be found in the meanings of words. But this is inadequate to describe the whole situation. Ideology not only can be found in the meanings of words, but also in the presuppositions, coherence and figures of speech of a text. The above-mentioned oversimplified conclusion is reached under the illusionary influence of intertextuality. Intertextuality, which means the insertion of history (social and historical context) into a text and of the text into history, is the source of the ambivalence and ambiguity of texts. Marxist critics always put a text into the concrete social formation of a specific historical period of time. As far as tracing the characteristics of intertextuality is concerned, hypertext is a very good way to meet the needs.

Any literary work of art has both a trans-historical identity and a stable significance. It is both eternal and historical. The reactions to and interpretations of the same work in different ages and cultural backgrounds are more or less different. Unless the reader is in the same cultural system and ideological climate, the extra-linguistic associations and implications of the literary work can never be, even theoretically speaking, fully understood by him. The Hamlet read by contemporary Englishmen is no longer the same one that was meant to be understood by the audience in Shakespeare's own day. Apart from the semantic change of linguistic elements (foremost the broadening, narrowing and shift of the meaning of words), the subtle ideological insinuations always deviate in different times. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to explore the whole field of the discursive formation of a literary work. This paper only concentrates on the first phase-- the entering of ideology into the text. The length of the paper has made it impossible for me to treat the other two phases with equal theoretical fervor and status. However, they are occasionally touched upon at some places in this paper where such a move is inevitable.

The ideology of a literary work must be understood in its social formation within a whole field of what Michel Foucault called 'discursive practices'. Norman Fairclough holds that discursive practice involves "processes of text production, distribution and consumption" [6]. Texts are produced in specific ways in specific social contexts. The functioning of the process of this discourse can be illustrated by figure 2:

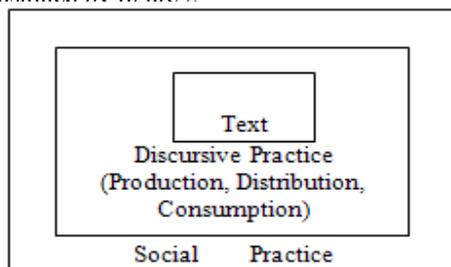


Figure 2. The conception of discourse (Norman Fairclough: 73)

Norman Fairclough gives a convincing analysis of the working mechanism of power in both face-to-face communication and the discourse of mass media. In Fairclough's view, there are a lot of paralleling similarities between the language of literary works and the discourse of mass media. The situation is always the same: the media producers or writers address an ideal subject. They dominate and control the text; readers have to negotiate a relationship with the ideal subject. Writers exercise power over readers in that they have sole producing rights in determining what to be written. And this power of writers in discourse enables them to express their own ideas, value judgments, or stark ideological tendencies. However, there is, above all, a great difference between them: the difference of the addressees. The discourse of classic literary works was written long ago, therefore the ideology in it is 'inorganic' to the texture of social life; the discourse of mass media is consumed immediately, therefore the ideology in it is 'organic' to the texture of social life. Being read by the reader, a literary work can be recharged with new ideological implications of his time. It is doubtless that they are the original ones that have undergone a series of adaptations, adjustments, and alterations.

III. THE HYPERTEXTUALITY OF IDEOLOGY

History can never be described and grasped without language. It is a stream of signifiers, which must go through the phase of signification in order to enter a text. It is a truth universally acknowledged that language is a site of power struggles. Literary works are undoubtedly texts of fictional, well-arranged and self-manifesting language. And ideology is the controlling and constitutive force in the phase of signification. Therefore, history enters into the text as ideology. Ideology is a word that has lost its boundary during the endless expansion of its domain of meanings. This term was invented by Destutt de Tracy, the French economist and philosopher, and his friends. It was meant to be a new science of ideas, neutral and objective for the judgment of all ideas originating in human experience. About fifty years later, in their German Ideology, Marx and Engels recharged this notion with new power. Into the term was injected strong political implications, which were beyond its original framework of instrumental epistemology. It was perhaps the most well known definition in the last century. In the classical Marxist notion, ideology is seen as false consciousness, which helps legitimate a dominant political power. This definition used to be the most popular one; but the wind has changed now. A lot of scholars including Donald Davidson, Jurgen Habermas, Paul de Man, Peter Sloterdijk, Denys Turner, Raymond Geuss, Terry Eagleton and Fredric Jameson were strongly dubious about this mystification of the term. False consciousness implies the possibility of some absolutely correct way of viewing the world, which is under deep suspicion today in the light of postmodernism. What's more, it is a kind of class elitism that imagines the great majority of people to be an ignorant mob that could be cheated like blindfolded mules. Peter Sloterdijk invented a new phrase, 'enlightened false consciousness', to remedy this definition. 'Enlightened false consciousness' lives by false values but is

ironically aware of doing so [7]. Even though people know that they are under the control of a false consciousness, they are willing to succumb to its ruling and leading power.

