

Analysis of Western Paintings Based on Bryson's "Transference" Theory*

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Abstract—Based on Bloom's misreading theory, Bryson borrowed the important concept of "Transference" from semiotics. The analysis of artistic works through the theory of "Transference" reflects the broad explanatory power of Bryson's art history theory. Bryson starts with specific paintings and goes deep into the concrete psychological process of painters to explore the specific painting traditions caused to artists. The research method of influence is different from the previous vague and ambitious research, which provides us with a new vision.

Keywords—Bryson; tradition; Bloom; Transference

I. INTRODUCTION

Norman Bryson, a famous contemporary European and American art theorist and art historian, is one of the most influential scholars in the study of the "New Art History" that emerged in the 1980s. In the 1980s, Bryson published a series of books called "The New Art History Trilogy", which were hailed as "The most prestigious academic achievements in Western 'New Art History' 's research". [1] Its quite new ideas and challenging attempts have injected new vitality into the quiet art history research.

II. BRYSON'S TRADITIONAL VIEW OF ART HISTORY

Bryson's traditional view of art history is mainly embodied in one of his trilogy "Tradition and Desire-from David to Delacroix". In his book, Bryson analyzes the attitudes toward tradition of artists in art history. He believes that "in tradition for the pioneers, perhaps everything is possible, but for a person who feels late, the legacy from past may be a burden, a certain problem, and some kind of anxiety." [2] That is, Bryson believes that the influence of tradition on later artists is not a positive influence in Gombrich's opinion, and it is a sense of anxiety for them. Bryson's attitude towards tradition is not his own, but is influenced by the "misreading" theory of Yale University professor Harold Bloom.

In his book "Anxiety of Influence", Bloom focuses on the attitudes toward tradition in the field of poetry. He believes that the history of poetry is a history of "misreading." Under the influence of the pioneers and modelling achievements of the predecessors, the poets often feel that they are a latecomer

and there seems to be no space for them to create. Bloom called this shadow of the new poet as the "influence" of tradition to future generations. So the problem that the new poets want to solve is: how to let themselves join this immortal rank, how can their own works be listed in the immortal tradition with the predecessors? Bloom believes that this forms the "anxiety of influence".

III. BRYSON'S "TRANSFERENCE" THEORY

As mentioned above, tradition has created a self-defining pressure on later artists in a classic and exemplary manner. Then, in the face of traditional classics and models, later artists have nothing to do to find their own position?

Based on the actual psychological effects caused by Bloom's "anxiety of influence", Bryson draws on the concept of "Transference" in semiotics, pointing out that the artists of the later generations complete the transcendence of tradition by "Transference". So that they have a place in the history of art. As Bryson said, "it is rather to say that the model is positioned in the respectful Transference of the later generations, than to say that the models ("Michelangelo's work, Leonardo da Vinci's sketch, Raphael's work") are extended or overwhelming, or its authority is top-down. We do not treat the transformation of predecessors' works from later generations as a product of resistance, resentment, or protest, and we treat this transformation as a paradigm force in its unified actions, caused from bottom up in the whole process of Transference by reference." [3]

"Transference" comes from rhetoric, refers to the meaning transformed or derived from the original meaning. Bryson believed that "Transference" gives a new meaning of their paintings by drawing on traditional or ironic traditions and thus transcending tradition. That is to use tradition to create new works that are different from the traditional ones. In the book "Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix", Bryson puts forward several kinds of transference such as "shield transference", "total transference" and "translocation transference".

IV. THE ANALYSIS OF ART WORKS BASED ON THE THEORY OF "TRANSFERENCE"

The following is a detailed analysis of Bryson's three transference theories — shield transference, total transference and translocation transference theory.

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A. Shield Transference

Bryson believes that shield transference is the work of the younger generation artists to transform their works on the edge of imitation by means of the "strong backing" of the predecessors. The shield here is the tradition, which transforms under the tradition cover. In particular, Bryson used David's "Antioch and Scatonica" to analyze how David's works were transference under the cover of predecessor's works.

In "Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix", Bryson mentioned that in "Antioch and Scatonica", "Education's every aspect of gesture, the prominent position of his bed, the jagged corolla, the spread hand of the medics, and Scatonica's slightly neurotic gestures — even include the overhanging curtains and the right-facing stretch behind the figure, as well as other concepts, all these details are directly quoted from the works of Pietro da Cortona. Such as Andromeda in "The Death of Hector" painted by Gavin Hamilton, she is tall and round, her feet are on the floor, and her head is lateral; the person behind Scatonica, the servant in the lower right of the painting, has another source - she humbly squats and looks surprised, this is a repetition of the female image of Lebrun's "The Queen of Persia knell at the feet of Alexander". [4] Through Bryson's analysis, we can see that David imitated Pietro da Cortona very meticulously in "Antioch and Scatonica". So what is the reason? This is also the analysis that Bryson wants to focus on. He believes that David did not quote Poussin, who was the dominant discourse at the time, is because he wants to get rid of the traditional Poussinism and the pressure that Peyron put on him, while drawing on Lebrun's work, which made David not completely caught in the overall style of Pietro da Cortona. Thus, through the analysis of Bryson, we can conclude that under the classic cover of the artists of the predecessors, David has achieved both beyond the tradition and also with the shadow of tradition, thus making himself occupy a unique position in the chain of art history.

