

The Debate on the Spread of ‘Literariness’ in Chinese Academic Circles

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Abstract: This paper mainly discusses the academic debate on the spread of “literature”. In this debate, supporters argue that “literariness” is spreading to other areas, while opponents argue that “literariness” has not really spread. The two sides have the same path in the purpose of maintaining the status of literature, but there are differences on the definition and scope of “literariness”. Proponents try to maintain the academic value of literary studies through literary sexual spread, while opponents try to maintain the purity of literature. This paper reviews the Russian formalism literary theory, and analyzes the situation of literature in the image era, in order to judge whether the “literariness” is spreading.

Keywords: Literature; Image; Formalism; Film; Documentary

Foreword

In the context of today’s interdisciplinary and interdisciplinarily academic research, the application and influence of the concept of “literature” in various fields has attracted wide attention. However, with the advent of the image era, the status of literature has been challenged, and the academic circle began to pay attention to whether literariness is spreading to other fields. This paper aims to sort out the debate on the spread of literary literature, analyze the rationality of all views, and discuss the situation of “literariness” in the image era. This article will introduce the relevant concepts and review the relevant literature in order to provide readers with a comprehensive understanding.

1. The “literary nature” spread theory debate

In 1921, Jacobson, a representative figure of Russian formalism, first put forward the concept of “literature” in his article in *Modern Russian Poetry*.

Literariness is the scientific object of literature, and even if the work becomes the connotation of a literary work. All kinds of science can also use literary literature as defective second-hand data, but literary science must identify “technique” as the only “protagonist” in its research^[1].

As a key concept of literary theory, “literature” has carried the responsibility of acting as the scientific object of literary research since its birth, and has also become a symbol of distinguishing literature from non-literature. The concept of “literariness” is a fundamental concept supporting Jacobson’s linguistics and poetics, but it has always been controversial, mainly for its origin and connotation. At present, there is no doubt about the author of the concept of “literary” and the source of literature, but some scholars believe that from the perspective of linguistics, the Russian dictionary of “literary” originally means language standardization, which is a figurative induction of “literary inner law” of Jacobson, rather than a new concept^[2]. After tracing the history, some scholars found that the dissemination and construction of the concept of “literature” was not the credit of the Russian formalists, but the product of Russian formalism, new criticism of British and American countries and French structuralism^[3]. On the debate of its connotation, the first thing to mention is Jacobson’s student Victor Ellich, as a representative of promoting the concept of “literary” to the West, Ellich understood it as “significant feature” or “distinguishing feature”^[4], according to this understanding, “literary” is not the essential feature of literature. Another western representative figure is the French critic Tivantodorov. In the beginning of his poetics, he proposed the definition of “literariness”: making a literary work have the abstract characteristics of its particularity^[5]. Todorov believes that “literariness” is the unique attribute of literature. After the concept of “literature” was introduced into China, different opinions on whether it is the essence of literature triggered the debate on the spread theory of “literariness” among Chinese scholars.

The first shot of the debate was Yu Hong. He started from the end of literature in the End of Literature, and believed that the seeds of

the demise of postmodern literature can be traced back to the end of Hegel's art, replaced by film and television art and science. The rising middle class and the consumer public are addicted to the direct sensory stimulation of Nietzsche's aesthetics and adapt to the film and television art spread by electronic technology. While literature is marginalized in universities and academia, "literature" has quietly penetrated into all kinds of humanities and humanities and social sciences. Then, standing on the basis of the facts of social development, Yu Hong took the consumption of society, media information and public performance as examples to analyze the invasion of "literature". However, the "literariness" in Yu Hong's works is not the "literature" of Jacobson's correct literature, but the deconstructed special literary mode or the overall concept of the collection of multiple literary elements. These literary elements include fiction, metaphor, narrative, imagination, rhetoric and other specific techniques applied to literature. It is these elements that become the grasping point for Yu Hong to prove that other industries have "literary nature". Therefore, Yu Hong's understanding of "literature" should be closer to Erich. As for why the deconstructed "literary" is not replaced by other terms such as "artistic" or "scientific", the author believes that there are two reasons: first, Jacobson, the author of "literary", has no clear concept definition and scope delineation, which triggers different understandings of "literary" in later generations. Second, since the era of printing, the great influence of literature is enough to cover the universal characteristics of all kinds of art, and the elements and techniques of literature are really applied to the process of artistic creation, so that no proper noun is more appropriate than "literariness".