Another famous definition of this term was made by Louis Althusser, the French Marxist philosopher, in his paper *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*: ideology is a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence [8]. He also makes a distinction between Ideology (philosophical position in general) and ideologies (particular materialization of the general notion and always express class positions). Althusser's theorization on ideology is the most influential one in recent debates. He tries to shift us from a cognitive to an affective theory of ideology. He translates ideology into discourse, which is omnipresent and all pervasive. But his theory is also notorious for its limitations.

There are a great variety of other versions of definition, which makes this term become a 'text', woven of a whole tissue of different conceptual strands. Terry Eagleton has listed more than 16 definitions of ideology currently in circulation. With the unlimited expansion of the meaning of ideology, its boundary of power is blurred to the point of erasure and emptiness, becoming politically toothless. It has undermined itself from beneath its own feet by its seemingly all-comprehensiveness. The term has exhausted itself in its ceaseless enclosure movement of concept. Therefore, it is our top priority to redefine this term. Terry Eagleton defines it in roughly six ways in a progressive sharpening of focus. However, his most significant definition of this term is found in his broader view of this concept: "ideology denotes any fairly central conjuncture between discourse and power" [9]. Just like literature, ideology cannot be separated from its context, either. It is the function of the relation of an utterance to its social context. Ideology is often regarded as a principally discursive phenomenon, which is intimately involved and connected with actual social practice. In his *Language, Semantics and Ideology*, Michel Pêcheux uses the concept of 'discursive formation' to go beyond the controversial Saussurean distinction between 'langue' and 'parole'. A discursive formation constitutes a 'matrix of meaning' or system of linguistic relations within which actual discourse processes are generated. Just as the meaning shade of a word can only be understood in a concrete context, the ideological implications of a word, a sentence, a literary device, an image or anything concerning a literary work must be examined in the blood-and flesh of its broad context of literary tradition and the immediate social existence.

As far as a concrete literary work is concerned, the study of ideology should begin from and end in its material existence of a text. M. H. Abrams holds that all the theories of literary study can be grouped into four categories: the world, the writer, the work and the reader (critic) It is beyond doubt that the work (text) is the basis and center of literary studies. Therefore, the working of ideology in the literary text should be one of the

theoretical foci of Marxist critique. In an essay entitled *Towards a Science of the Text*, Terry Eagleton wrote: "It is in literature, above all, that we observe in a peculiarly complex, coherent, intensive and immediate fashion the working of ideology in the texture of lived experience of class-societies" [10]. The analysis of the working of ideology in a given literary text is always enlightening for the better understanding of the literary work itself.

Once literary works are put into a social context (language in use), they become a kind of discourse. A text cannot be separated from its social formation. Any literary work involves, consciously or unconsciously, the fighting of ideologies. Ideology of a literary work must be understood in its social formation within a whole field of discursive practices. It must be integrated with the actual discursive actions. A literary work is an object of experience, selected by the author from his own 'structure of feeling', preconditioned by literary conventions and then re-experienced and realized by readers of different times and places. Therefore, the relationship between ideology and the text should be looked for in these changing complexes.

It is of great significance for us to know the concrete process and the working mechanism of ideology in a literary text. In this paper the word 'text' refers to an imagined concrete body of composition, which can be roughly defined as the ideal and shared common property of the physical existence of all the specific compositions of literary works. According to Saussure's theory of the arbitrary and structural nature of signifiers and signifieds, each signified is determined by its position in relation to other signifieds, being what others are not. Therefore, in such a highly structured and internally dependent system, any change of any element will bring a series of sliding and collapses to all the other elements of the whole system. The minute effect of the reception of a given literary work by different readers in the same circumstantial environment is different; let alone readers in different circumstantial or cultural environment. This discrepancy is, being traced to the root, caused by the change of ideological climate. This macro social variance, I think, plays a far greater role than the micro different experiences on individual readers' part in making the reception of the same literary work different in readers.

