

Original Paper

A Brief Analysis of the Language Features of Longfellow's

Snowflake

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Abstract

Henry Wordsworth Longfellow is one of the most popular poets in the United States in the 19th century. He is a veritable prolific poet. This article mainly analyses the language features of Longfellow's Snowflake in the aspects of tone, rhetoric, image and so on.

Keywords

Longfellow, Snowflake, beautiful melody, rhetoric beauty

1. Introduction

Longfellow is one of the most popular poets in European country in the 19th century, and people all over the world regard him as the greatest poet in the United States. Longfellow's reputation is famous as Tennyson in England, and his bust was placed in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, London. What's more, he is the first American writer to be so honored. Longfellow had a sweet and beautiful soul, and he loved a quiet, tidy and orderly way of lifestyle all his life, which had a great influence on his poetry. Longfellow advocated art for life, and his lyric poems were beautiful in tone and easy to understand, and were well known in the European and American literary world. In addition, the popularity of Longfellow greatly enhanced the status of American poetry and made great contributions to the foundation of early American literature.

During his lifetime, Longfellow wrote many poems, which were collected in his collections of poems such as *Voices of the Night*, *Ballads and Other Poems*, *The Belfry of Burges and Other Poems* *The Seaside and Fireside*. The *Snowflake* is a lyric poem expressing Longfellow's melancholy and depression, which transforms Longfellow's pain into nature and transcends the suffering.

Henry Wordsworth Longfellow, born in Portland, Maine, was one of the greatest American romantic poets in the 19th century. Although Longfellow was born into a rich family, he wrote poetry for the poor. During his lifetime, Longfellow's two beautiful wives died one after another, which brought a deep blow

to Longfellow and also influenced his later style of poetry creation. Longfellow was also a versatile lyric poet with a pure, gracious and gentle style and has gained an eternal reputation. In the 19th century, Longfellow was one of the most popular writers of the United States, but in the 20th century, Longfellow became the abandoned son of his motherland, and the sadness also implied the many setbacks of Longfellow's life. The death of his wife became the turning point of Longfellow's creation, and from then on, his poem creation was dominated by depression. This article based on *Snowflake*, created when Longfellow touched the scene of snowflakes falling, and inspired his dreary melancholy in order to mourn for his dead wife's sad feelings. *Snowflake* is included in his poetry *Voices of the Night*, Longfellow's emotional use of melancholy makes the poem's tone, rhetoric and imagery more unique. The process of searching up and down the long road of life is just like snowflakes, floating and sprinkling, and Longfellow's *Snowflake* is to convey his sense of Longfellow and melancholy.

2. The Melody of *Snowflake*

2.1 Rhyme

Snowflake is a lyric poem interwoven with poetry and music. Not only the words are simple and ingenious, but also the rhythm is soft and beautiful. Longfellow expressed his inner sadness and mourned for his dead wife through the falling snow. The poem consists of three stanzas, each consisting of a long sentence divided into six lines, just like a snowflake. The use of fricative makes the poem silky and soft. For example, the three "s" in the beginning of the sentence and "Silent, and soft, and slow" in the first verse add a soft and slow flavor to the verse. The alternate use of vowels and consonants slows down the rhythm of the sentence, such as /l/ as a final rhyme in "reveals, feels, revealed, field"; In the words "wood, feel, grief, slow, snow," the combination of low, slow vowels and flowing consonants gives a sense of rhythm to the falling snow, as if it were a snow song echoing through the air.

2.2 Rhythm

The rhyme pattern of the whole poem *Snowflake* is "ababcc, ababcc, ababcc". We can see from "air, shaken, bare, forsaken, slow and snow" at the end of the first verse that "air" and "bare" rhyme with the vowel /e/, "shaken and forsaken" rhyme with /eiken/, and "slow" and "snow" rhyme with the vowel /u/. The full and long vowels make the rhythm of this poem feel relieved and deep. The second and third verses follow the same rhyme pattern, and after reading through the whole poem, the rhythm is harmonious and strong, which expresses the poet's resolution of the melancholy and the sincere memory of his dead wife.