Chen Xiaoming, *The disappearance or ghosting of Literature?* Writing in 2002, it is similar to Yu Hong's final literary final conclusion and the spread of "literature". After analyzing the internal and external forces of literature, he also discovered the secrets of the fall of literature. The strategy of saving literature is that the future of literature must rely on the power of TV media and non-literature. This forward-looking idea has been verified today, but now the form of film and television media has developed from TV to films, documentaries and short videos. Chen Xiaoming believes that the electronic era has adapted to the human perceptual understanding of the world instinct, so the image easily kills the body of literature, but the soul of literature is not destroyed, and this soul is the "literature" in Yu Hong, specifically refers to the thinking and expression techniques of literature. He believes that the media has been imitating literature, including all the means taken by the media to create "truth" or "fiction", and the production of advertising is a typical representative of them. Literature can be easily combined with language to achieve reproduction without the help of any media, which is impossible to electronic media, and is also the reason why "literature" has always existed. On a broader level, reality is filled by various symbols, including various discourse, various narratives and various allegations, to jointly build the super text of *The Times* and present it in the form of images and language. Whether we read specific literary works or experience the super text of *The Times*, the charm of "literary nature" has always been the driving force that attracts us to read, especially the form of "literary nature" narrative. In the age of image, literature did not disappear, but retreated from the front to the background, becoming the core of the image, depicting the dream of "great literature" or "pan-literature" together with the image.

Tao Dongfeng also mentioned the spread of "literature" in the article "The Disenchantment of Literature". He believed that the spread of "literature" is a form of expression of literary disenchantment, which is accompanied by the atrophy of pure literature and pure art and the generalization of aesthetic art. Tao Dongfeng's understanding of "literary" also tends to rhetoric level, and Yu Hong's view is similar, but the process of literature, art, aesthetics, economic and political aspects in the field of humanities and social sciences, compared with Yu Hong's about literature and literature psychology in specific industry use and practice point of view, Dongfeng's stance is wider, wider vision, so the author thinks that: the history of literature, with "cultural" diffusion instead of "literary" diffusion expression perhaps more appropriate. The process of literature is essentially the boundary between literature and the literature gradually blurred process, the result of literature down sacred coat, become cynicism and boring, and after the literature with a strong tendency to literature, the image as the representative of the literary personality, especially in the aspect of literature.

2. The rationality and problem of the "literary nature" spreading theory

Although the spread of "literary" is a local argument, the opinions of Yu Hong and supporters Chen Xiaoming, Tao Dongfeng, Dong Xin and others on the spread of "literary" are more or less influenced by David Simpson and Jonathan Kallal. After Hillis Miller published his view of "the final conclusion of literature", Simpson put forward the view of post-modern "literary rule", that is, the focus of literary

criticism has shifted to other fields. Simpson said: “Literary study itself has become more interdisciplinary than ever (in the form of cultural studies), borrowing new forms of description from sociology, cultural anthropology, political science, psychoanalysis, and so on. Accordingly, non-literary disciplines are gradually being colonized by the redissemination of literary methods by their own extremists^[6].” It can be seen that Simpson has fully affirmed the literature for other disciplines discourse yuan narrative function, on the basis of the literature in the integration of postmodern interdisciplinary knowledge system and reconstruction, that literature rule method and effect is based on the construction of interdisciplinary theory, trying to decline in a new subversive way to save literature. Of course, what Simpson calls “literature” refers to the literature in the theoretical form, not only the literary characteristics such as narrative and rhetoric, but also contains the literary configuration as a knowledge generation mode or cultural mode, which is close to the philosophical level^[7].

Kallal, on the other hand, builds on Simpson’s theory, describing the ruling “literature” as a “literary element”. He said: “No matter where the discourse of theories comes from, they always remind us that different variants of literariness play a role in various kinds of discourse, and thus reaffirm the centrality of literature in their way^[8].” It can be seen that Kal does not think that literature is gradually dying out, because” literature “is spreading other fields, and post-theoretical literary discourse has become the research paradigm of other disciplines, and has completely changed the research direction of non-literary disciplines. Scholar Xu Zhiqiang believes that the literary paradigm of Simpson and Kler’s post-theory not only returns to the ontology of “literature”, finds the legitimacy basis of literary existence for literary research troubled by the end of theory, but also provides a post-modern interpretation strategy for knowledge reconstruction of non-literary disciplines^[7]. If Simpson and card by discovering the literary theory paradigm in the theoretical era of the inner influence of other humanities, thus again affirmed the status and value of the literature, the rainbow others others deepen their views, the influence of “literary” into all aspects of society, which emphasizes on the basis of “word game” consumer society “literature”, involving consumer literature psychology and commodity promotion. Simpson, Kler, Yu Hong and Chen Xiaoming all have the courage to break the boundaries of traditional disciplines and fields. Their innovative views promote the “literary turn” of theoretical research, and also provide the possibility for interdisciplinary and cross-field research. But their views on the spread of “literature” are also being questioned by many scholars.

