

# Avant-Garde Poetry in Postmodernism Literature

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## ABSTRACT

The paper basically discusses the development of avant-garde poetry in postmodernism literature, which mainly talks about the effect of rhythm and the advantage & disadvantages of avant-garde poetry compared with traditional poetry. Besides, it also introduced the ideal function of rhythm working as the tool to separate content in the poem, in which Death is not only a simple rhythm replaced by a complex rhythm but also the rhythm of the individual's life and the rhythm of the external world's more complex struggles and compromises. It also analyzes the poem "*Les Fleurs Du Mal*" and discuss the innovation of the poem.

**Keywords:** *Avant-garde poetry, postmodernist literature*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the thousand years of human development, the main effect of "word" has turned from transforming basic information to conveying emotions. Similarly, literature also progressed with the advancement of human society. In some cases, literature became the mirror that reflects the situation of the specific period of its background environment. When talking about postmodernist literature, it is the development and extension of modernism and inherits the literary experiment of modernism against tradition. On the other hand, postmodernism rebelled against modernism and broke with it, showing the attempt of postmodern writers to abandon the content and form of modernism literature. It is obvious that postmodernist literature abandoned all of the tradition, to be "damaging" to the traditional idea about what literature should be. Postmodernist fiction through the break between the new value orientation and the traditional ethical and moral concepts, the avant-garde novels tend to depict humanism and pursue the equality of personality, reflecting the rationality of the emotional enjoyment, material pursuit, and the life of the bottom people in modern life.

This essay will aim to analyze the meaning of the existence of avant-garde poetry and discuss the rhythm and expression in the poetry. The following writing will be divided into two sections, the first section will investigate the basic information of avant-garde poetry, which mainly talks about the common rhythm of Chinese avant-garde poetry, followed by a detailed

analysis of French poetry, "*Les Fleurs Du Mal*".

## 2. AVANT-GARDE

### 2.1 Basic Information of Avant-Garde

When talking about the avant-garde, it will be an important concept that introduce and analyze later. The avant-garde is characterized by breaking the traditional art system, and artistic self-discipline is an important part of the traditional art system. From all different kinds of forms, avant-garde does exist in many ways. In architecture, "*Avant-Garde in the Cornfields* is an in-depth study of New Harmony, Indiana, a unique town in the American Midwest renowned as the site of two successive Utopian settlements". (1) Avant-garde artistic expression form is an avant-garde expression technique only, is not the core of avant-garde. The essence of avant-garde should be to advocate breaking artistic self-discipline. Besides, avant-garde also played an important role in historical events. According to the article, "It aims to remedy certain historical deficiencies by constructing a history both sensitive to the wider intellectual, political, economic, and cultural milieu of the French interwar crisis". It adheres to the art above all else, does not assume any obligations, pays attention to explore the inner world, delicate description of dreams and mysterious abstract instant world, discovering the inner mystery of the characters, the flow of consciousness, so that irrelevant events constitute a parallel multi-level structure characteristic. As an adjunct, avant-garde poetry all over the world is a useful tool to present the projection of a tip of the iceberg for the whole postmodernist literature.

## 2.2 The Role and Effect of Avant-Garde Poetry Works in Postmodernist Literature

How to define avant-garde poetry? It is easy to raise an example from China in order to explain it clearly. In traditional Chinese poetry, there is a rigorous criterion of the number of words, rhythm, and the content of words in the same position in different sentences. However, with the May 4<sup>th</sup> movement and the revolution of using Vernacular Chinese changed the definition of the poem completely.[5] Many scholars believe that it was the death of traditional Chinese poetry, which brought huge pain and loss for all the Chinese people. "The birth of new poetry is the scar left by this wound, which has not healed yet. This "scar" not only can not be self-affirm but from time to time arouses people to leave it and return to the "matrix" impulse." [1]. One of the main differences or development of avant-garde poetry is the rhythm inside it. With the change of rhythm, the image presented by the author would be discovered easier. Rhythm influenced how the reader will make pauses in the reading, in order to make the words in the same pause are talking about the same thing. However, rhythm itself is not the basis of "poetry", but the basis of "poetry", neither are the seven rules and five absolute rules. Poetry" is only a form of poetry. The birth of "poetry" is a constantly changing rhythm the result of the war. This process of struggle is the result of meaningful sentences (combinations of words) from different ages. Changing rhythms and sentences contribute to the fluidity of the poem. Ancient rhythms were simple and abstract. Rhythm, while it will not die, will be eclipsed by the increasing complexity of rhythm. Death is not only a simple rhythm replaced by a complex rhythm but also the rhythm of the individual's life and the rhythm of the external world's more complex struggles and compromises.[3] Similarly, as postmodernist music, they have all gone to an extreme. Music seems to have become a mere thing of the senses, anti-rational. In the post-modern era, music is no longer called "works", but "texts". All the time, music is an effective tool to raise people's emotions. This fragment of postmodernist music sounds really strident and discordant, but we can say it made everything possible and reasonable. In other words, it combines noise and music. It's not just western professional music. The idea of pluralistic and world music holds that all musical cultures are equal and have unique values.[2] Therefore, classical, modern and postmodern professional music, folk music of various nationalities in the world, and all kinds of popular music are all aesthetic resources, living and thriving together to form a multi-cultural ecology, which means several culture live in a huge environment.

