

Analysis on Traditional Narrative New Year Pictures from the perspective of semiotics: Taking the Legend of White Snake as an Example

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Keywords: CDA, New Year Pictures, the Legend of White Snake, semiotics

Abstract: As a major way of publicity of Chinese Culture, New Year Picture is like a window showing core content of folk art in traditional culture to attract potential audiences by using words, images and role styles in pictures. New Year Pictures, as one of typical Chinese cultural semiotics, is worth to be explored to find out how it creates visual meaning to express the meanings and how it catches the attention of potential audiences. The paper is to explore the artistic essence of Traditional Narrative New Year Pictures from the perspective of Pierce's "deixis" and analyze the stages of CDA expressed in the paintings by way of description, interpretation, and explanation from semiotics.

1. Introduction

As the most popular and popular form of folk art in traditional farming society, traditional New Year pictures, especially narrative New Year pictures, widely use some special symbolic image in the special backgrounding. Some folk artists, as well as commercial semioticians are still very interested in creating different types of narrative New Year pictures. Generally, immediate form of interpretant can be traced from traditional Chinese New Year Paintings. They appear in the overall space of New Year pictures, but they are clearly marked as separate parts with striking lines, common knowledge, common sense, and mimetic representation.

The external forms of these metasemiotic image are not collective agreement. The three types of signs summed up by Charles S. Peirce, that is, iconic, indexical, and symbolic, also exist in traditional Narrative New Year Pictures. Nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as such according to Peirce, there is causal or associative relation between the indicator and the object, especially pointing out that they are interrelated in space. This kind of special "indication" image symbols in New Year pictures

construct a special image space with potential interpretants. Then, in the folk images and image narration represented by narrative New Year pictures, what are the representations and functions of such "indicative symbols"?

2. Methodology

The paper is to explore the artistic essence of Traditional Narrative New Year Pictures from the perspective of Pierce's "deixis" and analyze the stages of CDA expressed in the paintings by way of description, interpretation, and explanation from semiotics. The metasemiotic cultures according to Umberto Eco includes geographical, historical, political, sociological, ideological, psychological, and religious elements, etc. Just as the saying goes, "without differences, the structure of the world would be lost" (Roman Jakobson); "constructing an identity requires you to know who you are not" (Daniel Chandler); and "differences that make a difference" (Bateson, 1979, p. 99), an analysis of the deep structures and cultural stereotyping of traditional narrative Year Pictures is of great value in prevailing and promoting the traditional art form.

3. Discussion



Picture 1:

