

A brief analysis of the time theme in the works of PASCAL Quignard

Wen PU

Xi 'an Fanyi University, Xi 'an 710105, China

Abstract: PASCAL Quignard is one of the most important contemporary French writers, whose works are abundant and have won many literary awards. He has won many awards. Time is a ubiquitous theme in his work. The writer's exploration and transcendence in artistic forms provide possibilities for his "indescribable writing", and each possibility constructs a unique association with temporality. While revisiting history, Quignard considers the timelessness of history. He writes about the emotions and life experiences of his characters and narrators.

Key words: Quignard; Time; Language expression

Time, that invisible, colorless, tasteless, yet all-changing being, is an indispensable subject in artistic creation. From ancient times to the present, no matter in poetry, novels or movies, there are a large number of works involving the theme of time. By deeply exploring the expression of time in the works, we can understand the profound impact of time on human life, and how artists use the theme of time to express their unique views on life and society.

In literary works, the theme of time often appears in various forms. For example, in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, author Cao Xueqin skillfully uses the element of time to show the prosperity and loneliness, prosperity and decline in the Grand View Garden vividly. The characters in the novel show different personality characteristics and fate trends at different time nodes, which makes the whole work have a profound sense of time hierarchy. In modern novels, such as Mo Yan's *Family of Red Sorghum*, time has become an important force to promote the development of the story plot. By depicting the flow of time, the fate of several generations of a family is shown.

Film, as a representative of visual art, plays the theme of time to the extreme. In the film *Five Centimeters per Second*, the director compressed and stretched the time with delicate pictures and precise editing, allowing the audience to experience the long years of the male and female protagonists from young teenagers to mature adults in just 90 minutes. In the film *Interstellar*, the director fully demonstrates the relativity of time, allowing the audience to deeply understand that time can be changed and manipulated on a cosmic scale.

In addition to literature and movies, music is also an important art form to express the theme of time. The themes of time in music are often expressed through rhythms, melodies and lyrics. For example, in Beethoven's *Symphony of Destiny*, the hurried rhythm and tense melody make people feel the urgency of time and the ceaseless struggle of life. While in Jay Chou's song *Blue and White Porcelain*, the soothing rhythm and melodious melody make people feel the precipitation of time and the heavy weight of history.

The theme of time in the art works not only shows the charm of time, but also makes people think about the meaning of time. Time is merciless, it will not stop or reverse because of our joys and sorrows; But at the same time, time is also sentient, it precipitates our memories and emotions, so that we continue to grow and change in the long river of years. By appreciating these art works that involve the theme of time, we can have a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of time, so as to better grasp and cherish the present moment.

Pascal Quignard, a famous French novelist and essayist, is regarded as one of the most powerful and innovative contemporary French writers, whose works have both depth and breadth, and whose novels and essays are well loved by readers. His works include *Tous les matins du monde*, *Una pura formalità*, *Terrasse à Rome*, *le Salon de Wurttemberg*, *Vie secrète*, *la Leçon de musique*, *la haine de la musique*, *les ombres errantes*, etc. He has successively served as the chairman of the Versailles International Baroque Theatre Festival, the Chairman of the Festival of Nations, and was awarded the French President's Order of Honor (Chevalier). In 2000, he won the Baccalaureate Prize for Fiction for his novel *The Balcony of Rome*. "les ombres errantes" won the 2002 Prix Goncourt.

Quignard's literary works have been paid much attention by critics for his rich achievements. The foreign research on Quignard's works can be roughly divided into two stages: The first stage was from 1980s to around 2000, mainly focusing on newspaper articles, journal papers and interviews, mainly discussing the author's latest works, and the research content was roughly synchronized with the publication of his works. Although researchers had basically found the key words and writing characteristics in his works, most of them were descriptive articles, lacking theoretical support; The second stage is from around 2000 to now, with the emergence of monographs, doctoral theses and symposiums on the study of writers' works, the research object began to separate from the author's single works, but to grasp the creative ideas as a whole. In France alone, there are hundreds of journal articles, more than 40 research monographs and dissertations, more than 60 interviews and dialogues, and more than 30 doctoral dissertations, which are mainly studied from the following three aspects: First, the two "life" themes of "original" and "real" in Quignard's works; Second, the linguistic features of Quignard's works, which are mainly reflected in fragmentation and the common use of "dead languages" (such as Latin); The third is the combination of Quignard's works with auditory and visual art.

The domestic research on Quignard's works can be roughly divided into two stages: the first stage was from 1999 to 2011, when the domestic academic circle began to contact and translate Quignard's works officially, and introduced him to China through various ways with the opportunity of the author winning the Goncourt Literature Prize in 2002, but there were no academic achievements in the strict sense during this stage; The second stage is from 2012 to now. At this stage, the research results of the author's works or the Chinese translation of

his works are published every year in China. So far, a total of eight Chinese translations of Quignard's works have been published, and other translations are in progress. The relevant research results in China include 14 journal articles and four doctoral theses, which mainly discuss Quignard's works from the aspects of music, language, "original", historical writing and Chinese culture.

Quignard's works are famous for their scattered forms, ancient and modern knowledge, thorough learning, and open pattern. His works span many fields, such as linguistics, music, mythology, philosophy, psychoanalysis, politics, history, and even natural sciences such as medicine and astrophysics; Formally, Quignard wrote novels, legends, fables, essays, literary criticism, and autobiographies, but more notably, he broke down the boundaries of literary genres and fused them together, allowing ideas to emerge freely.

