

## An Analysis of the Image of Beauty in *Three Kingdoms*

Fu Jia

Shaanxi Technical College of Finance & Economics, Xianyang, Shaanxi, 712000, China

**Keywords:** Three Kingdoms; aesthetic; image

**Abstract:** *Three Kingdoms* is one of the four classic novels of Chinese literature. It not only affects generations of Chinese, but also is translated into various languages and spread into a lot of countries. From the perspective of literary thought, *Three Kingdoms* has a high literary connotation. Moreover, the image of beauty in this work is also a very important characteristic. Its relatively complete narrative structure and magnificent story content present the image of beauty from both structure and content. Therefore, it is positively significant to analyze the image of beauty in this work. On the one hand, it helps to train the aesthetic ideas of contemporary students, so that they can establish correct aesthetic concepts; on the other hand, it can enrich students' thinking, make them face learning with positive thinking and have confidence in life, which is very beneficial for them.

### 1. Introduction

*Three Kingdoms* reproduces complex politics in the historical background of the Three Kingdoms period, namely the last years of the East Han Dynasty. When reading *Three Kingdoms*, people can not only understand the historical environment at that time, but also know something of political and military struggles and feel some aesthetic connotations. Some scholars believe that masculine is an important aesthetic style of the book. In this work, readers can understand Zhuge Liang's resourcefulness and be subdued by his talent; meanwhile, they will be impressed by the image of many heroes and feel heroism. *Three Kingdoms* not only inherits the traditional culture of China, but also provides an important source for the study of aestheticians. Therefore, people should correctly view the image of beauty in the work. The analysis of *Three Kingdoms* from different aesthetic aspects will have different benefits, and the following is detailed analysis from several aspects.

### 2. Beauty of emotion

Emotion is an indispensable part in every excellent literary work. Without the support of emotion, literary works will be hollow and cannot attract readers, and thereby not be able to impress the readers. Therefore, an author often gives characters different souls in the creation of literature. When reading, readers can put their own emotions into these works and their emotion also change according to the emotional changes of the characters. Whether it is delightful sublime beauty or sad tragic beauty, the emotion itself has the nature of aesthetics. An author places his emotions on the characters that he creates, and the readers can feel the inner emotions by reading the work, so that the author and the readers are effectively connected <sup>[1]</sup>. In this sense, the emotion plays a role as a bridge. Readers often have their own views on the characters when reading a good work, which reflects not only the individual differences but also the cultural accomplishment of them. A person with high literary attainment often feels the emotions hidden in the work, rather than simply staying on the surface of the story; people with a general level of literary attainment are often attracted by the plot and do not consider the emotions behind them.

As a good work, *Three Kingdoms* presents a variety of emotions. Liu Bei has always been known for his kindheartedness and justice. This work tells about "the Oath of the Peach Garden" at the beginning. In the continuous development of the plot, the story not only shows Liu Bei's benevolence between the brothers, but also shows that he has the same kindness to his people. Here

takes the Chapter Forty-one as an example. Cao Cao decided to launch an attack because Liu Bei did not surrender to him. Zhuge Liang tried his best to persuade Liu Bei to give up Fan City, but Liu Bei refused. He said: "These people have been following me for so long, how can I bear to give up them?" In that turbulent period with frequent wars, the behavior of Liu Bei can not only make readers understand his benevolence, but also display that he takes the people as the foundation and has deep friendship with his people.

Guan Yu also has strong friendship with his brothers. In the Chapter Twenty-five, Guan Yu was defeated and he stationed troops on Tushan. Cao Cao wooed Guan Yu by banqueting, presenting beauties and high official titles. But Guan Yu is still unmoved. When Cao Cao gave Guan Yu expensive robe, Guan Yu wore the old robe that Liu Bei gave under the new one, which shows that he did not forget the friendship with Liu Bei. In the face of danger and temptation, Guan Yu still remembered the friendship with Liu Bei, not only effectively portrays the noble image of Guan Gong, but also impresses readers deeply by the affection of this character. While showing Guan Yu's high skills in martial arts, the author also showed his inner softness and made this character more full.

