

# Disseminative Characteristics of Poetry Embryology and Development

## LES CARACTÉRISTIQUES COMMUNICATIVES DE LA POÉSIE DURANT SON APPARITION ET DÉVELOPPEMENT

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**Abstract:** This article attempts to discuss from the poetry embryology, to inquire about characteristics of the related information dissemination in the process of studying poetry literary style and poetry development, to clarify the relationship between the development and dissemination of poetry. As a result, it can offer new train of thought for understanding and solving some problems existing in the poetry.

**Key words:** poetry, poetry embryology, dissemination

**Résumé:** Le présent article tente de chercher, sous l'angle de l'embryologie de la poésie, les caractéristiques communicatives du genre poétique dans son apparition et développement et illustre la relation entre le développement de la poésie et la communication, dans le but d'offrir de nouvelles perspectives à pas mal de problèmes dans la compréhension de la poésie.

**Mots-Clés:** poésie, embryologie de la poésie, communication

Poetry is one kind of artistic forms that appeared in the early period of human social life, and it is also one of the most important human artistic patterns, which plays a very active and deep function in the entire human social life. The embryology, development and maturity of any kind of literary styles must go through a long process, so does poetry. The dissemination of poetry arises together with the poetry activities. Therefore all kinds of behaviours related to poetry possess the disseminative characteristics to some extent.

Professor Huang Shaoqing, the renowned expert in the field of poetry study, divides the history of poetry writing into six stages in his book *History of Chinese Poetry Writing*. The first stage belongs to the initial stage of poetry writing, which is also known as the primitive form of poetry writing. The second stage belongs to the stage of writing archaism poetry, which includes The Book of Poetry, The Odes of Ch'ü, Yuefu, etc, and it is also the pioneering stage for Chinese poetry writing. The third stage is the stage of writing modern-style poetry when poetry style gradually has its definite form. The fourth stage is the stage for the initial fission of Chinese poetry style, among which the writing of literator poem is very extrusive. The fifth stage is the sage for further fission of Chinese poetry style and the writing of San-Ch'ü, which focuses on Xiaoling and Santao, occupies large part of poetry writing space. The sixth stage is the stage of writing modern poetry and it is an ultimate "fission type of" revolution in Chinese poetry writing history, in which great changes have taken places in forms and contents

of poetry. Poetry styles do not confine to factors such as rules and forms of classical poem, etc, colloquialism becomes the trend in the language use and the contents become popularized step by step, which is making its great efforts to express the great changes of eras. As to the motives for the changes of poetry styles, Professor Huang Shaoqing points out the following reasons, that is, "Most changes in poetry styles originate from people who are mothers that nurse and give birth to poetry styles. As Luxun once said that in my point of view, poem, poetry, lyrics and verse originated from people and literators just took them for their own use. We will find out, from the panoramic view of origination and change of certain poetry styles, from The Book of Poetry, The Odes of Ch'ü, Yuefu, to Song poetry, Yuan Verse, from Four-character Sentence Pattern, Five-character Sentence Pattern, to Lyrics, that all of the above-mentioned poetry styles originate from the folks, which can become a kind of relatively perfect poetry style only after literators absorbed, learned, processed and improved them.... It is very important to do well in absorbing foreign nutrition and deal with theoretical conclusion, which will improve poetry style revolution and promote poetry writing quality."<sup>2</sup>

Professor Huang Shaoqing's demonstration contains great values. He portrays the rough structure of Chinese poetry writing history, points out important reasons in

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<sup>2</sup> Huang Shaoqing, P 3 to 4, *Chinese Poetry Writing History* [M], Nanning, Guangxi Education Press, released in 1994.

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the change of style in poetry writing, emphasizes on the function of cultural communication in the change of poetry styles and especially focuses on the key roles that foreign cultures have played in poetry styles. The demonstrations made by Professor Huang Shaoqing also contain obvious inadequacies. His work still inherits the conventions in the study of traditional poetry, that is, he still takes literature study into the consideration of aesthetics. His demonstrations are based upon the internal parts of poetry styles instead of placing them on wider backgrounds though he gives us some practical examples in his study process. If (we can) take poetry into the consideration of the entire cultural views, that is, we place each related factor on equal position instead of treating with the artistic features in poetry as its kernel thesis, by which (we will) get closer to the primitive status of the embryology of things and it will avoid malpractices such as prejudice and thesis coming first to some extent. Namely, we need study poetry from the disseminative characteristic of poetry embryology and development, treat with poetry changes from mutual influences of various factors and mutual language situations, and convert the kernel of poetry behaviours from its attention to aesthetic factors to its functions in information transmission.