Throughout his work, we will find that Quignard's work mainly focuses on the history and culture of Europe in 17th century. This period was an important turning point in European history, experiencing several important events such as the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution. By conducting in-depth research and analysis on the historical events and cultural background of this period, PASCAL Quignard revealed the diversity and complexity of this period and had a profound influence on later history. His works cover multiple aspects of the 17th century, including politics, religion, culture and society. He shows the complexity and diversity of society at the time through his meticulous depiction of historical events and deep characterization of the characters. He pays special attention to the social contradictions and conflicts of the time, and explores the interaction and influence between different classes and interest groups. Through these in-depth analyses and reflections, PASCAL Quignard helps readers understand the historical and cultural background of this period, and also reveals its influence on later historical developments.

Secondly, Quignard criticizes many social phenomena both ancient and modern, and one of the focuses of his criticism is the concept of "progress". In his opinion, the so-called progress now is to "erase the past time" and form a social "forgetting" of the past, which is a sign of the demise of human civilization. People have always thought that time has a direction, that it can be directed from origin to end, that it can be given meaning, and that people "want to believe that there is an initial numerical code, a direction or a promise for the future." In Western philosophy, Hegel once directed time to human history. The development of industrial civilization, the abundance of consumer goods and the speed of information technology are, on the surface, progress. But such progress comes at the expense of the natural environment and the traditional value system, that is, the denial of past time. Citing the Inuit as an example, he said the Inuit have a saying: giveaways train slaves and whips tame running dogs. "That's how the Western world began to protect ethnography. Fieldwork became a high-sounding excuse to invest in remote parts of the world that also refused to use bank money." "Gifts of medicine and food destroy their traditions. Aid keeps them in prison. This assistance subjugates different groups to industrial products and to alcohol, opening the door to useless consumption and retardation. To hold them fast through money, to tie them firmly to the stake of credit." "The Inuit discovered how a 3,000-year-old civilization could be completely wiped out in a decade." So fight against economic globalization, and especially against cultural globalization.

In addition, from the point of view of language, time is natural time, not man-made time. Before man expressed time in words, time had a "before", just as before human society had individual man, "before the sun shone into our eyes we had life, and in that life we had heard something which could neither be seen nor read". He also cites two key moments in Clovis's reign, "one when he planted the FIG tree, and the other when he planted the almond tree," which reveals the problem of "priority time" in time. In artificially directed time, woven in linguistic chains, time seems to be a trickle in the long stream of history, with no specific moment or climax, which does not really conform to the natural trajectory of time. Quignard also argues that silence is the opposite of speaking, that what is important is often "behind the words," to hear "the kingdom behind the invisible." We humans hardly have this experience anymore, and perhaps some animals can still show it without realizing it. As the horses recalled in Chapter 12 of *Les ombres errantes*, "They held their heads high, as if awake, like a herd of beasts who were not hungry, like a herd of wild beasts who had lost their wildness, like the memory of a great herd of beasts, surrounded by a wire fence. As I drew near, one of the horses, with a snout, rose unsteadily from the grass, and tottered toward me with a strange grace that struck one with astonishment, as if it had just awakened from a thousand-year slumber." What is interesting here is the connection between elegance and clumsiness, which, by thinking about the relationship to time, reveals a surprising ethic and aesthetic. "The ability to surprise hasn't gone away," Quignard stresses. The future that is coming should not come, but must surprise ".

PASCAL Quignard's work is heavily influenced by the theme of time, through which he shows the ups and downs of life, the evolution of history and the relationship between man and nature. In his works, time is not only a scale of linear passage, but also a meeting point between the inner world and the outer world, which is the key to understanding the world. In his works, time is often used as a clue to connect individual but interconnected stories. He is good at constructing plots and relationships between characters through time, which gives his works a rich sense of hierarchy and depth. In addition to being a series of plots, time also has a deep philosophical connotation in Quignard's works. Through the depiction of time, he discusses the impact of time's infinity, transience, irreversibility and other characteristics on human life. In addition, PASCAL Quignard's works also reflect the relationship between human beings and nature. Here, time is not only a feeling in the human heart, but also an immutable law of nature.

References:

- [1] Keling Wei. PASCAL Quignard: The Artist's Face [J]. *China Book Review*, 2022(12):13.
- [2] Juan Liu. Study on Foreign literary Theory on the theme of "Silence" in Quignard's novels [M]. *China Textile Publishing House Co., LTD.*, 2022.
- [3] Wang Mingrui. On the Mother Image of Siren in Quignard's Works [J]. *Contemporary Foreign Literature*, 2019(4):7.
- [4] Menglei Wu. Tracing the original -- The reverie of Water in Quignard's Works [J]. *Journal of Harbin University*, 2023, 44(5):84-88.

[5] Juan Liu, Jing Wang. The “Mirror of History” of Classicism -- A Brief analysis of Quignard’s writing in the 17th century [J]. Dongwu Academic Journal, 2020(5):5.

About the author: PU Wen, female, lecturer, Master’s degree, Xunyi County, Xianyang City, Shaanxi Province. Her research interests include French literature, French history and culture.

Fund project: This paper is a universal-level regular scientific research project of Xi ‘an Fanyi University in 2022 (Project number: 22B08). Project Title: A Study on the Theme of Time in the Works of Pascal Quignard.