

An Analysis of the Lady of the Camellias from the Theoretical Perspective of Longinus' on the Sublime

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Abstract: *The ancient Greek writer Longinus introduced the word "sublime" into the aesthetic category in his article the age of hepsus, and put forward five sources of the sublime style. Judging from the writer's writing style, "La Traviata" embodies Dumas' lofty thought from the analysis of the characters in the work, the heroine Margaret exudes a noble spirit. This paper attempts to analyze the sublime thought in Camellia from the perspective of langinus' theory of sublime, so as to analyze Dumas' view of the sublime, as well as to provide a philosophical theoretical paradigm for the analysis of Dumas' literary works.*

Keywords: *Longinus; On the Sublime; Dumas; sublime thought; The Lady of the Camellias*

1. Introduction

Longinus, Aristotle and Horace (2009) took literary works as his object of study, and in his essay "Peri Hupsous" proposed five sources that make up the style of the sublime : "grand and great thoughts", "impassioned feelings" , "The application of algae decoration technology (including the algae decoration of thought and the algae decoration of speech)", "elegant wording" and "the structure produced by dignity and elegance (the source includes all four points mentioned above)" (Zhang Anqi 83). Later related scholars applied its sublime style to the analysis of literary works to interpret the sublime beauty of literary works and the sublime views of writers. La Traviata, as a representative work of Dumas, has great commonality in its unique writing style and the noble temperament of La Traviata and that of Longinus. This article will use the theoretical viewpoint of Longinus's "On the Sublime" to analyze the sublime thought in "La Traviata" from the five sources of sublime style, so as to interpret the sublime view of Dumas. The literature provides a philosophical theoretical paradigm.

2. Analysis of the sublime style of "La Traviata"

La Traviata (1848) is a novel by French writer Alexandre Dumas (1824-1895). This novel is about a twisted and tragic love story between a young French man named Armand Duval and a Parisian high-class man named Marguerite Gautier (Ridley P, 2021). The story of "La Traviata" not only exposed the festering world of the aristocratic bourgeoisie, but also publicly pointed out that compared with the despicable nobles at the top, the 'La Traviata' at the bottom of society is noble (Wang Zhongxiang, 1983). Combining his own personal experience, Alexandre Dumas poured his noble thoughts into the pen, making La Traviata exude a strong and noble atmosphere. The following will analyze the sublime thought of La Traviata from the five sources of the sublime style of Longinus.

2.1. Solemn and great thoughts

As one of the writers in the transition period from romanticism to realism, Dumas's literary creation mostly came from real life. "La Traviata" is a typical real life restoration work in this period. Zhongmai seeks the authenticity of the story. This work combines the true story with the color of romanticism, and highly restores the prototype of Margaret, that is, the famous prostitute Marie Du Plessis marked by the "La Traviata". Although Margaret was a prostitute and was criticized by the world, she was still full of elegant and dignified temperament, retaining the beauty and purity of camellias. From the perspective of humanism, Margaret's pursuit of the true meaning of love highlights the humanistic concern for personal values and personal emotions (Zhou Rong, 2011). Although La Traviata is brave in courtship, she is willing to give up her hard-won true love in order to win her final dignity. Longinus

believed that "the sublime is the echo of the noble mind" (Ma Wenting and Gong Xue, 2009). It follows that a simple idea naturally inspires readers to appreciate the great ideas it expresses. The author believes that Margaret's spirit of sacrificing true love in order to win the respect and recognition of the world not only shows her value pursuit and noble attitude towards love, but also reflects the grandeur and grandeur of *La Traviata* worthy of praise from readers.

The Christian religious color that Alexandre Dumas Jr. played up by the tragic figure of the camellia woman can be described as another presentation of the solemn and great thought. Zhou Rong (2011) believed that "Marguerite's dedication to love originated from the influence of Christian culture". Adhering to the Christian culture represented by Jesus, the camellia woman sincerely expressed her strong sacrifice and dedication. In addition, the author participated in the heritage auction of Camellia woman as a narrator. Everything at the auction showed the author the poor girl's forced dedication again and again. As the author looked at it, he thought that old age was the first death of the socialite, but God was very kind to her (the camellia girl). At least, he didn't let this sad woman suffer the usual punishment, but let her die in a young, beautiful and luxurious life (liyumin, 2009). At the level of Christianity, the author, with his sharp and unique writing style, mercilessly exposed the hypocrisy of the aristocratic bourgeoisie of the French July Dynasty and the decadent life of the upper class, and fed back to the camellia woman with Jesus' great compassion. The solemn and great religious ideology of Christianity has been perfectly interpreted in Margaret.