In the work *Three Kingdoms*, readers generally have complex emotions about the character Cao Cao. He is not only a person full of emotions but also a veteran military general. Later generations also had mixed opinions on Cao Cao. Some people think that he is a fierce and ambitious person, while some people hold that he is a traitor. But this also reflects the author's emotions in some ways. He gave Cao Cao more than one image, but portrayed this character in many aspects, making Cao Cao's image very full. When Yi Zhongtian commented on Cao Cao, he said that he is a person who likes crying and laughing. For example, he once cried twice for Dian Wei. Cao Cao's crying to Dian Wei not only presents his love for talents and sadness for losing talents, but also shows his true nature. And Cao Cao once cried for Guo Jia three times. For example, when he was beaten on Huarong Road, Guan Yu let him go due to friendship in the past; After Cao Ren received Cao Cao, he faced upwards into tears. His subordinates asked him why he cried <sup>[2]</sup>; he replied he cried for Guo Jia. He said: if Guo Jia was there, there would be no such mistakes. And then he beat his chest and cried. Modern scholars believe that the reasons for Cao Cao's crying are different. The crying for Dian Wei was to move subordinates, while the crying for Guo Jia was to express his guilty for advisers. The former crying seems to be a reward, while the latter crying is more likely to be a punishment. It is because of the multifaceted nature of Cao Cao that, although he is regarded as a traitor, he still has some cuteness. This is also the emotional beauty of the character Cao Cao, which enables the image of beauty to be revealed.

### 3. Beauty of form

The form is the expression of external content, and the image can be expressed through the form beauty of the work. Because of the diversity of forms, uniformity is needed in a work to make the work more harmonious and uncluttered. There are many plots and characters in *Three Kingdoms*. If the main line of the story is not clear and clear enough, it will be difficult for readers to understand the theme of the work, and it will also make the plot loose, not rigorous and unorganized. Therefore, only by ensuring that the form is unified but not single can the story be full and show the beauty of form. The work is based on the hegemony of three kingdoms (Wei, Wu and Wu). The plots are relatively complicated, and the ups and downs in this work present high value in appreciation for readers. The unique narrative form can show delicate emotions of characters and close the distance between readers and characters, so that readers will not feel that the work is too high-minded to be popular. From the perspective of the whole layout, some suspense are laid in some chapters and then revealed in the later chapters. The unpredictable story line allows readers to enjoy wonderful form beauty. The first sentence of the work describes the general trend of the world. "This world will be separated after long time united; also will do the opposite after long time splitting." In the last chapter, Sima Yan unified the three kingdoms <sup>[3]</sup>. This not only echoes the beginnings and ends, but also allows the readers to return to the beginning after going through many battles, generating their sigh for fortune and characters. This kind of arrangement can not only make the readers

experience the “Three Kingdoms”, but also make them have a sigh for life, so that they have the feelings of being greatly discerning and apprehending.

Content and form are inseparable with each other. For an excellent work, if there is no proper external form, the inner content will be plain and lack novelty; and, if the author lays too much stress on the external form, the work will be empty. Therefore, the work must grasp the beauty of form. In *Three Kingdoms*, diverse plots coexist harmoniously, which produces strong beauty of form that fits the readers' aesthetic needs. The novel form can make readers feel pleased and be attracted by the form; meanwhile, the harmonious unity allows them to feel the integrity of the plots and experience the beauty of harmony. When creating a work, every artist starts from two aspects (namely content and form) and reflects the inner beauty through art form, so that the inner beauty can be revealed; only in this way can readers be convinced by the author's superb talent when appreciating it <sup>[4]</sup>.

#### 4. Beauty of art

*Three Kingdoms* is an organic combination of many works, based on a variety of artistic expressions. It not only gathers *Records of the Three Kingdoms*, but also presupposes drama and miscellaneous notes, and it is an excellent work that epitomizes the thought of many arts. In this work, the author effectively demonstrates political myths. Some of the oracles about the rise and fall of politics not only make the story mysterious, but also express the beauty of art. The author pinned this thought on the character Zhuge Liang, who can observe the sky and effectively predict the battle. This kind of artistic technique also paves the way for the destiny of characters, allowing readers to have certain participation psychology; and they will make corresponding psychological orientation according to the plot development and predict the outcome of battles <sup>[5]</sup>. Whether their prediction is correct or not, they will have a special feeling, which also reflects the beauty of the image and display the beauty of art vividly.

When Liu Bei entered Xichuan, the contradiction between Pang Tong and Zhuge Liang began to intensify. Luo Guanzhong uses the narrative of mythology to present this plot. Zhuge Liang arranged for Ma Liang to send a letter to Liu Bei <sup>[6]</sup>; after receiving the letter, Liu Bei accepted Zhuge Liang's opinion and decided to return to Jingzhou. At the same time, Pang Tong advised Liu Bei and then there was a contradiction between the two. Because Liu Bei dreamed about a god, he let Pang Tong continue to take the path and asked him to stay at Peiguan. But Pang Tong laughed and said: “You were confused by Zhuge Liang, and thus you doubt my loyalty.” Liu Bei worried that the ill omen would become a reality, so he gave his own saddle horse to Pang Tong. Pang Tong was shot by the enemy finally and died because the enemy thought that it was Liu Bei who was on the saddle horse. Zhuge Liang found that Pang Tong was in adversity when observed the sky, and he was very painful. In the performance of this plot, the god mythology is adopted to push development of the story and achieve the interlinking of events. This not only makes the work more attractive, but also allows readers feel the beauty of art, so that the image of beauty can be effectively displayed.