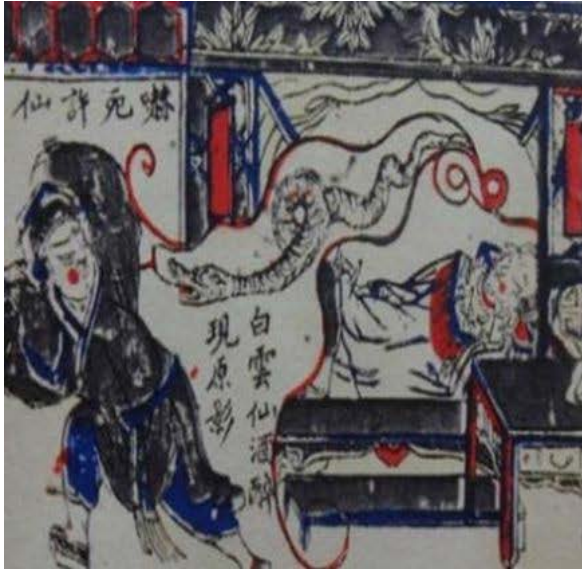


Picture 2



Picture 3

First, traditional narrative New Year Pictures are different from any other types of artistic styles for its cultural vocabulary and linguistic choices without resistance to closure of interpretation in the unlimited semiosis, but the difference symbolizes cultures of various sorts. There is a collective consensus about some semiotic elements in Chinese New Year Paintings, such as: denotation as the signifier of the connotation, differential relations, and things like direct connection, spatial co-occurrence, temporal sequence and cause and effect. The semiotic elements in the paintings are indexical and just like the nodes within a network which can be analyzed according to socio-semiotic principles, structuralism, as well as other ways like principle of difference and the principles of interchangeability. Peirce especially emphasizes that the deixis forces people to pay attention to their own objects blindly: the deixis quickly draws people's eyes to the sense of the image narrative from the surface structure, instructs the viewer or explains and emphasizes to the viewer from the connotator of meaning. The drama conflict is displayed and completed by the assistant department's "button" action which is in the final form of interpretant. The artist's image depiction of the scene intentionally or unintentionally strengthens the indicative role of fingers. The image narration of the New Year pictures faithfully restored this transition. The pluralistic nature of semiotics is expressed in the painting. Goubo is polysemic in Chinese language, is as the signifier of identity, and as the connotation of job title. "The God of Treasure" because due to its mnemonic treasure, he is believed to be able to bring people good luck as well as great fortunes. Immutability due to cultural heritage brings about the popularity of the "God of Treasure" and the (final form of interpretant of it suits the worship made by Chinese people about fortune and richness. "goubo" is the homophone of "Guifo" in Chinese, a synonym of "excessive", Picture 1 shows a group of "goubo" in New Year pictures of different regions and shapes: The two persons are created in the form of binary opposition, , only with exception of the opposition of their facing direction, it shows that Fahai is not present, and Xu Xian's actions show that his behavior is active; The design of the two main characters is almost the same under the strategy of alignment, without any intention of showing contrasts or contradictions. Picture 2 shows that Xu Xian's attitude is somewhat passive according to content analysis, because the golden bowl is still in his hand, and behind him is the supervision of Fahai, who is wearing a cassock and holding a Zen stick. Picture 3, Fahai's actions show that he is the doer of the bowl, and the golden bowl is facing the white snake. The white snake's panic implied the magic power and power of the golden bowl. Xu Xian wanted to save it, indicating his heart to protect his wife. Humans are multisensory which can cause hybridity in sign relationship. The details of the images may be different, but the intention of indicating the magic weapons to subdue demons is the likeness. What is more noteworthy is that the hand of the bowl holder is the starting point of this indicative space, especially the Fahai in the third picture, which directly guides and "forces" the viewer's eyes to this symbol and space trajectory. In fact, this kind of compulsory attention is reflected in many scenes in the legend of the White Snake New Year picture: when Xu Xian was involved in a lawsuit, the white lady pointed to the court under the influence of the magic with her fingers or the dust in her hands; Fahai used her fingers to manipulate the green Dragon Zen stick to cast her magic to the pregnant white snake who was still fighting hard. In this way, the deixis performs the function of attention and emphasis. Just as the saying goes "to be structuralist is to be human" (Daniel Chandler), when we explore the reciprocity of signs in Chinese New Year Paintings, we are able to reveal its potential meaning-m beneath its markedness and likeness of real life phenomena. When analyzing things from the perspective of Semiotics, and signification processed should be the central concern.



Picture 4



Picture 5

In the painting of the legend of white snake, the significance of using balloon and spiral "indication symbols" to represent the original form is very prominent and internally coherent. The simple lines and meaning potential wrapped by them clearly indicate the original identity of the image. Especially, the conventionality between the incarnation and the real body of the white lady, Xiaoqing and the snake, the crane boy, and the crane, has been endlessly referred to in the narrative New Year pictures. In literary narration, the deformation of the strange love and marriage is an important motif of the story of the White Snake, and an aspect of the attraction of the theme. To restore the legendary color of the story to the maximum extent, the image narrative of New Year pictures repeatedly marks the image and its original appearance with the indicator symbols to remind the audience of its dual identity and transformation with shared knowledge, which reflects the image narration's close imitation of literary

narrative and the limitation of image static space reproduction make up. The visual symbol "indication" of the original form of the alien in the New Year pictures of the white snake is especially focused on the two segments of "Dragon Boat Festival appearance" and "stealing fairy grass". There are differences in details in the description of the New Year pictures in the section of "Dragon Boat Festival" in general. The two works in Pic. 4 objectively reproduce the literary narration with image like symbols, directly depicting the white lady being controlled by the realgar rice wine, losing consciousness and magic power completely, the human appearance faded, and the original forms of horrible snakes were completely displayed in front of Xu Xian and the audience. Different from the two works in Figure 5, the two kinds of appearances are the similarities. In the picture, the snake shaped body is drawn from the end of the white lady figure lying on the bed, indicating the correspondence between the two. This relationship is also reflective level of representation of New Year pictures. Most of the New Year pictures with the theme of "stealing fairy grass" choose the instant scene of Bai Suzhen's fighting with crane boy to depict. While reproducing this fierce fight with iconicity symbols, the original shapes of the two are not forgotten to be marked in Zhichi paintings to render their irreconcilable relationship.