What the text takes is not the real objects but certain significations. We used to believe that one of the characteristics of literature is its reflection of real life or the world we live in. But the difference between literature and historiography lies in the fact that a literary text doesn't have a determinate object; whereas historiography is meant to 'copy' the real objects (conditions, happenings, social existence and so on) on paper. The value of literature lies in beauty, whereas that of historiography truth. Even if a literary text is deemed as a faithful record of real objects, what makes it a literary text is not the level of faithfulness of its representation of those real objects that it represents (if the real world could be represented with words at all) but the way of how to represent them. The substantial difference between the relationships of literature-reality and historiography-reality can be crudely bracketed with that between free form-concentricity and bound content-concentricity. As far as linguistic theorization is concerned, the concentric material social situation in which the literary work is produced is not the signified but the referent of

the literary discourse. However, the process of signification can not be separated from the way of the organization of the text.

For traditional and conventional texts, the pages are organized in strict linearity. A possible way of representing the organization of the pages of a traditional text can be shown in figure 3:

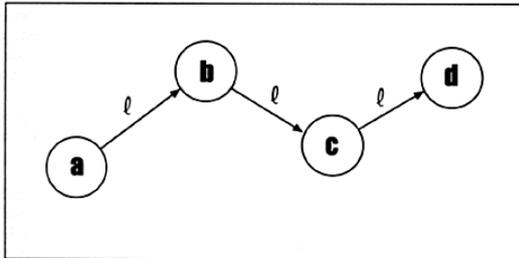


Figure 3. Organization of the pages of a traditional text (Sergio Cicconi: 24)

In contrast, for a hypertext, the nodes form a non-linear network, “those pages have a multimedial character; the fixation of a certain amount of knowledge within a certain amount of pages of a hypertext, and according to a particular organization, is only temporary, and subjected to a continuous revision and extension” [11]. The openness of communication and availability of cross-reference between the pages can be shown in figure 4:

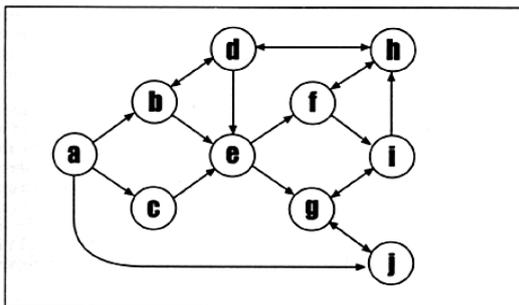


Figure 4. Organization of the pages of a hypertext (Sergio Cicconi: 24)

In the two figures by Sergio Cicconi, each letter within a circle represents a page of a text, or a particular “node” of a hypertext, that is a portion of the (hyper-)text easily identifiable by means of a whatever procedure of segmentation. To be a faithful representation is to describe things as they are, the author being absent from the surface of the work. And the author’s omnipresent subjective judgment is obviously contradictory to this principle. The author’s fervent drive to pop up from under the surface of the hidden narrative, which is thought to fulfill the function of the imaginative smooth ‘mirror’ to represent faithfully the real world, makes his/her direct remarks to the reader ideologically obtrusive in the whole literary work. In contrast to the disguised form of ideological implications in other parts of the literary work, these direct addresses to the reader are ideologically stark in both its content and aim. These direct addresses are close to belief or creed declarations, which are formed by and in turn

form ideological power. Ideology could be roughly divided into three aspects: the political, the intellectual and the ethical. Moral values can be grouped into the third category: the ethical. Any literary discourse has aesthetical, sociological and ideological dimensions. Realism is a particular kind of signification, which has a clear purpose at the outset. It is guided all the way by the invisible power of ideology.

As a distinguishing feature of realistic novels, “structure of feeling” connects delicately the amply described daily life experience with ideology. It is meant to research the empirical, individual and sentimental items in the field of life. This new concept appeared for the first time in the year of 1959 in Raymond Williams’ cultural-sociological monograph *Culture and Society*, and it underwent a lot of revisions in his later works. “structure of feeling” is a brand new instrument for analyzing and criticizing social culture and fostering the values and dignity of human beings. Williams defines “structure of feeling” as “a combination of sympathetic observation and of a largely successful attempt at imaginative identification” [12]. Therefore, in his mind, “structure of feeling” is the observation and identification in the society on individual’s part. The imaginative identification is the result of the controlling and molding power of ideology. The omnipresent invisible force of ideology pervades our whole way of life. These social experiences are the result of cumulative precipitation, which are more obvious and available.

