

An Analysis of the Stylistic Effects of *Love is More Thicker than Forget* from the Perspective of the Foregrounding Theory

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ABSTRACT: E. E. Cummings is a famous American modernist poet whose bold use of poetic language has broadened the meaning of poetry and created a unique poetic style. This article focuses on the stylistic perspective of foregrounding and analyses the stylistic effects of Cummings' classic poem *Love is more thicker than forget*, based on its deviation and parallelism, in order to further understand the ideological connotations of the poem and deepen the understanding of the foregrounding of poetic language.

KEYWORDS: Cummings' poetry, Foregrounding, Stylistic effects

I. INTRODUCTION

Poetry is one of the most special linguistic vehicles in the language of literature. It condenses the poet's thoughts in simple language. Poets have been exploring how to use artistic techniques and a range of creative language to achieve their desired effect within the effective constraints of space, and to leave space for the reader's imagination and reflection. For this reason, the phenomenon of foregrounding has been widely used in poetic language, in which poets attract readers' attention to the language itself through artistic processing and treatment of poetic language, thus reflecting their own expressive intentions while highlighting aesthetic effects (Zhao, 2008: 14).

E. E. Cummings was one of the most influential poets in 20th century American modernist poetry. He was deeply influenced by rebellious ideas and cubist painting style in his poetry, and made experimental explorations of modernist poetic techniques. The content of his poetry did not depart from the tradition, and remained some classic and common themes, but he made very bold attempts in poetic form, breaking away from the strict and traditional rules for poetic creation, and even refusing to convey messages and emotions through the traditional printed format, creating a unique poetic style unique to Cummings.

Love is more thicker than forget is a classic love poem by Cummings, in which Cummings uses extremely abstract descriptions, but it is this extraordinary description that creates a gap of meaning in the interpretation of the poem, which in turn triggers the reader's imagination, as the reader needs to find connections and make associations through the word information, and then comprehend the emotions of love in it (Yang, 2009: 150). The

poet's work incorporates the celebration and perception of love into the natural imagery in a vivid and original form, with a sincere and touching thought and refined language, expressing the great power of love.

This paper will analyse *Love is more thicker than forget* based on the perspective of the foregrounding theory in stylistics, analyse the stylistic effects it produces, deepen the understanding of Cummings' poetic approach and ideological connotations, and strengthen the understanding of the theory of foregrounding in poetry.

II. FOREGROUNDING AND POETIC LANGUAGE

Foregrounding is an important concept and part of stylistic theory. The process of its formation has taken many years and, thanks to the refinement of many scholars, it is now an extremely important tool for the stylistic analysis of texts. Foregrounding is an essential element in the creation of poetry, and plays a very important role in its creation. This section will begin with the concept of foregrounding and introduce the theoretical significance of foregrounding and the forms of foregrounding in poetic language.

2.1 The concept of foregrounding.

Foregrounding was introduced from the art of painting and refers to the need for people to distinguish the three-dimensional from the background in the process of perception (visual art). The concept of defamiliarization was first introduced by Shklovsky, one of the representatives of Russian Formalism, before the theory of foregrounding was proposed. It refers to the different and special means of using literary language and daily language, where people will change their feelings about things in everyday life into automatic recognition, while strangeness can be used to allow people to see things through new eyes, break with inertia and gain an unfamiliar and intense sense of beauty. (Liu & Zhu, 2006: 34-35)

The concept of foregrounding is based on defamiliarization was pioneered in 1964 by Mukarovsky of the Prague School, who argued that 'Foregrounding is the opposite of automation, that is, the de-automation of an act. objectively speaking, automation schematizes an event; foregrounding means the violation of the scheme' (Qin, 2001; 31). Mukarovsky's foregrounding theory focuses on the emphasis on deviation in literature, while Jakobson builds on Mukarovsky's emphasis on parallelism in literature. In the 1960s, Leech combined the two, distinguishing between syntagmatic foregrounding and paradigmatic foregrounding, making foregrounding unified into a complete theory.

2.2 The theoretical significance of foregrounding

Foregrounding, as an important concept in stylistics, has an extremely important role to play in the interpretation of literary texts. Firstly, through the use of foregrounding theory, we can analyse literary texts from a variety of linguistic and formal aspects, and thus gain a deeper understanding of the ideas that the author is trying to convey, as well as directing the reader's attention to the text through foregrounding. Secondly, the use of foregrounding enhances the effect of the language, making common words and expressions rich in meaning, and by foregrounding them the author makes the reader curious and fresh about the text, thus further enhancing the tension of the language. Thirdly, the use of foregrounding also breaks the traditional format of literary texts and the use of themes, which promotes the development of literature (Peng, 2014: 244).

