

## Analysis on Stages of Poetry Appreciation

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**Abstract:** the Receiver is One of the Four Elements of Art. Studying Aesthetic Activities from the Perspective of the Receiver is a New Concept in Modern Aesthetics. Using This Concept to Appreciate Chinese Poems Can Produce Unique Effects. When the Reader Holds the Worshipful Attitudes and Reads the Magnificent Chapters Which Marching out of Time, he is Actually Having a Wonderful Dialogue with the Writer. through Repeated Reading and Tasting, the reader's Soul Can Be Flushed; he Can Really Enjoy the Beauty Brought by the Poem. But the Appreciator Can Not Immediately Realize the Beauty of the Poem and Understand the Reasons Hidden in It; he Needs to Go through Several Different Stages Before Reaching the Perfect State.

### 1. Introduction

Meyer Howard Abrams, a Famous Contemporary American Artist, Put Forward That Literary and Artistic Activities Should Be Composed of Four Elements. "Every Work of Art Always Involves Four Elements... the First Element is the Work, or the Art Product Itself... the Second Common Element is the Producer, Namely the Artist... the Third Element Can Be Considered as the World Composed of Characters and Actions, Thoughts and Feelings, Materials and the Time, or the Essence Beyond Feeling. the Last Element is the Audience, the Appreciator, the Reader..." These Four Elements Are Not Isolated or Static. They Are Interdependent, and Can Interpenetrate and Interact with Each Other. These Elements Are All Connected through the Work as the Centre; They Can Establish a Unique Relationship.

The Traditional Aesthetics Emphasizes the Work, the World and the Author, But Often Neglects the Role of the Appreciator. the Modern Aesthetics Pays Attention to the Role of the Appreciator, Believing That the Appreciator is Not a Passive Recipient of the Work; he Can Give Full Play to the Subjective Initiative. by Appreciating a Specific Work of Art Continuously, the Appreciator Can Grasp the Unique Meaning of the Work, and Then Go Deep into the Complicated Inner World of the Creator. he Can Have a Dialogue with the Creator, and Finally Understand the Beauty and the Profound Philosophy Meaning Brought by the Work.

### 2. Stages in Poetry Appreciation

There are several stages from appreciating works to aesthetic enjoyment. Aaron Copland, an American musician, divides the process of music appreciation into three stages. The first stage is the "aesthetic stage", in which the audience hears the beautiful melody. The second stage is the "expression stage", in which the audience begins to experience the thoughts, feelings and meanings described in the music. The third stage is the "pure music stage", which is the sublimation to the realm of philosophy.

When a reader is reading, tasting and understanding the poem, the process is the same as music appreciating course proposed by Copland. There are also three different stages .

The first stage is the "aesthetic stage". When readers read a beautiful poem, they will be immediately attracted, and then resonate with the writer who lived thousands of years before. The miscellaneous and trivial things in daily life are interrupted immediately. Readers focus on the beautiful poem, forgetting all the connections between themselves and the reality, forgetting their life and identities, and gradually entering the wonderful world described in the poem. They are concentrated, and be intoxicated by the beautiful world brought by the poem. In the words of the

ancient Chinese, they “concentrate all their attention on one thing”. An example is the appreciation of a poem written by Yu Han, a great poet of the Tang Dynasty, to Ji Zhang. The title is *Submitted to the Ministry Councillor Zhang of the Water Department in Early Spring*.

The royal streets are moistened by a creamlike rain; Green grass can be perceived afar but not nearby. It's the best time of a year late spring tries in vain, With its capital veiled in willows to outvie.

When readers read this poem praising the scenery of early spring, they will be immediately attracted by the natural and fresh sentences. At that time, they will never think of trivial things like they haven't eaten, they want to drink, or they don't have toilet paper at home. That is “the interruption of daily life”. Through further careful reading, the reader can see that the road of the capital city is moistened by the light rain like cream; the colour of grass looks obvious in the far distance, but cannot be found in the near. They can find the author's praise of spring: early spring has the most beautiful scenery in the year, far better than the scene of late spring with vibrant green poplars and willows. The reader “concentrates all their attention on one thing”; he can find that the poem has harmonious and catchy rhyme, as well as clear and beautiful rhetoric. The picture is moving. The reader can experience the beauty brought by the poem, and then produces the resonance. The beautiful picture which the poem brings to the reader will come to the reader's mind and stay for a long time.

The similar process happens when reading *A Fisherman's Song* written by Zhihe Zhang in the Tang Dynasty.

In front of western hills white egrets fly up and down, In peach-mirrored stream mandarin fish are full grown. In my blue bamboo hat and green straw cloak, I'd fain go fishing careless of slanting wind and fine rain.