#### 5. Beauty of sublime

When reading *Three Kingdoms*, readers are often infected by the lofty personality of many characters and feel the beauty of sublime. The author pinned the beauty of sublime on the characters, and the corresponding fluctuations occurred according to the success or failure of these characters' career. Whether in ancient times or in modern times, sublimity is an indispensable kind of emotion. In this work, the author brings readers to the Three Kingdoms Period through the sublime performance of “righteousness” allowing the readers to dialogue with many heroes, discriminating their merits and demerits and using pure hearts to feel the story. The readers sigh for the death of Zhou Yu and were impressed by Guan Yu's loyalty. Sublime not only reflects transcendence, but also effectively reflects the needs of the times. When the society is in turmoil, this demand is getting stronger and stronger. It was in the changing period of Yuan Dynasty and Ming Dynasty which was

full of political and social upheaval when Luo Guanzhong created this work. He longed for loyal and righteous persons to uphold justice, save the people and promote righteousness. It is for this reason that Liu Bei, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei have become important heroes in people's mind<sup>[7]</sup>. The "Oath of the Peach Garden" not only reflects the mutual unity of the people, but also the struggle against the evil forces. It also reflects the friendship between the friends. From these three people, readers can discover the beauty of sublime, and can also find certain spiritual comfort to lay their emotion.

## 6. Beauty of heroism

*Three Kingdoms* portrays many heroes. An important one is Cao Cao. Cao Cao's ambition for power formed his image as a traitor in people's minds. Therefore, Cao Cao was not widely loved by the public. From the perspective of disposition, Cao Cao is not only selfish and violent, but also unkind. His injustice to his friends gradually extended to all people, leading to the image of a person who achieves high position by unscrupulous scheming. Another typical character is Ma Su. As a senior general in the Shu Kingdom, Ma Su not only likes showing off, but also has a fondness for the grandiose and does not consider the collective interests. In the Jieting Battle, Ma Su did not obey the orders of Zhuge Liang, but arbitrarily deployed the army and kept them away from the water. After discovering that Ma Su's army was on the mountain, Cao's army cut off the water source and the grain road to trap Ma Su's army on the mountain, and set fire to the mountain. The lack of water and food made the soldiers hungry and thirsty, which led to the fact that the morale of the troops begins to slump<sup>[8]</sup>. In the end, the Shu army was defeated in the battle. Ma Su caused the serious loss of the Shu army, and finally Kong Ming beheaded Ma Su in tears to enforce the law strictly. The portrayal of this kind of individualistic heroism can, alert future generations, and on the other hand avoid such phenomena. Most of the heroes in the *Three Kingdoms* highly valued national interests and often sacrificed their own interests for national interests. This is an important embodiment of Chinese traditional culture, and also shows the lofty, tragic and heroic characters of heroes. When reading this work, modern people can be inspired and impressed by the spirit of heroes.

## 7. Conclusion

*Three Kingdoms* is self-evident in both literary and aesthetic values. Therefore, when appreciate this work, we should not only analyze it from the literary level, but also should study from the aesthetic aspect to embody the image of beauty of the work and then improve the aesthetic ability.

## References

- [1] Wang Xinlei. Analysis of the Imagery of Beauty in *Three Kingdoms* [J]. Journal cradle, 2018 (10): 11-12.
- [2] Shen Bojun, Jin Wenjing. China and Japan: Retrospect and Prospect of the Study of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* [J]. Literary Studies, 2006(04): 61-75.
- [3] Guo Yu, Luo Xuanmin. A Fine Example of Scholarly Translation --Moss Roberts' Translation of *Sanguoyanyi* and Its Reception [J]. Foreign Language Research, 2015(01):101-104.
- [4] Luo Haihui, Wang Haiyan. Academic Discussion of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in the United States--A Review of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms and Chinese Culture* [J]. Chinese Culture Forum, 2012, 6(06): 150-155.
- [5] Ma Yiming. Research on the Role of Fragmented Reading in the Transmission of Classics [D]. Tianjin Normal University, 2017.
- [6] Shen Changsheng. Content and Textbook Design of Cultural Teaching for *Three Kingdoms* of Thai college students [D]. Xiamen University, 2014.

[7] Shi Xin. Review of the Research and the Application about Military Strategies in *The Romance of The Three Kingdoms* in the 21st Century [J]. Journal of Hubei University of Arts and Sciences, 2016, 37(04): 15-20.

[8] Wu Jing. The Spread and Research on *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in North America [D]. Shanxi University of Technology, 2018.