2.2. *Impassioned feelings*

"Longinus clearly pointed out that thought needs the heat of emotion. What he said about emotion is passion beyond the general intensity" (Chenrong and E. Department, 2015). Impassioned feelings are another source of noble style. This source requires writers to accurately find the most appropriate essential elements and connect the inherent essential elements contained in a thing to form an organic whole. "The author gives full play to the role of 'sadness' in art, and uses him to connect serious events and noble thoughts, to express sympathy for the victims, protest against the oppressors, hate the darkness, and pursue the light. This is where the loftiness of the novel art style lies" (wangzhongxiang, 1983). While exposing the darkness of capitalist society, the author reveals the impassioned emotion of a realistic writer to the readers between the lines. Longinus mentioned that "some authors attract readers by choosing themes, while others conquer readers through the organizational effect of themes" (Ma Wenting and Gong Xue, 2009). The author believes that the reason why "Camellia woman" is popular among readers is not only because of Dumas' unique theme choice, but also because of its unique theme organization effect. On the one hand, "La Traviata" is the first literary work in the history of French literature that takes prostitutes as the subject matter. Its unprecedented choice of subject matter in the French literary world is easy to create a preemptive momentum and give readers a sense of light.

On the other hand, Dumas' organization of the theme is quite meticulous, especially the emotional treatment of the main characters of the story, which can be said to be targeted and scalable. Once the most basic safety and physical needs are met, social needs such as love and a sense of belonging will come in and become new centers (Fu Yan, 2015). When Marguerite's material life and physical need to be guaranteed, in the face of Armand's infatuation, she gradually moved from indifference when she first met, until she fell deeply in love. Marguerite's emotions have gone through a process of continuous sublimation. It was Armand's sincere confession that inspired Marguerite's yearning for free love and finally made her firm determination to get rid of the boring life in Paris. When her love was strongly opposed by Mr. Duval, Armand's father, Marguerite abandoned her love to preserve her dignity. As Fu Yan (2015) said, "Margaret fulfilled her promise with death, exchanged her life for dignity, and realized her self-worth across time and space in Nirvana". The author believes that *Traviata's* pursuit of value beyond the mundane and into the spiritual level is not only her unique way of expressing love, but also the outstanding performance of her impassioned emotion.

2.3. *The application of rhetoric technology*

Longinus is convinced that "the figure of speech has a certain natural quality, which can make the style of the article more noble; on the contrary, it can also make the noble style get amazing support" (Ma Wenting and Gong Xue, 2009). However, excessive use of figures of speech tends to lead to doubts about their authenticity, thus giving the impression of artificiality. However, the sublime mood and the strong expression of emotion help to resist the doubts caused by rhetoric (Ma Wenting and Gong Xue,

2009). Therefore, figures of speech can be artfully presented in their most eloquent and effective forms only when they are not perceived. Longinus believes that the decoration technique includes the decoration of thought and the decoration of speech. The author boldly infers that the former focuses more on the central idea that the author wants to express to the readers, while the latter focuses on how to choose words and sentences to make the work more convincing. In "La Traviata", Dumas' use of figures of speech can be seen everywhere in each chapter.

In the aspect of ideological decoration, the author describes the pure love story between Armand and Margaret in the form of a combination of true feelings and romanticism. In addition, "in the process of characterization of Margaret, the author used the writing technique of intersection of appearance description and inner monologue to show the whole process of the fate tragedy and inner repentance of the camellia woman, making this semi real and semi virtual image particularly full and vivid" (Tanfangli, 2009). As Li Yumin (2009) said, "social prejudices and emotional misunderstandings have acted as catalysts and synergists for this love story." The author uses his superb rhetoric and techniques to show the noble style of the camellia girl, and adopts the ideological and rhetorical expression form of overlapping layers to reveal the process of many misunderstandings between lovers with different status. In addition to the decoration of thoughts, the decoration of words is the most brilliant move in the artistic technique of the work. The novel turns the first person into two people. The author appears as an upper class person and listens to Armand's love story with the camellia girl. This is equivalent to indirectly telling the story to the readers as the first person. This unique narrative method perfectly highlights the language decoration level of Alexandre Dumas Gao Zhan.