This is a poem describing the scene of fishing in the spring flood season of Jiangnan (regions south of the Yangtze River). In front of the readers are a series of clear images: mountains, egrets, running water, mandarin fish, fishermen, slanting wind and fine rain. These images form a landscape painting with a strong flavour of life. In front of the Xisai mountain, egrets fly leisurely; peach flowers are in full bloom and the spring tides rise in the river. Mandarin fish are fat; fishermen on the shore wear blue bamboo hat and green straw cloak, enjoying themselves in the wind and rain. When reading, the readers can clearly feel the light and harmonious rhythm, as if he is listening a beautiful Jiangnan ditty. The words are lively and vivid, showing the fisherman's delight of life. At that time, the reader “concentrates all attention on one thing” and enters into the leisurely and free state brought by *A Fisherman's Song*.

The second stage is the expression stage. In this stage, the appreciator is no longer concentrated on the beautiful pictures depicted in poems, but gradually goes deep into the interior of the poem, and follows the author to enter a more imaginative and experiential fantasy world. At that time, the reader is more deeply separated from the real world. He constantly shuttles between the literal meaning of the poem created by its author and the deeper meaning of this work; he fully mobilizes his life experiences, emotional experiences and imagination abilities. His heart beats; he immerses himself into the beautiful world depicted by the poem, and understands the deeper meaning of the work. Not subject to the limitations of time, space and geography, the reader follows the author to expand his imagination boundlessly. That is the realm, “his thoughts can gallop freely and without limitation of time and space”. One example is reading the poem *Untitled* written by Shangyin Li, a great poet of Tang Dynasty.

It was hard to meet thee and then bid farewell. The east wind blew weak and all flowers fell. Silkworms weave until Death do them relax; Tapers burn down to the last drop of wax. She fear in her morn mirror white hairs grow; Chanting at night, the lunar chill I'd know. Her fairy abode is not far from here; Blue-bird, be my messenger of love dear.

This is a famous “untitled” poem by Shangyin Li. The poet writes the love story in a woman's voice. When readers begin to appreciate the poem, they can directly see that the lovers are separating in the late spring when flowers are withering. They can't forget each other, and suffer from the pain of missing. They can't sleep at night, so that their hairs fall down. Finally, they have

to ask the massager of bluebird to visit each other. The reader can not only realize the first stage of aesthetic feeling and understand the words. When the reader gradually enters the second stage, he will apply his literature, history and other related knowledge to further understand to poem. The reader will think of the story that Shangyin Li, a great poet, fell in love with a woman while learning Taoism in Yuyang mountain, but finally they had to be separated. Through this story, the reader can further taste the essence of this poem: the deep feelings, the heartbreaking but persistent affection. In addition, readers will have more complex emotional experiences. Those readers who have had similar experience with Shangyin Li will be completely free from the complex real life and enter the same realm of lovesickness described in this poem. They may also want to see the people they once loved again, and ask where they are now? Whether they have the same feeling of missing? They may also hope that there is a bluebird in the real life, and that the bird can visit their lovers for them. Some readers even cry; they are completely immersed in the emotions depicted in the work and are unable to extricate themselves.

When reading Yong Liu's *Yu Lin Ling*, we will have the same feeling.

Cicadas screech chill, shrill, after a sudden shower. By the roadside pavilion in the evening, we are parting outside the city gate, no mood for the farewell drink, no strength to tear ourselves apart, when the magnolia boat urges me to board. We gaze into each other's eyes in tears, hand holding hand, all our words choked. I'm sailing out, for thousands of miles along the mist-enveloped waves, the somber dusk haze deepening against the boundless southern sky.

It's been hard for lovers to part since time immemorial. How much more so at this cold, deserted autumn! Tonight, where shall I find myself, waking from a hangover - against the riverbank lined with weeping willows the moon sinking, and the dawn rising on a breeze? Year after year, I will be far away from you. All these beautiful scenes are unfolding, but to no avail. Oh, to whom can I speak of this ineffably enchanting landscape?

This is a good poem to describe farewell. Yong Liu used the technique of narration and named the time, place and situation of departure. He wrote two lovers who have no mood to drink before separation. It's hard to say goodbye when they parted. They miss each other for a long time after departure, just like playing a TV series on farewell. Then, readers will be attracted by the parting scene in the picture, gradually go deep into the inner world of this work. They will make rich associations, and even go back to the parting scene thousands of years ago. The reader himself is one of the protagonists of the song of parting. He is lingering with his lover in the pavilion. "Gazing into each other's eyes in tears, hand holding hand, all our words choked." Until they can't see each other's figure from far away, they feel as if a knife were being twisted in their hearts. Even if there are "beautiful scenes unfolding" in the future, no one can share it with them. In the second stage, readers will also associate themselves in reality according to the artistic conception described in the work. Those who have the same experience of separation with Yong Liu will think of the scene they have to be separated with their lovers. Their hearts broke, standing still in the place for a long time... In this way, readers are deeply shocked and moved, unable to calm down for a long time, and have a more thorough communication with authors came from different times. That is the so-called "thoughts galloping freely and without limitation of time and space".