B. Total Transference

Total Transference means that all the images in the works are from tradition, without their own originality, like the sum of various styles in the tradition, which constitutes a mockery of tradition, in order to express their new meaning.

Bryson used the example of Ingres' "Napoleon's Royal Image" to analyze the Total Transference. He pointed out that Ingres used the statue of Zeus made by the ancient Greek sculptor Phidias, citing a "powerful male god's point of view" [4]; in the color and texture of the work, Ingres borrowed the work of Phidias, the statue of Athena made of gold and ivory for the Parthenon; the scepter in Napoleon's hand was used by Charlemagne; the feet exposed from the robes is a common style of the king and the bishop in the Old Testament; Napoleon's holistic image comes from the Father in Van Eyck's "The Worship of the Sheep"; Napoleon's crown is from the Caesar era. Bryson pointed out in great detail the references of various traditional styles in Ingres' "Napoleon", and also pointed out why Ingres had to give Napoleon the clothes and utensils of the traditional saints, which is "Napoleon can't wait to be such a heir, not just the heir to Caesar... but also the heir to the French kings." [4] At this

point, Ingres achieved "Total Transference" in "Napoleon's Royal Image", that is, through the traditional concept of male god's enthronement, and the costumes and artifacts of the saints, Napoleon is packaged into god and saint, the irony of sarcasm precisely portrayed the ambitious that Napoleon wants to be the king, while at the same time making himself transcend the tradition. At this point, Ingres completed the Total Transference in "Napoleon's Royal Image" by drawing on traditional style and semantics. In fact, in Ingres' other works, we can also see the obvious imitation and the shadow of tradition. Ingres "converted the weakness of modernity — that is, standing at the terminal position hundreds of years after the performance of predecessors — into an advantage and a pride." [1] "Fig. 1".



Fig. 1. Ingres' "Napoleon's Royal Image".

C. Translocation Transference

Translocation Transference means "method to borrow the images of the predecessor for my use and give them a new meaning".

Ingres' "Louis XIII de la prestation de serment" is his most obvious use of Translocation Transference. The upper part of the painting, including the character image and the composition of the picture, are obviously copy Raffaello's "Sistine Madonna". It is the integration of the standing "Sistine Madonna" and Raffaello's sitting Madonna; wisdom angel is taken from a wise angel in "The Virgin of Fle ño"; the image of Louis XIII is the evolution of the women image in Champagne's "Fire on the Street". Every image in the painting has its source, but the theme of "Louis XIII de la

prestation de serment" is to depict the Louis XIII hand holding the crown and the scepter to vow to the Virgin, it has a very different meaning in the theme expression of the picture with Raffaello's "Sistine Madonna".

In Ingres' era, Raffaello's works were universally acclaimed, there even was such a eulogy: "Raffaello! Just by saying this magical name, our whole body and mind are like being spelled. Surprising, joy, and awe occupy our souls and throw us into the whirlpool of passion." [1] Ingres especially favored Raffaello, he treated Raffaello as a lifelong idol. He said "We will continue to try to imitate him and appreciate his artistic ideas." [1] For "Louis XIII de la prestation de serment" borrowed Raffaello's "Sistine Madonna", Ingres got no qualms about that, he said "Don't think that my preference for Raffaello will make me a monkey, not to mention that it is difficult or even impossible. I think, when I imitate him, I can maintain my independence. I wonder which famous art masters don't imitate others? We can't create new things from nothing; we could only create things with some value only when our ideas permeate with other people's things. All those who work in literature and art, to some extent, are all the descendants of Homer." [1] Thus, through such an extreme reference to tradition, Ingres has "achieved a self-overhead that is absolutely his own, and made his self-definition", [1] extended the distance between himself and Raffaello's works. and also completed the transcendence of Raffaello and owned his self. "Louis XIII de la prestation de serment" received warm official praise, and for that Ingres received the title of "Knight of Honorary Legion" issued by the Bourbon Dynasty, and was elected as a member of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts the following year. As shown in "Fig. 2" and "Fig. 3".



Fig. 2. Raffaello's "Sistine Madonna".



Fig. 3. Ingres' "Louis XIII de la prestation de serment".

The above is a reading of Bryson's several concepts of Transference, from which we can see the broad interpretation of Bryson's art history theory, and also secretly applaud Bryson's offbeat analysis of specific paintings. From specific paintings, Bryson explore the influence of specific painting traditions on the artist and the way of coping with it through the specific psychological process of the painters, it is different from the previous vague and grand research, which provides us with a brand new vision.

V. CONCLUSION

Through the interpretation of Bryson's two Transference methods, we can see that Bryson interprets the diversity of art history styles from the perspective of the actual psychological effects of traditional artists. This kind of research method is different from the previous views of positive inheritance and reference to tradition, and it provides a new perspective for our art history research methods.

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