

The Artistic Innovation of the Longevity Preface by Gui Youguang

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The object of study selected for this paper is the Longevity Preface of the more controversially evaluated and less studied ancient writings of Qui Youguang. These essays are also the most included in the collection of Qui Youguang's writings, with differentiated content tendencies and a gradual convergence in the genre's style. The artistic value embedded in the creation of Longevity Preface is rich in research value. The topic of this study is to analyze the innovations in the artistic characteristics of Longevity Preface by focusing on the specific breakthroughs in the image of the preface master, the expression of values, and the stylistic paradigm of Longevity Preface, so as to examine the contribution of Longevity Preface in the development of the genre.

Keywords: Gui Youguang, Longevity Preface, artistic features

The Breakthrough and Molding of the Image of the Preface Master

New Changes in the Image of the Female Sequel Leader

In the ancient times, when “mothers were valued by their children and wives by their husbands”, people, whether poor or rich, tended to focus only on the male members of the family, and once the male members of the family achieved status and success, they were given all the halos and glory, while the women who worked silently behind them were most easily neglected. However, Qui Youguang was able to pay attention to this social phenomenon, and in his preface for them, he would focus on their good character and dedication.

Qui Youguang's preface depicts a series of virtuous women, such as Mrs. Gu Yang's 70th birthday preface and the preface of Qiu Gongren's 70th birthday preface, both of whom, after the death of their husbands, were able to treat their sons as if they were their own and cultivate them with all their heart. “Gu Ru Ren Sixty Birthday Order”, “Mrs. Zhu Zheng Sixty Birthday Order”, “Mrs. Zhu Sixty Birthday Order”, and other articles portrayed a number of festival for many years, and for many years to raise the orphans of the image of the female order.

In “The Preface to the Birthday of Mrs. Zhang Tai'an”, through the behavior in daily life to show the human glory of the prefects “can not go on being rich and noble, and can not move away from poverty and lowly”, Gui Youguang creatively gave women the character of a “great man”. And in the “Zhu Shuo life preface”, “Chen Dan Ni Shuo life preface”, “Zhang mother Wang Ru Ren life preface” and so on, these female preface as the husband's “virtuous inner helpers”, well versed in the way of family unity. The way of family unity in ancient times is generally for men, return to the Longevity Preface strongly praised these women's ability to family unity, set up a new, different from the previous traditional feudal women's character image. The above female figures can be

considered as a major new change in the history of Longevity Preface, in which Gui Youguang focuses on their outstanding moral character and outstanding talent, reflecting a light on them that is no less than that of any man.

New Changes in the Image of the Male Master of the Order

In the many characters portrayed by Gui Youguang, the more typical is to pay attention to filial piety and righteousness and integrity of the male serial master, such as “In Preface to the Birthday of Mrs. Zhu, the Elderly Matron Sun,” the protagonist embodies both loyalty and filial piety. He serves the country with unwavering dedication and utmost loyalty, and in private, he shows deep respect and care for his elders, bringing them joy and happiness. In the Preface to the Birthday of Mrs. Sun's Mother, the governor of Taicang, the governor of Taicang is portrayed as a man who loves the people like a son and is beloved by them.

In addition, there are some Longevity Prefaces that emphasize the true character of the preface master, such as the preface to the birthday of the Royal Historian of Fang in which the preface master, as a Royal Historian, is conscientious in his duties, and does not shun the powerful and the rich in the court of impeachment, and even if he is relegated for this reason, he is still able to hold fast to his own heart, similarly, the main character in “The Preface to the 60th Birthday of Mr. Mer Zhai” and “The Preface to the 60th Birthday of Xia Shuren”. In addition, there are also those who understand the thought of Laozi, who are free and open-minded, and who are satisfied with what they have, such as the main character in “The Preface to the 80th Birthday of Mr. Zhou Qiu Ting”. This is also one of the few preface to the preface of Zhou Qiu Ting's 80th birthday, which is not entrusted by others, so it can be seen the preface of Zhou Qiu Ting's love and respect for the preface of Zhou Qiu Ting.

The Value of Melting Discussion in the Narrative Expression

Involvement and Discussion of Political Events

The author of “The Preface to Mr. Shanzhai's 60th Birthday” is Zhou Fengming, the Prime Minister of the Da Lisi, who was forced to return to his hometown after being dismissed from his post because his proposed amnesty edict offended the powerful ministers. In order to let the preface owner see the past court situation, Quai Youguang lists since the Jiajing era, Gu Wenkang Gong, Mao Wenjian Gong, Zhou Kangxi Gong, Chai Gong, Yuyan Zhou Gong, “the law of the provinces from the ministers”, and “now in the Chinese dynasty, there is no one there”. And by analyzing the reasoning contained in the “Zhou Yi”, it pointed out that the preface of the Lord “is very young, the gas is very sharp, the sky is not to eat the fruit of it”. At the beginning of the article, Gui Youguang pointed out, “Laozi said, ‘The benevolent one sends people with words’, and ‘I dare to congratulate them with words’. I dare to congratulate you on your words”. In the end, he echoes the opening phrase “congratulations in words”: “I am also a native of the countryside, so I speak like this. I am also a native of the countryside, so I have this to say. However, I am not only congratulating you”. This indicates that Qui Youguang is using the birthday celebration as a pretext to tell his fellow prefects about the way of life as an official.