The third stage is the "pure music stage". In this stage, the reader will not only expand rich association and mobilize his feelings for deeper understanding, but also bring himself completely and thoroughly into the realm described in the poem, and start to ask questions closely and daydream more deeply. Readers will repeatedly taste the deeper meaning of poems, have in-depth, heart to heart talks with the author, and have more general and profound understanding of grand issues such as life, history, the universe, and the common people from a certain point of the poem. They can extract more meaning beyond the literal meaning and the beauty of the picture, go deep into the experience of proposition with metaphysical meanings, and gradually sublimate to the realm of philosophical meanings. This is the most mysterious, enjoyable and beautiful stage in the beauty-appreciation process. It is an experience process with transcendental nature; it is also an absolute, pure and dynamic aesthetic process with no distractions and no utility. An example is the appreciation of *On His South Mountain Villa* written by Wei Wang, the "poem Buddha" in the Tang

Dynasty.

This mind after youth for the holy has grown. Still later, up here, there's my house so fine. Whenever there's the mood I will wander alone With pleasures sublime - be sure, all are mind! Upon coming to the end of water flow, I would sit down to behold white clouds float. An old man may be here, and then, full of cheer, We'll chat and laugh with no thought of time.

This poem is a Zen poem written by Wei Wang after his middle-age. Experienced the turbulent political situations and difficulties in official career, Wang wanted to get rid of the trouble of the world. He lived a half official half reclusive life after the Anshi rebellion. He wandered leisurely in the Wangchuan villa, enjoying the scenery and enjoying himself alone. He walked at will until the end of the flowing water; he sat on the spot and looked at the clouds in the sky. He was so leisurely, when he met an old man he even forgot to go back. So far, the readers start to associate with the author's description of the leisure life in Zhongnan mountain. They can march together with Wang, watch the clouds together, and understand the exquisite world depicted by the author. However, in the third stage, the reader can think of Wei Wang's life story. "How much sorrow one has to go through in life? When encountering such sad and distressed things, one can only find comfort in the philosophy of Buddhism, which is empty and silent". Readers can repeatedly taste the meaning of the poem, especially when reading the two sentences, "upon coming to the end of water flow, I would sit down to behold white clouds float." The reader will see the poet walking at will. When it seems no way to go, the poet doesn't care and simply sits on the spot. The poet looks at the sky with white clouds, leisurely and carefree. In fact, it is a kind of Zen realm of "finding one's true self" and forgetting everything. It is a state of unrestrained, in which all things follow their fate and all laws are natural. It is also a peaceful state of staying on my mind no matter what the situation changes. Therefore, Biyun Yu commented that appreciating this poem can help readers "see the infinite beauty, realize the infinite changes in life and learn the endless philosophical connotations." At that moment, the reader will experience the feeling of eyes lighting up. They seem to understand that all things in the world are like flowing clouds and streams of water. As long as you have a usual mind, you will be able to hold yourself aloof from the world and be self-possessed, so as to achieve the state of real peace and indifference in the mind. At that time, the reader completely enters into the philosophical mood, in which his soul is flushed.

Another example is the appreciation of *Calming the Waves* written by the literary giant Shi Su.

Listen not to the rain beating against the trees. Why don't you slowly walk and chant at ease? Better than saddled horse I like sandals and cane. O I would fain, Spend a straw-cloaked life in mist and rain. Drunken, I'm sobered by vernal wind shrill and rather chill. In front I see the slanting sun atop the hill; Turning my head, I see the dreary beaten track. Let me go back! Impervious to wind, rain or shine, I'll have my will.

This poem was written by Shi Su after he was demoted to Huangzhou. The author went out for fun on March but the weather was bad. The rain was heavy; he could hear the sound of the rain beating bamboo leaves. When others wanted to come back, but the poet was still excited. He walked with a bamboo stick, sang while walking, and was calm in the rain. Soon after, the sun shone again after the rain. At that time, readers will think of Dongpo (another name of Shi Su). As a poet who was demoted, he had optimistic character and held open-minded attitudes towards life. Afterwards, according to literature and historical common sense, readers can further understand the poem, and gradually think and comment on the philosophy of life embodied in it. When the rain and the wind blow, others feel disappointed, while the author put forward, do not listen. This is to tell us not to care too much about the objective existence; we can use a common heart to appreciate it. In today's society of complaining, it's better to learn from Su's calm mind. Then the author wrote, "O I would fain, Spend a straw-cloaked life in mist and rain." The sentence extends the artistic conception from the wind and rain to the whole life. It expressed that when facing the ups and downs in life, the author can still stand up to the hardships. This is a kind of detached mind, a kind of super high philosophy realm of forgetting everything. It is the highest stage of tasting poetry. At that time, the readers can find themselves in an entirely new world; their souls were enlightened. They enter a pure, complete and selfless metaphysical spiritual realm.

### 3. Conclusion

To sum up, aesthetic appreciation is a very complex process; poetry appreciation is also a very complex process. Readers need to repeatedly read, understand, taste and appreciate the poem, so as to immerse themselves into the situation brought the poem alone. Forgetting ourselves and concentrating on the appreciation, readers can gradually enter the pure beauty realm brought by the poem.

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