2.4. Noble phrase

"Elegant wording" requires the author to grasp the usage of metaphor, exaggeration, parallelism, rhythm, etc., so as to add greater appeal to the work. Longinus focuses on the role of language conciseness, metaphor and exaggeration in noble style. "The lady of camellias better represents the creative features of Dumas Jr.'s novels, with fresh and elegant artistic forms, plain language and words, blending meaningful, profound and touching thoughts and feelings" (wangzhongxiang, 1983). The author finds that the most eye-catching wording in the novel is in two forms: simple language and metaphor. As for the expression form of plain language, one question and one answer is one of the outstanding ways of expression. In the first chapter of the novel, the author used the question for the first time. He first asked himself: "what is worse than the late scene of a dissolute life, especially the late scene of a dissolute woman?" Then it leads to a self answer: "this kind of evening scene, the dignity is lost, and it can not attract the attention of others." (liyumin, 2009) the same way of asking questions also appears in the second chapter. The author first asked, "why can Margaret's hot life leave her with a unique innocent or even childish mood?" Then he replied, "this is the aspect that we cannot ignore and wonder about." (liyumin, 2009) the author believes that this way of asking and answering questions better expresses the author's compassion for the camellia girl and exposes the poison and harm to the body and mind of the camellia girl caused by the obscenity of capitalist society. Longinus especially pointed out that, compared with the feeble and simple narration, the method of asking and answering questions by oneself is not only the natural expression of lofty feelings, but also more persuasive (Zhang Anqi, 1998).

In addition to the questioning forms mentioned above, metaphors also occupy a pivotal position in the novel. In the second chapter, Dumas made this comment on the death of La Traviata, "Marguerite was very beautiful, but such a woman pays attention to a luxurious life, and the more controversial it is, the more silent she is when she dies. Breathless, like those planets that rise and fall every day and are bleak" (Li Yumin, 2009). Margaret was like a dazzling star in her lifetime, but faded like a falling meteorite, revealing the ruthlessness of society and the dark reality of capitalism to a certain extent. , rendering a different kind of sublime style. In the twenty-second chapter of the novel, Dumas describes the life of Armand, who lost his love, Marguerite, as follows: "The empty bed sometimes feels like a tomb" (Li Yumin, 2009). Here the author compares the bed to a tomb, expressing the emptiness and loss in Armand's heart after losing his lover. In addition, the tomb has thus far become the burial of the once vigorous and sincere love between Marguerite and Armand, an extraordinary metaphor that creates an extraordinary sublime style.

2.5. The overall effect of dignity and elegance

The fifth sublime style mentioned by Longinus is "the general effect of dignity and elegance". He believes that this sublime style includes the four sublime styles mentioned above, namely "solemn and

great thoughts", "impassioned feelings", "application of algae decoration technology" and "elegant phrasing". Chen Rong mentioned that among these five styles, the first two are the requirements for the quality of the artist, and the last three are the writing skills (Rong, C. and E. Department. 2016). Longinus believes that this great style is like the parts of the human body that cannot be dismembered, and if the parts of the sublime text are divided, the sublime will also collapse (Ma Wenting and Gong Xue, 2009). Therefore, it is only by combining the parts in a harmonious order into an organic, well-rounded whole that a powerful effect with a loud sound can be created. This effect is highly in line with the overall layout of *La Traviata*. Whether it is its artistic style, superb skills or powerful charm, it is inseparable from the author's ideological quality, life experience, creative personality and artistic accomplishment (Wang Zhongxiang, 1983). Dumas closely combines the fate of the heroine with the real-life prototype Miss Marie Du Plessy, listening to Armand narrating his love story as an upper-class nobleman in the first person, using flashback writing skills, using concise and unadorned writing skills. The language expression sings praises for the noble spiritual quality of a courtesan who is born for love and lives for dignity. As Tan Fangli and others said, Margaret was a famous courtesan who loved camellias, and camellias symbolized the beauty and purity of women (Tan, F. L. 2009). The author fills Margaret with solemn and great thoughts and impassioned feelings with superb rhetoric techniques and elegant words, making it a noble and dignified temperament like a camellia, so as to achieve the overall effect of dignity and elegance.

3. Conclusion

Longinus said in "On the Sublime", "Because of an innate power, truly noble works often elevate our souls, make us proud and satisfied, as if This article is written by ourselves" (Ma Wenting and Gong Xue, 2009). Through the analysis of this article, it is not difficult to see that Dumas' unique narrative technique and writing style convey the essence of Longinus' sublime style. "What the lofty requires is that the noble soul maintain a lasting and strong inner drive, so that the written words can be passed down through the ages." (Chen Rong and E. Department. 2016). "*La Traviata*" is full of Longinus-style sublime spirit, which makes readers from generation to generation moved and shocked in the process of reading. *La Traviata's* pursuit of sincere love and the value of abandoning true love for self-esteem are highly in line with Longinus' lofty style, making people conquered by its solemn grandeur and impassioned passion.

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