An ideologeme is a linguistic entity, which forms a semiotic arena for the fighting of different competing social groups. Within the second horizon of Jameson’s theory of three-horizon criticism, the object of study is the great collective and class discourses which are composed of ideologemes. Jameson holds that the text is grasped as a symbolic move in an ideological confrontation between the classes. At this point another question arises: what is the relationship between the author’s psychology and that of the society?

This could also be answered by returning to the category of the “structure of feeling”. The socialization process of individual psychology is a two-way channel. Individuals observe experience and accept social psychology, in turn individual psychology is reconstructed by it, making it assimilate the universal characteristics of social psychology; the other way is the outward movement of individual psychology into social psychology, influencing and changing it. Moreover, the transformation between individual and social psychology is more often than not completed through the medium of community, transferring message and power in the net structure of communities and society.

Feeling is a part of social psychology. It comprises values, meanings and unprocessed primeval and mixed sentiments of individual lived life, being unsystematic, illogical and irrational. All in all, having the characteristics of being empirical, detailed and direct, feeling is acute, sensitive and competent enough to reveal the essence of reality. The “structure of feeling”, then, is the lived experience and sentiments of social consciousness in a certain historical period; the other way round, through describing this hidden social experience still in process, writers can contribute to help mould new social consciousness. “structure of feeling” is mostly individual, which is “often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private,

idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies" [13]. Feeling is the best carrier to grasp the intricacy among the three modes of fighting residual, dominant and emergent ideologies. The priority of "structure of feeling" is given to its historical continuity—the constitution and changes over a long period in this structure. The notion of "structure of feeling" concerns the interactive relationship between individuals and society in both historical and material perspective.

The entering of social ideology into a literary text is accomplished through the "structure of feeling". The priority of "structure of feeling" is given to its historical continuity, which are the constitution and changes over a long period in this structure. The notion of "structure of feeling" concerns the interactive relationship between individuals and society in both historical and material perspective. "Structure of feeling" is able to grasp the texture of society through the author's own lived experience in his immediate living communities. "There is a close affinity between the structure of hypertext and the organization of information of human beings' association and recollection. Being used to organize our knowledge, it can show the innate relationships among the nodes of the network of knowledge. At the same time, it can record our learning process and conditions as well as their level of knowledge" [14].

The concentric relationship between literary works and social structure reflects, in most cases, real social qualities and feelings. At this crucial point, however, we should recall a theoretical principle that the concentric material social situation in which the literary work is produced is not the signified but the referent of the literary discourse. It opens the door for fictional creation in literary works. The fact that the content found in an author's work is inevitably similar to, in a seemingly faithful or disguised way, the social existence of his or her time and society does not necessarily mean that the story or descriptions in the work is only a copy or mirroring image of the actual world. This empiricist view of representation has long been taken for granted. It seems better, however, to say that the actual social existence provides only the possibilities for the mental connecting of the signifieds and signifiers in the literary work.

IV. CONCLUSION

Hypertextuality is a very useful notion which can help us have a better understanding of the nature of literature as well as its relationship with history and ideology. Literature is the site for the dwelling of ideology in the field of aesthetic constitution and practice. It represents the real world in an aestheticized and unavoidably distorted fashion. The author has to select the topic, the plot, the setting, narrative, syntax, vocabulary and other factors in a literary text. And any choice involves ideological inclinations. The ideology of a literary text is latent, slumbering under the cover of aesthetical air. It derives its power from two channels: the social formation at the time

of its production and the literary tradition of which the literary text is an integral part. It is both a complex absorbing in the existing ideologies from intertextual literary texts and a complex emitting out its ideological implications onto other literary texts.

Ideology has several ways to get access to the text: through the process of signification of language as well as the selection of raw material and literary text-composing techniques. It fulfils its subversive power by the seduction or oppression of the social formation at the time of its consumption. The ideology of a literary text, which could not be fully understood in an imposed vacuum of the text, is an organic part of the historical existence of temporality and space. In this sense, hypertextuality can contribute a lot to the move of the interaction between history, text and ideology.

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