Xia Shuren's 60th Birthday Preface: “In the reign of Emperor Wuzong, sycophants were using power to obstruct the government. The world's resistance to the straight soldiers, rows of the door called out, pointing to cut the right and wrong, reciting the words in the court. On the end of the heart of the innocent speakers, and then relieved, to raise the gas of the straight ministers, and the Shi more to preserve. Therefore, although at that time you have light did not get to board the hall of the public,... often talk about the world of the public, to say that at that time so”. Visible to return to Youguang on the court of current events dynamic concern, although not as an official, but still mindful of the country. The reason why Gui Youguang wrote about the period of Wuzong was

to compare and contrast, lamenting the declining world trend. At the end of the article Gui Youguang added: “The twenty-fifth year of Jiajing was also. Since the Great Ritual Prison, the heavenly authority has become more severe”. The “Dali Da Jail” is the incident of the Dali Discussion.

In “Preface to Mr. Zhou of Dianshan’s Sixtieth Birthday”, the author first narrates Mr. Zhou’s dismissal from office, and then introduces his discussion on “the lack of talent in the world”: “When talent exists but is not utilized, or when it is utilized but not to its fullest extent, or when it is employed contrary to its nature—these three scenarios are the reasons why there seems to be a lack of talent in the world.” This article is a typical embodiment of the return to the light of the narrative, first of all, the account of Mr. Zhou’s experience as an official, and then lead to the above on the improper use of the court, resulting in the world of no talent argument, the whole piece of the narrative, literature and reasoning, expressing the return to the light of the court as well as the personal future of the concerns.

Discussion on the Imperial Examination System

At the end of “Twenty-three Questions and Answers”, Gui Youguang said, “The subjects have corrupted the talents of the world.” Gui Youguang believed that the imperial examination system had a considerable negative impact on the literati’s article writing. In the Preface to the Life of Taijun, the Secretary of the Ministry of Revenue, he once again expressed his view that “the imperial examination system could not help but be a certain type of character, and it was not a type of character that could be constrained. Common people, seeking fleeting gains, remain ignorant of the true essence of culture. Yet they boast of their supposed understanding and dare to judge the world’s heroes and talents—a truly disgraceful display. Returned to the light that the imperial examinations written articles should have a certain standard, but should not be overly confined to a particular style, and should not apply their own set of “style” to measure the evaluation of the other literati heroes.

The New Change of Style Paradigm

Turning to the Text of Entertainment: The Historical Color of the Narrative

Gui Youguang creatively utilized the historical and biographical style in the Longevity Preface, turning the Longevity Preface from an “article of entertainment” into an authentic literature, and restoring the ancient tradition of the Shiji, which had been lost for a while. Gui Youguang was deeply influenced by Sima Qian and the Historical Records, and he also said in the text that he was “uniquely fond of the Historical Records” and that he was “fond of reading Sima Zichang’s books when he was a young man”, and he even wrote in a letter to his friend Wang Zijong, “I thought that I had obtained the Longmen I thought that I had gotten Longmen’s law, and I could know the way.” The History of Ming Dynasty also recorded: “Youguang was a scholar of ancient literature, originally of the scriptures and arts, and was good at the Book of the Grand Historian of China, and got the divine reasoning of the book.” Gui Youguang deeply influenced by Sima Qian’s “Records of the Grand Historian,” authentically captured its essence. He innovatively infused birthday prefaces with a historical biography style, liberating them from the dryness of conventional social writing and establishing a new paradigm in this genre.

Emotionally Oriented Narrative: Weakening of Ethical Didacticism

In ancient Chinese prose, since the prose of the pre-Qin sages, the Confucian ethical didacticism in the text has been strong. During the Six Dynasties, it was changed to advocate the expression of the author’s personal feelings. In the Tang and Song Dynasties, the rise of the ancient literary movement made the concept of “writing

as a way of life” once again deeply rooted in people’s hearts; until the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, the cultural ideology of the Han and Tang Dynasties, the idea of restoration of the old is quite strong, and the literary world of simulation and plagiarism prevails. Return Youguang was able to not fall into the cliché to move people with feelings, and do not see the delicate artifice, the text from the word smooth. It played a key role in the reversal of the bad style in the literary world at that time.

Wang Xijue “return to the epitaph of the public” has commented on the return of the text “for writing the embrace of the text, warm and elegant, such as the clear temple of the serpent, a sing three sighs, not intended to be touching, and joyful and miserable thoughts overflowing in the words, can be said to be a great elegance is not a group of people”. Returning to Youguang as a human being is quite frank, the article to the feelings of the main, natural into the text, so as to be able to do really touching. In contrast to traditional ancient writings, which are characterized by ethical sermons, Qui Youguang is good at mining materials from daily life trivia, writing from the smallest detail, and describing in a delicate and sincere manner.

Qui Youguang’s writings are also concerned with human nature and morality, but he does not start from ethical sermons; he simply recounts a certain word or deed in the life of the preface owner, which seems unintentional in a few strokes, but often reveals the author’s thoughts on human nature and ethics, but does not degenerate into traditional sermons.

Qui Youguang puts the daily life of the people into his writing, and this kind of writing, through the restoration of the historical scene, side by side reflects the national contradictions, class contradictions, and social realities in the middle and late Ming Dynasty, which has certain historical value, and at the same time, this kind of narration method of “focusing on emotions” is also the innovation and broadening of the topics and methods of writing ancient texts.

Conclusion

Discussing a series of artistic innovations and breakthroughs of Longevity Preface by Gui Youguang helps to sort out and perfect the transmutation process of Longevity Preface’s style and status, so as to form an overall view of literary history. In addition, it also helps to examine more clearly the evaluation and positioning of the value of Gui Youguang’s ancient writings in the later generations, thus clarifying Gui Youguang’s position in the history of literature.

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