We need go back to the embryology of poetry to make further statement on relationship between embryology, development and dissemination of poetry. "The so-called art contains the forms limited to singing, dancing and painting in prehistoric period without words. It is the development situation of the entire prehistoric human arts, so is China, the certain group of people in details. Singing and dancing constitute music, which becomes the resource of Chinese art. Then music is linked with poetry and poetry becomes one important component of music..... People accept music in an active and voluntary way instead of mechanical and passive way and the purpose of music must be favourable for human existence and development, and it must be favourable for ethics and morals..... Music contains the features of propagating ethics and assisting in observing political situations in the distant past."<sup>3</sup>

The above-mentioned demonstration is regarded as the most precise, overall and relatively fair statement on the embryology of poetry. The author proposes of one kernel point of view, that is, the key role that music plays in the embryology of poetry. Poetry develops only as one part of music in its initial development stage. Therefore, the role of poetry appears only under the precondition of assisting music; the role that music plays lies in its social values, which is embodied for its disseminative functions. All functions of music such as the expression of people's emotions, attracting people, activating and touching people, propagating morals, assisting in observing political situations, etc, originate from its disseminative behaviour. People often focus on

its disseminative meanings while judging and defining functions and values of music at that time, which is only the expression of ancient language and thinking pattern. As a kind of literary style, poetry, since its embryology and dissemination is basically related to the sociological meanings of dissemination, must have ultimate relation with dissemination as to its embryology and development in initial period. The sociological features of music are more obvious, which developed in the practical social level. Music combines with dancing with the company of singing, which is the tool for direction communication among people and it developed in a relatively representational way. On the contrary, poetry, as the development of letter symbols, it contains relatively abstract form. Its individualized features become more and more obvious with the development of the obvious letter function of poetry step by step, which starts emphasizing on features in the sphere of aesthetics. Poetry are organically combined with artistic forms such as music and dancing, etc in embryology period of poetry, which contains very obvious social functions. All human behaviours related to poetry in that period take dissemination as the fundamental starting points basically speaking, and all behavioural processes can be analyzed and observed from the aspect of dissemination. The introduction of dissemination is the only way to have a clear view of sociological features of poetry in its initial embryological behaviours and acquire the panoramic view of the development of things.

It is hard to treat with a kind of literary style in a simply way from the aspect of literary art especially in limited materials that can be investigated. Materials with letter recording is scarce in the long-term construction of poetry for human beings and poetry expressed by simply body moves and mixed syllables are extinguished already, which cannot be understood and recognized. But it is the longest and the most fundamental process, which roughly determines all basic features of poetry styles because it is the complicated process when human beings confirm their individual and collective, regulatory, internal and normative behaviours. Our ancestors often start from the aspects of history and archaeology to deal with the study on poetry embryology in early period, find out ancient poems from the most ancient scriptures as the proof or carry out analysis from aspects such as epics and folk ballads, etc.

Mr. Zhu Ziqing already pointed out in the 1930s that this kind of ancient-collection did not work because this kind of behaviour contained a wrong argumentation premise, that is, there were two assumptions, "this kind of ancient-collection method will never find out the resource of poetry and it contains two fundamental wrong ideas, firstly, it assumes that the most ancient poetry recorded in history is the resource of poetry; secondly, it assumes that we cannot find out resource of poetry except the most ancient poetry." We cannot master poetry through documentations only since

<sup>3</sup> Hu Jingzhi, Lijian, P 1 to 5, *Chinese Classical Literature & Art Study*[M], Beijing, Guangming Daily Press, released in 2006.

poetry sprouted before the appearance of letters, which requires us to explore a brand-new channel in the study. Zhu Ziqing also advocates that we should make more external researches such as the investigations on folk ballads, and we can also carry out internal studies at the same time, which seems to be more important. In his point of view, the resource of poetry is a psychological problem instead of a historical problem. We must understand reasons that people sing to make poems if we want to study the resource of poetry. He then draws a conclusion on this issue, that is, poetry originates from the born natures of human beings and its resource is as long as that of human beings whatever poetry is aimed to express internal feelings, represent foreign images and creating happy feelings with pure artistic images. Mr. Zhu Ziqing proposes of two very important theoretical statements. The first one answers why “poetry” cannot be the literal articles certainly and why we are used to approving of such point of view without any hesitation. Poetry occurs with the company of human beings and it becomes the must for the expression of rhymes. People use the form of poetry to record their behaviours and experiences so as to memorize and transmit them; the second statement is that it is the must for us to seek for the basic motive for the embryology of poetry out of the current pure poetry style.

“Poetry” we mention now does not confine to poetry text that takes letters as the media, or the nice sounds orally sung one by one in the form of ballad. In fact, the primitive poetry form shall be earlier than that of verbal poetry. Poetry occurred when human beings contained

human consciousness. Poetry is a kind of “categorized” consciousness and it is a kind of motive that differs human beings from other things. The occurring such motives, basically speaking, belong to inter-human dissemination taking body languages such as eye contact, expressions, gestures and actions, etc, as media. Primitives make information communication and exchange through the expression of poetry and the poetry-like behaviours they use enable them to have rules of “categorization”. It’s been a long process for human beings to get rid of their animal-like features and people acquire the sense of poetry through gradual exchanges and communications, which enable them to have disseminative features. To some extent, human beings become human beings in the process of dissemination and vice versa, that is, the poetry kind of behaviours of human beings enables dissemination to develop.

The primitive poetry originates from the disseminative behaviours; basically speaking, the embryology of poetry is the embryology of dissemination of human society and both of them are unanimous, either of which promotes the other and happens simultaneously. Therefore, it is the must for us to place poetry into the vision of dissemination and take it as part of dissemination to make analysis and researches if we want to investigate on the basic features and definitions of poetry, embryology and development of poetry, by which we will truly understand the old debates and difficulties in the history of poetics that still remain unsettled.

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