It is modern new poetry to find lyricism in the narration of the world and poetry in the world of prose, the first lesson in songwriting and reading. The first thing in this lesson is not to criticize, curse or escape the

strange world in front of it was not swallowed up by it, but to approach it, watched it, understood it, and died for it. The name, makes it part of the poem. The principle of "inbreeding" between words is defamiliarization. Modern poets have been replaced by the principle of collocation, having to reassemble unfamiliar objects and words and make new connections. This requires, above all, the ability to marvel, not to resent. At this moment, as content "desire", rhythm "and" breathing rhythm "came in handy as a form. The modernist way of perception was always destined to lean towards the hidden corners of the individual mind, with a more distant attitude to pain and the storms of the age, or just that use it as a carrier and window, let the emotional lyricism broken the sense of rupture evaluates its value and significance, outlines the spiritual loss of modern people, and makes it present a delicate and subtle "modern mood". The disappearance of the original order and the anxiety brought about by the birth of the new personal consciousness of freedom is the important turning points of the transition from classical poetry to modern poetry. The increasingly fragmented daily experience and increasingly personalized pace of life have put forward new requirements for experience capture, expression, and communication. The complex relationship between the rhythm of life, the rhythm of life and rhythm of poetry, and people's adaptation and expectation to the new rhythm constitute the more complex context of new poetry.

### 3. ANALYSIS OF LES FLEURS DU MAL

In the following, I would like to discuss the poetry anthology "*Les Fleurs Du Mal*" written by Charles Pierre Baudelaire at the very end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, mental depression and perplexity in France, anxiety, loneliness, emptiness, and boredom in life, and the decline of physical desires became the universal mental state in the Western world. Around the time of the First World War, with the intensification of various contradictions in the western capitalist society, various modernist literary factions emerged successively and reached a climax in the 1920s.[4] As social individuals, people lost their value and couldn't find a way out. It reflects the conflict between man and The Times and society. He was melancholy, lonely, arrogant, pessimistic, rebellious, and a stubborn individualist more anxious, guilt-ridden poetry. Here, I would select one poem from "*Les Fleurs Du Mal*".

#### CHATIMENT DE L'ORGUEIL

*En ces temps merveilleux oi la Theologie  
Fleurit avec le plus de seve etd'energie,  
On raconte qu'un jour un docteur des plus grands,  
- Apres avoir force les coeurs indifferents;  
Les avoir remues dans leurs profondeurs noires;  
Apres avoir franchi vers les celestes gloires  
Des chemins singuliers alui-meme inconnus.  
oi les purs Esprits seuls peut-etre etaient venus,-  
Comme un homme monte trop haut, pris de panique,*

*S'ecria, transporte d'un orgueil satanique:  
<Jesus, petit Jesus!je t'aipousse bien haut!  
Mais, sijavais voulut'attaquer au defaut  
De larmure, ta honte egalerait ta gloire,  
Et tune serais plus qu'un foetus derisoire!>  
Immediatement sa raison s'en alla.  
L'eclat de ce soleil d'un crepe se voila;  
Tout le chaos roula dans cette intelligence,  
Temple autrefois vivant, plein d'ordre et d'opulence,  
Sous les plafonds duquel tant de pompe avait lui.  
Le silence et la nuit s'installerent en lui,  
Comme dans un caveau dont la clef est perdue.  
Des lors il fut semblable aux betes de larue,  
Et, quand il s'en allait sans rien voir, a travers  
Les champs, sans distinguer les etes des hivers,  
Sale, inutile et laid comme une chose usee,  
Il faisait des enfants lajoie etlarisee.*

*In these wonderful times oi Theology  
Blooms with the most seve and energy,  
It is said that one day a doctor of the greatest,  
- After having forced indifferent hearts;  
To have stirred them in their dark depths;  
After having crossed to the celestes glories  
Singular paths alui-meme unknown.  
oi the pure Spirits alone may have come,-  
As a man climbs too high, panicked,  
Was written, carried with satanic pride:  
<Jesus, little Jesus!*

*But, ifjavais wanted to attack the fault  
From tears, your shame would equal your glory,  
And tune would be more than a ridiculous fetus!>  
Immediately his reason went away.  
The brilliance of this sun of a crepe is veiled;  
All the chaos rolled in this intelligence,  
Temple once alive, full of order and opulence,  
Under the ceilings of which so much pump had him.  
Silence and night settled in him,  
As in a vault whose key is lost.  
From then on it was similar to the bites of larue,  
And, when he went away without seeing anything,  
through  
The fields, without distinguishing the summers from the  
winters,  
Dirty, useless and ugly as a worn-out thing,  
He made children lajoie etlarisee.*