Picture 6



Picture 7



Picture 8

Thirdness, In order to make things simple and concise, and make the art form evaluative, the signifier of the original images have already indicated that the subject matter of the indicative symbols usually has the fictitious and fantastic romantic color with intentional level of representation. Generally, dynamical form of interpretant is the most common. In the narrative New Year picture, spiral or balloon symbols are used to indicate dreams without substitution, which has become a popular painting symbol with referential and polysemic meaning. In the relation process of literary narrative visualization, one of the means to present illusory themes and strange scenes is the focus of deictic symbols. For Peirce, the interpretant is an element that allows taking a representamen for the sign of an object and is also the "effect" of the process of semeiosis or signification. In the process of interpretation of the painting, we can consider the syntagm as a slot, and the paradigm as a slot filler. This is the space construction of several "fighting methods" scenes in the White Snake new year painting. The spherical or spiral indicating semiotic square, or the content of "magic ", or the unique skills of magic assistant, highlights the "magic height of one foot and the height of the road" of both sides, forming another layer of symbolic significance of the New Year pictures. However, Fahai, a Buddhist monk, is not so easy to deal with. Shouldering the Buddha's edict to subdue demons, he can not only mobilize the heavenly soldiers and heavenly generals, but also equip himself with enough and powerful magic weapons. The green dragon Zen stick, golden bowl and Fenghuo cassock are the three powerful treasures in his hands, especially the green dragon Zen stick, which is often set off by "indicative symbols". The image of a green dragon coming straight to the white snake's face is marked (Pic. 6). In the face of Fahai's arrogance, Bai Qing did not shrink back. The New Year pictures not only depict the fearlessness of Bai Niangzi, but also emphasize their struggle with the original forms of white snake and green snake (Pic. 7), which are also represented by "indicator symbols", which not only reveals their real bodies, but also implements their magic power. In Pic8, Fahai wenruotai's gesture shows his confidence in winning. His magical assistant or specific law enforcement actors are the representatives of the divine generals, Nezha and Erlang. One of them is attacking the white snake with the standard weapons of fenghuolun, huntianling and firepoint spear, and the other is sending out the wheezing dog to attack the white snake. The strange scene or illusory space marked by the deixis is an imaginary scene that does not exist and belongs to the fictitious or "non reappearance" image in literary narration. Literary narration is based on the language symbols of the real meaning, and the principle of arbitrariness makes the words shuttle freely between the real representation and the imaginary expression. However, the visual transformation of New Year pictures is restricted by the virtual image symbol medium, and the image reproduction based on the principle of similarity is relatively passive, so there is supplementary emphasis and guidance of the indicator space combining the indicator symbol. In this way, literary narrative and image narrative share the responsibility of presenting and spreading the story in the process of the alternatives between the virtual and the real by meaning-making.

4. Conclusion

On the basis of Peirce's classification of symbols, through the analysis of the indicative symbols and their framed indicative space in the White Snake New Year pictures, we can draw a preliminary conclusion: imperialistic nature of semiotics is one of the image symbols of New Year pictures, just like the reproducible iconicity symbols and conventional symbols with special semiosphere. This kind

of semiotic detective exists in the form of image and image space in the New Year pictures, and gradually develops into the denotation of image narration. Its function is mainly signified in connecting the real world with the illusory world, accomplishing narration and the absent narration in the sequential relations and spatial relations. In addition, it is also the main means for the description of identity (especially the alien prototypes) and the display of the supernatural space (fairyland, dream and Magic changing situation). Through the realization and identification of the virtual space, it performs the interpretation of image narration explanation and emphasis. From the perspective of spatial composition and image narrative, the use of this symbol is the embodiment of image breaking through its own static limit and trying to bring time into space narrative.

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