2.3 Ways of foregrounding poetic language

The phenomenon of foregrounding is widely used in poetic language because of the characteristics of poetry, and it is not only beneficial to the poet's expression, but also to the reader's imagination and appreciation. Based on the above, there are two main ways in which foregrounding can be achieved: deviation and parallelism. Deviation and parallelism stylistic features can be realized at various levels of language, such as phonology, graphological, grammar, syntax and lexical. In textual analysis, these features can be combined with textual elaboration in order to bring out the characteristics of the text to a greater extent.

It is worth noting that not all deviations and parallelisms have a foregrounding effect. Care must be taken to select only those salient features that are relevant to and motivated by the theme of the work.

III. THE FOREGROUNDING ANALYSIS OF *LOVE IS MORE THICKER THAN FORGET*

In order to analyse *Love is more thicker than forget* stylistically, this paper adopts the concept of foregrounding as a basis for studying the themes conveyed by the poem and its stylistic effects. The ways in which foregrounding is used in poetry and the principles on which it is chosen were mentioned in section 2.3. In this section, five dimensions of foregrounding that play a role in the language of the poem are selected for analysis in order to understand the message Cummings is trying to convey and the effect he is achieving.

3.1 Graphological Deviations.

Graphological deviations are studied in terms of deviations in graphology, punctuation, spelling, sentence length, etc. These deviations are deliberate violations of the normal writing patterns of poetry by the poet in order to achieve a particular, attention-grabbing and thus foregrounding effect. These deviations are linked to the theme or expression and are not randomly arranged. The poem *Love is more than thicker forget* also has a number of deviations.

Firstly, there is a deviation in punctuation; there is no punctuation at all in the poem and only one sentence runs through the poem. This is a typical deviation from the Cummings style of writing. The use of this deviation serves mainly to attract the reader's attention, creating a driving effect when the reader is given an incomplete idea of what the poet is trying to say and needs to continue reading in order to figure out what the poet is trying to say (Zhou, 2014: 74). The last line of the poem remains without a single punctuation mark, indicating that although the poem has ended, the meaning it implies does not, giving the reader space for association.

The absence of punctuation also shows that although the poem is independent in terms of lines, it is actually linked in meaning, both embodying a small and profound philosophy about love. By deviating from the punctuation, Cummings makes each line of the poem meaningful and plays a very important role. The foregrounding effect is achieved, stimulating the reader's anticipation and imagination and giving the reader a better aesthetic experience.

Secondly, there is a deviation from capitalization. Cummings uses lowercase letters in his work, even signing his name 'e. e. cummings', and *Love is more than thicker forget* that the poem contains only two capitalized initials. That is, "Love" in the first and ninth line. The rest of the words are in lower case, which reflects the

foregrounding of the poem's language and the use of deviations from case to bring the theme of the poem to the forefront, emphasizing the power of love and allowing the reader to understand the meaning of the poem more deeply, thus strengthening their understanding of love.

3.2 Lexical deviation.

Lexical deviation in literature mainly refers to neologism, which serves to achieve a certain novelty effect (Liu & Zhu, 2006: 29). Neologism is not an arbitrary collocation in violation of the rules of word formation, but the creation of new words within the existing rules of word formation. For example, affixation, deviation, compounding, conversion and other methods (Zhao, 2008: 21). And while these newly created words produced specific stylistic effects, a large part of them were later accepted. There are many lexical deviations in Cummings' poetry, which are very much a feature of Cummings' work. *Love is more than thicker forget* also contains many lexical deviations.

In the sixth line of the poem, he adds the prefix “un” before “be” to form the new word “unbe”, meaning death or end. But it is paired with the word less in the previous line, which has the opposite meaning, implying the eternity and longevity of true love. Also in lines 5 and 13, the words “moonly” and “sunly” are transformed into adjectives by adding the suffix “ly” directly after the noun. The use of the two most common images of everyday life, “moon” and “sun”, describes the romance and haziness of true love, making it more accessible to the reader. In line 12, the use of littler as a comparative of little surprises the reader and conveys the idea that love always understands, making this idea even more apparent to the reader.

