

An Analysis of Animal Farm from the Perspective of Defamiliarization

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ABSTRACT. *George Orwell's Animal Farm is regarded as the most outstanding political allegory of the 20th century. This work successfully creates a series of unique animal images. Orwell's satire of the British political environment at that time is embedded in the storyline, which exposes to the reader the hidden side of political life. Based on the theory of defamiliarization, this paper analyzes the animal images, story structure and language expression, and gives a brief account of the defamiliarization technique adopted by the author to realize political irony and the artistic effect achieved in his works.*

KEYWORDS: *Animal farm; Defamiliarization; Political allegory*

1. Introduction

George Orwell, a British writer, uses allegorical style in *Animal Farm* to attract many readers by reflecting the political life of human groups deeply and vividly in *Animal Farm*, which has also become a representative work of political allegory novels. This story takes place on a farm where the animals rise up against the oppression of the farmers and try to build a utopian home where “all animals are equal”. However, animal leaders broke this equality and eventually chose to cooperate with human beings, even becoming more dictatorial than human beings. Nowadays, the researches on *Animal Farm* mainly focus on its narrative techniques and writing techniques. This article will analyze this work from the defamiliarization angle and introduce the defamiliarization technique and the effect.

2. An Overview of the Defamiliarization Theory

For the first time, the Russian formalism theorist Viktor Shklovsky regards “defamiliarization” as an independent concept, “What is called art as technique exists to re-experience life, to feel things, to make stone to stone (Shklovsky, 1994)”, “he wrote in “art as technique”. It's about feeling things. The art skill is to make the object strange, make the form difficult, and increase the feeling of difficulty and time length. The famous dramatist Bertolt Brecht believed that the process of defamiliarization is the process of artificially alienating the familiar and keeping it at a distance. Once the familiar thing changes, it will cause the subject to think, thus obtaining the new cognition of the familiar thing. On this point, Bertolt Brecht agrees with Viktor Shklovsky. Both Viktor Shklovsky and Bertolt Brecht believe that defamiliarization is common to all arts, except that the former takes poetry as the theoretical point of entry and the latter takes drama as the theoretical point of entry. Bertolt Brecht stressed that the realization of the effect of defamiliarization should first of all take away the familiar and obvious things of the event or character, so as to make people surprised and curious about them (Bertolt Brecht, 1990:63). It is precisely this distance from reality in *animal farm* that ensures the possibility of criticizing the false ideology of capitalist society. As Bertolt Brecht himself put it, “The art of defamiliarization takes what is usually commonplace from the realm of what is taken for granted to a new level.”

3. Unfamiliarity in Animal Farm

3.1 Bizarre Animal Images

Animal Farm is a classic example of Utopian and Dystopian fiction. From the perspective of a group of animals, the novel stages a “Political Revolution” against human beings. Under the leadership of the pigs, the human owners of the animals are driven off their farms, and a so-called “Egalitarian” animal society takes shape. Yet clever pigs usurp the fruits of the revolution, becoming more authoritarian than their human masters. Political literature often conjures up didactic tirades, but Orwell manages to anthropomorphize the animal. He

creates a series of images such as “Napoléon”, “Snowball”, “Boxer” and “Benjamin”.

In Western traditional culture, pig has the implication of dirt, greed and evil. Napoléon and Snowball, the pigs who lead the animals to change in animal farm, were originally civil campaigns for power. When Napoléon came to power, he was selfish, deceitful, and cruel to a fault. Orwell sketches the roles of different pigs in three dimensions and reinforces the negative images of pigs with humanized descriptions. At the same time, the setting of the pig as a leader and dictator, in the context of the revolution, adds a sense of distance. Let the reader not be limited to the revolutionary theme, but to reflect on the performance of different animals in the revolution.

3.2 Historical Story Structure

For Bertolt Brecht, defamiliarization also means presenting events as history. Defamiliarization is the representation of historicization, which is the core concept of Bertolt Brecht's dramatic theory and the related term of defamiliarization. Russian formalism believe that the process of art is the “defamiliarization” of things, a means of complicating things, that is, trying to increase the difficulty of feeling, thus extending the time of feeling. At the same time, the artistic creation process and the appreciation process also became the so-called “historical” process. The historicization of animal farm runs through the story, with pig leaders reducing the old major's principles of animalism to seven commandments after the ouster of Mr. Jones. The so-called “seven precepts” are actually the revolutionary principles and guidelines of defamiliarization, through which animals construct their own unique historical identities, which can be regarded as the background of the revolution. But then the pigs led by Napoléon usurps the fruits of the revolution, constantly destroying the “seven precepts” set up at the beginning of the revolution, and again creating a “sudden change” in the plot, which was a continuous “historicization” process, the effect of defamiliarization is obvious when the reader interprets the political allegory.

3.3 Metaphorical Language Expression

The effect of defamiliarization is the basis of literariness, which is embodied in the use of language in literary works. Everyday language can achieve novel effects by becoming standard language through literary techniques. Defamiliarization refers to the use of borrowed words, metaphorical words and other expressions. In animal farm, Orwell's writing is clear and precise, free of flowery rhetoric and superfluous embellishments, and satirized with plain language. After the animals takes over the farm, the pigs successfully milk three cows. “It's nice to have a pig's paw to do the work, “ he said, a remark that made people laugh and recall the humanlike behavior of the pigs after they took power. After the revolution, snowball was busy “setting up egg-laying committees for chickens, a clean-tail coalition for cows, and a wildlife re-education committee”. Language is real and imaginative, and the successful grafting of human bureaucracy into animal life has had novel effects. During the renovation, the cat told the sparrows that all animals are gay now, and that any sparrows can come and stay on her paws if they want, “but the sparrows still keep their distance”. With a few pen strokes, the author paints a vivid picture of an animal whose natural hostility is hard to shake off. When animal farm announced the creation of the so-called “republic,” the only presidential candidate was “Napoléon,” and “he was elected without question”. Although it is only an objective statement of the hypocritical electoral facts of animal farms, it is a powerful attack on totalitarianism and causes the reader to think and judge the reality.

4. Conclusion

Animal Farm has been welcomed and loved by the general reader, wonderful story content is of course the most important. However, George Orwell breaks the traditional writing method in animal farm, and makes the work more literary and artistic by “defamiliarizing” the subject matter, the plot and the language expression. There are different feelings in different eras, and each era has its own set of acceptance. If a literary work wants to retain its sensibility, it must constantly change its form of expression, because the change of form of expression is, in another sense, the change of way of feeling. The application of defamiliarization in Animal Farm makes the readers doubt and question the existing ideas, thus prolonging the readers' aesthetic feeling and making them ponder over the world again, that's the key to the success of this work.

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