3. The Rhetorical Beauty of *Snowflake*

3.1 Alliteration

The first section of *Snowflake* describes about the falling of snow, the second section writes about the cold air of the snow, and the third section expresses the feeling touched by the snow. At the beginning, there are images of "the bosom of the air, the cloud-folds, the brown and bare wood lands, the forsaken

harvest-fields” and so on. In a few words, the lonely and quiet natural scenery is outlined, and the poet’s sadness is expressed through these scenes. The first verse has both alliteration and end rhyme, “Out of the bosom of the air, Out of the cloud-folds of her garments shaken, Over the wood lands brown and bare, Over the harvest-fields forsaken,” there are two “Out” in the first two sentences and two “Over” in the third and fourth sentences, so that the tone of the whole poem is deeper and longer. “Silent, and soft”, the soft beauty of alliteration /s/ at the beginning and epilation /t/ fricative and clear consonant add to the soothing beauty of the first verse. In the second verse, “Suddenly shape in some divine expression, Even as the troubled heart doth make, In the white countenance confession, The troubled sky reveals, The grief it feels”, the “even” appears in the first and third sentences, and “the” shows in the fifth and sixth sentences; in the third verse, “This is the poem of the air, Slowly in silent syllables recorded. This is the secret of despair, Long in its cloudy bosom hoarded, Now whispered and revealed, To wood and field”, the “this” appears in the first and third sentences, and “ow” occurs in the second and fifth sentences, all these alliteration are used at the beginning of the poem with slightly sad, adding to the rhythm and poetic beauty of the whole poem.

3.2 Iterations

In the poem *Snowflake*, words such as “over”, “out”, “the”, “even” and “this” are repeated in the verse several times. The repetition of the same word shows Longfellow’s delicate observation of snowflake and his heartfelt love from sincere heart, which makes it easier for readers to feel the author’s complex sadness. The first verse of “Out of the bosom of the air, Out of the cloud-folds of her garments shaken” and “Over the wood lands brown and bare”, the repetition of “Over the harvest-fields forsaken” enhances the rhythmic beauty of the stanza and makes it easy to read, also enhancing the purity and sadness of snowflakes in the author’s eyes. The fall of snowflakes caused the sad poet and his sadness, witnessing the moment of snowflakes falling as if the poet’s melancholy also with the snow flying all over the sky. At the same time, the poet released his grief and helplessness together with the gray sky.

4. The Beauty of the Image of *Snowflake*

The author was very particular about the choice of words in this poem, using a large number of images, such as “bosom, air, cloud, garment, wood lands, snow”. The bosom of the air, the cloud-folds, the brown and bare wood lands and the forsaken harvest-fields formed a real picture of peace and tranquility. While reading slowly, our mind can emerge a snow drifting picture filled with a strong sense of melancholy, then the sad feeling is fully displayed in the lines imperceptibly. In the description of Snow, Longfellow used the European creed he had always adhered to. He described the local New England scene, and fully expressed the author’s love for snow and his own inner melancholy and anxiety, as well as the mourning for his dead wife.

In the beginning part “the bosom of the air, the brown and bare wood lands, the harvest-fields forsaken, Silent, and soft, and slow, Descends the snow, Even as our cloudy fancies take,” The snow descends from the bosom of the air, dancing with sadness and grief, and lying down the brown and bare wood lands.

How charming and fascinating scene! Snow is a natural phenomenon in nature, and the falling of snow is natural to the earth and sky. While seeing this situation and this scene, the poet's heart can not be relieved of the depressed and sad feelings under the snow. For Longfellow, the process of snow falling is also a poem, snow is the "poem of the sky", is the upset sky in the heart of the sorrow. At the same time, Longfellow's complex feelings in the snowflake scene naturally revealed.

5. Conclusion

Longfellow is a poet who transcends time and space, his complex emotions are the essence of this poem Snowflake. In order to appreciate and understand the poem Snowflake, we must use our imagination to feel and touch the poet's feelings, only in this way can we quietly appreciate the rich sadness in Snowflake. Longfellow has a sweet and beautiful soul, although the United States abandoned him in the 20th century, I believe people will still read his eternal poems when the impetuous and noisy society becomes calm and harmonious.

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