Artistic language always goes in search of a special form of language in order to express unusual emotions (Wang & Lin, 2012: 71). In this poem by Cummings, the use of neologisms, which make it different from the ordinary use of words, makes the lexical deviation full of novelty and achieves a foregrounded character, which also shows the novelty of the poetic language and inspires one to think about the deeper meanings embedded underneath the poetic language.

3.3 Grammatical deviation.

Grammatical deviation is essentially the poet's use of poetic language in which a poet breaks away from the inherent limitations of grammar, is not bound by the rules of grammar, and works according to his or her own ideas to achieve the creation of a poetic theme. The use of grammatical variation gives the poet a great deal of freedom and allows the text to be innovative and thus foregrounded.

In *Love is more than thicker forget*, there are also many grammatical deviations. The use of “more thicker” at the beginning of the poem is a grammatical deviation, and the use of the comparative degrees more and thicker in conjunction is ungrammatical. But it reinforces the relationship between love and forget. Similarly the second line “more thinner” implies the same thing, suggesting a relationship between love and recall. This grammatical deviation draws the reader's attention to it and stimulates the reader's thinking, enhancing his or her understanding of the contradictory relationship between love and recall and forget.

In the third section, the author uses a series of “less always”, “less never”, “less bigger” and “less littler”, which are also grammatical deviations. And echoing the beginning, this series of usages retain the “less... than”

structure formally, but deviate from the grammatical point of view. This variation brings a foregrounding effect, which strengthens the central theme of one of the vagueness of love expressed in this section, but also reflects the theme of the purity of love.

3.4 Semantic deviation

Semantic deviation is the most common deviation in poetic language. It can be understood as semantic logic irrationality, that is to say, the poet's specific purpose is expressed according to the abnormal combination of words (Liu & Zhu, 2006:32). Leach believes that the semantic deviation in poetry is also a metaphor in a broad sense. Through the unreasonable expression of words, the reader is guided to break through the conventional meaning of language and think from the metaphorical level, This is also the key factor that distinguishes poetic language from other languages (Leech, 1991:48-49). There are also many metaphors in *Love is more than thicker forget*.

In the third line, the poet uses "a wave is wet" to express the value of love. It is a very common thing that waves are wet, but using this common thing to express the value of love highlights the poet's affirmation of this concept. In the seventh and eighth lines, "all the sea" refers to spiritual love, while "the sea" refers to physical love. In our impression, spiritual love is much deeper than physical love, but the poem says that true love is more and deeper than spiritual love. It further highlights the theme that the poet wants to convey that true love is unforgettable, and the use of these metaphors strengthens the effect of foregrounding (Wang, 2009:177).

What is more noteworthy in this poem is that in the first section, the poet uses the sentence pattern of more than to connect three pairs of antonyms: "thicker- thinner", "forget -recall" and "seldom- frequency". In the third section, use the sentence pattern of "less... than" to connect the two pairs of antonyms : "always -never" and "bigger- letter". It has formed an obvious confrontation effect. The corresponding words in the second and fourth sections are antonyms. It seems to be disharmonious from the word meaning level, but it has reached consistency in the meaning level, which makes the theme meaning of poetry more prominent.

3.5 Repetition

As a feature of poetic language, the importance of parallelism is almost equal to deviation, and parallelism refers to the repeated occurrence of a language structure or component (Leech, 2001:65). Traditionally, the use of language should be changeable and avoid repetition. However, the repetition of poetic language will make people feel deviated, arouse the interest and curiosity of readers, and bring special effects.

Love is more than thicker forget uses more repetition. The first and third sections of the poem begin with "Love is..." and use interval repetition. Under the arrangement of the poet, it produces a foreground effect and makes readers pay more attention to the poet's view of love. What is more noteworthy in this poem is the repetition of "more ... than" and "less... than". In the previous part, we mentioned that the use of these two sentence patterns has produced lexical variation and semantic variation, but their repeated use not only enhances the rhythm and rhythm of the poem, highlights the love theme contained therein, but also plays a great role in the foreground effect of the poem.

IV. Conclusion

To sum up, as the most creative and innovative writer of his time, E. E. Cummings boldly used poetic language in his works, created a new poetic style and broadened the meaning of poetry. His classic love poem *Love is more thicker than forget* adopts a series of deviation and parallel methods. It is precisely because of these bold techniques that the foreground effect of poetic language can be perfectly reflected. It not only highlights the stylistic characteristics of poetry, but also enriches the meaning of poetry and gives readers deeper thinking and new experience. At the same time, the application of this technique deepens the connection between foregrounding and poetic language, and also provides great significance for the further study of poetry.

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