The theme of the book is evil and the relationship between good and evil surrounding it. Evil refers not only to evil but also to melancholy, pain, and sickness. Flowers can be understood as good and beautiful. Baudelaire broke away from the concept of good and evil for thousands of years and observed evil with a unique perspective. He thought evil has a duality, which has both the evil side and special beauty. On the one hand, it corrodes and harms human beings. On the other hand, it is full of challenge and resistance spirit, inspiring people to fight against their own laziness and social injustice. Therefore, Baudelaire both hates and praises evil and both fear and yearned for it. He lives in evil but tries hard not to be swallowed up by evil, but to face and analyze

evil with critical eyes. "*Les Fleurs Du Mal*" is not a collection of poems written in chronological order. Instead, it is divided into six groups based on theme and content: Melancholy and ideal, Paris, wine, flowers of evil, rebellion, and death. Each group is related to the context. According to the carefully arranged structure, the poet lays out a clear path, a heart path that the poet looks inside and then presents to the reader. Along the way, "each day we take a step closer to hell, passing through the dark night without feeling ill will." The main aspect that brings it into avant-garde is the description of evil in this production. It is a work of poetic art that expresses western psychopathy and social morbid. Yet sickness is not necessarily a form of beauty. He can find beauty in the world of evil, and also feel the existence of evil in the experience of beauty, and turn decadence into magic through poetry.[6] In a sense, therefore, The Flower of Evil is the art of "evil" rather than the ode to evil. It expresses the ugliness of the modern city, the hypocrisy of modern civilization, and the poverty and emptiness of the modern spiritual world. It's not quite necessary to focus on the modality of an artwork, but what it contained is the most important thing to define work. This points to the difference between poets and ordinary people: ordinary people cannot see the profound truth of the world, but poets can. For Baudelaire, who argued that "our world was originally a hieroglyphic dictionary," the poet was able to see the wholeness and similarity of the world in this dictionary. Baudelaire's beauty is such a defiant beauty. He would prick the eyes of the bourgeoisie with this startling combination. In Baudelaire's pen, we can feel that ugliness through artistic refinement, but also produced a quivering beauty. The poet should have a discerning eye for the flowing, secret and harmonious unity between all things in nature, between the senses, and among various forms of art.[7] Smell, sight and hearing interact to form "synesthesia". However, in Baudelaire's poems, synesthesia is not only a decorative figure of speech but also the entry point of the theory of harmony, which has become part of the poetry itself. According to Baudelaire, poetry should not depict but represent, the intuitive thinking and association of the poet in the presence of a certain image. In this theory of harmony, we can see the influence of Swedenborg's mysticism in the 18th century, which emphasizes the poet's imagination and insight based on a certain basis of reality, so that poetry can get rid of the simple description of phenomena and superficial expression of feelings.

"I would rather have been born a viper," said the poet's mother, terrified since she was born. The one who wants to love is terrified or watching from afar; His wife took out his heart and "threw it to the ground with contempt" The quiet poet raises his pious arm and says, "Pain is the only noble thing, for it is made only of pure light." [8] He thought that beauty could not be attained, and could not be possessed by those who lived in the

"abyss of pain", but could only stay in the illusion to be looked up to. The poet is thus in the pursuit of beauty and pain gradually fall into the bottom of life, and love, the flower of life, is just the sunshine in the deep valley, is the place where peace lies.[9] Love is only a means of pursuing pain, a means of indulgence and release. The clear part of the mind (ideal) and the dirty part (melancholy) cross again and again, until nothingness triumphs over hope when love is no longer a comfort. The poet offered a prayer to Satan, praising evil and praising Satan. To be clear, Baudelaire's hatred and praise of evil are not contradictory. Although the writer hated the evil that made mankind lose conscience and slide into the abyss of sin, he also found the "existence of beauty" in evil and saw the confrontation of evil in front of good (hypocrisy)[10].

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The poet turns from the illusion of drunkenness to the "flower" of sin. He returns to earth from his drunken paradise -- a place full of sin, but full of flowers. Because he is the evil that living in evil, but not let be swallowed up by the dark represents a kind of flower. After all the darkness, after suffering, try reading ugly, after death is the only home to return to, the only consolation though death is the end of all things, which is also a new beginning, so the poems, in the end, a return to "death".

Poetic contradictions are the most sensitive monitors of cultural contradictions. Nearly a hundred years have passed, and the new poetry has not formed a crystal of poetry in the poetic expression of the experience of modern people, let alone a holistic poetic view. The deeper reason is that there are problems with the entire poetics education, dissemination, and acceptance mechanism. As the most condensed spiritual container of this era, it needs a better educational or teaching environment, a higher explanatory ability and more effective analytical techniques, and a better communication medium. The greatest difficulty in achieving this is that the logic of poetry writing, education, and reception is incompatible with the logic of contemporary culture as a whole. Therefore, people are still nostalgic and memorize ancient poems. They either copied ancient poems or conveyed classical poetry in the form of modern poetry. It is not difficult to realize the modernization of society and material modernization, but the modernization of people and the modernization of cultural spirit requires a longer process.

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