Wang Yuechuan denied Simpson’s view of postmodern “literary rule” directly in his article of “literary character”, believing that this is just a misreading of his times. On the contrary, the elite literature and “literary nature” in the postmodern era gradually decayed and drifted away, and the status of literature was compressed by other media methods such as film, television and songs. He believes that the spread of “literature” should not only consider the appropriation of the form of language rhetoric. Although rhetoric has long been not only belonged to literature, the key problem of literature lies more in its spiritual directivity, transcendence and aesthetic modernity^[9]. It is also Wu Zilin who sees that the spread of “literary” lacks aesthetic consideration. In his article “Questions on” literary expansion “, he believes that” literary “in the era of commercial consumption is only a means rather than an end, and the poetic beauty of language is the fundamental embodiment of” literary “. The spread of “literature” will only lead to the rupture of the boundary between literature and non-literature, thus leads to the lack of literary ontology research. Moreover, “literature” is originally historical and mobile, and people in different times understand literature and “literature” differently, so there is no spread^[10].

Zhang wei in the theory from literature to literature —— consumption era of literary aesthetic disenchantment and value reconstruction article in favor of Wu Zilin about literature and literature boundaries itself is fuzzy and dynamic view, at the same time that the present literature is narrative, rhetoric, metaphor, and a series of text form, so the spread of “literary” is the spread of the form of text, literary elements in other text should be called “reciprocity”, if there is a really beyond the literary territory, universal meaning of literature, that is there the corresponding concept of “literary”^[11]? Zhang Wei’s view actually responds to Zhang Kaiyan’s “Is literature really in a crazy expansion”?—— Discuss with Professor Tao Dongfeng, he believes that Tao Dongfeng is only listing the art and symbol of goods, consumption and leisure, which is not equal to the literature; the expansion of aesthetic, art and symbol is not equal to the expansion of “literature”. Since ancient times, the “literature” has been weakening, because the whole process of social activities in ancient China is full of ritual poems, while the poetic wisdom of modern society is becoming weaker and weaker. Literary language is part of the composition, not the whole composition of language. The literature and “literature” based on language can only highlight part of the characteristics of language. Therefore, it is not comprehensive to talk about the “literature” of social science only from the perspective of linguistics. Although many spiritual and cultural

styles generally have the characteristics of narrative and statement, not all statements or narratives, or general statements or general narrative actions and their results are literary acts, and all are literary^[12].

Throughout the voice of the opponents, they mainly grasp the defects of “literary” definition is not clear, hong supporters did not to “literary” concept, or roughly follow Jacobson about “literary” is the nature of literature fuzzy tone, or from the language form and technique include the elements of “literary”, the lack of literary aesthetic level and value level. The confusion of the concept of “literariness” leads to the ultimate controversy about “what literature is” in the academic circle. Whether literature is coming to the end, whether there is a boundary between literature and non-literature, and whether “literariness” is spreading has naturally become the following small questions. Wang Yuechuan, Wu Zilin and others don’t approve of “literary” spread, but in the face of other humanities and social industry literary elements increase social reality, they did not give reasonable and withstand scrutiny analysis process, is simply interpreted as formal “intertextuality”, “artistic” or “aesthetic” characteristics, but this for “literary” spread and that is too thin.

3. Return to the concept of “literature”

In addition to the above two camps, some scholars put forward their own views on “literary”. For example, Shi Zhongyi said in his article on The Definition of “Literary” that the definition of “literary” is closely related to the language environment and cultural background^[13]. Zhou Xiaoyi and Shi Zhongyi have similar views. In his article “ Literariness, he believes that there is no abstract, eternal and objective literariness, only concrete, historical and practical literariness. In China, literariness is the concentrated embodiment of specific social, historical and cultural relations, the floating energy reference in life practice, and the metonymy of the structure of eastern and Western cultural relations^[14]. Of course, some scholars also made new construction on the concept of “literature”. For example, Liu Huainan and Yao Wenfang both divided “literary”. Liu Huainan believed that “literature” = literary “literary”, while Yao Wenfang believed that Russian formalism and French deconstruction respectively hold two different “literary”.

The views of neutrals may have reached the core of the controversy of “literary” spread, because both supporters and opponents of “literary” spread have the same goal of maintaining literary status. Supporters get inspiration from French deconstruction, and under the pressure of “the final conclusion of literature”, choose a new way to separate the noumenon and soul of literature, break the boundary between literature and non-literature, and advocate the expansion of literature for non-literature, aiming to try to maintain the academic value of literary research through the spread of “literariness”. In the face of the invasion of the image age, opponents either do not think that literature has the risk of extinction, or oppose the unlimited expansion of literary research to other fields, take the initiative to clarify the difference between literature and non-literature, resist the annexation of non-literature, try to preserve the final purity of literature and maintain the glory of literature for hundreds of years.

Conclusion

We can’t say which of the strategies is better, and neither is the “literary” as Jacobson advocated, but they are facing the same enemy — images. If there is still a breathing space for literature in the image society era, what will be the advent of the image era for literature, and whether “literature” will exist? To answer this question, it is necessary for us to go back to Jacobson’s Russian formalist literary theory, starting from the stage of academic research, and looking for the clues of literature in the internal study of literature, so as to judge whether the “literariness” is spreading.

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