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# Aestheticism in *The Nightingale and the Rose*

The Nightingale and the Rose written by Oscar Wilde is a very beautiful fairy tale. This story praised the nightingale kind-hearted, selfless, and persevering in the pursuit of love. It also criticized the girl ungrateful superficial. I was touched by the story deeply. I will never forget this beautiful story. In the following paragraphs, I will analyze the aestheticism in the story.

This fairy tale story embodies the aestheticism in form apparently. Wilde is good at rhetoric. In this story, he used a lot of rhetoric.

The rhetorical effect of sentence repetition varies with individual cases, but most writers use it to add force and emphasis to their statement. (冯翠华, 1996) “Give me a red rose,” she cried, “and I will sing you my sweetest song.” This sentence appears three times in the fairy tale. It indicates the nightingale’s eager mood to find the red rose. It was a long process. She failed to find a red one at the first and second time, but didn’t give up. She insisted on her seeking and at last achieved her expect. From the repetition we can see the hardship in finding a red rose. Facing continuous failure, the nightingale maintained a resolute and positive attitude. The repetition transfers to us a shock and more intense emotion.

“Attributes human qualities and abilities to inanimate objects, animals, abstractions and events.” (Bander, 1978) Unlike in other stories, personification is widely used in this fairy tale which becomes an outstanding feature of it. Every animal and plant has been personified, from big sun and moon in the sky to little insects on the ground. Their language is lively and vivid. Each character has distinctive personality which makes the story touching. For example, the offish attitude of the Green Lizard the Butterfly and the Daisy reflects the general attitude of the English in those years.

Wilde has used several contrast to manifest a kind of beauty that exist between two opposite things or two opposite aspects in one thing. For example, the death of the nightingale and the blossom of the red rose forms striking contrast. The exhaustion of nightingale leads to the blossom of the rose. Nightingale’s crimson blood dyes the rose red. It was the nightingale who let her life-blood and energy ebbed away from her and transferred to the red rose. The red rose was the fruit of nightingale’s death, also the bitter price of the nightingale’s pursuit of love.

This story also embodies the aestheticism through the beauty of image. “An image is a literal and concrete representation of a sensory experience or of an object that can be known by one or more of the senses.” (Holman & Harmon, 1986) The brilliant exertion of color makes the image vividly.

Firstly, the nightingale’s death appears to be aestheticism by colors qualifying. When the first time nightingale sees the tearful expression in that handsome man’s face, which makes her feel an irresistible impulse to notice. As she says, “His hair is dark as the hyacinth--blossom, and his lips are red as the rose of his desire; but passion has made his face like pale ivory, and sorrow has set her seal upon his brow.” In her description, the applying of colors indeed makes the appearance of young man vivid, from which the nightingale thinks that “this is an indeed expressive love”. The nightingale's death is beginning by her first direct-viewing expression, and the lifelike description of colors truly makes readers easier understand nightingale determination to die for the young man's love.

Secondly, the nightingale’s death appears more sentimental and heroic by the colors qualifying. When nightingale initially forces the rose-thorn to stick into her chest, the color of rose has a gradual change, “pale was it, at first, as the mist that hangs over the river--pale as the feet of morning, and silver as the wings of the dawn. As the shadow of a rose in a mirror of silver, as the shadow of a rose in a water-pool”. But the deeper as the thorn thrusts, “a delicate flush of pink came into the leaves of the rose, like the flush in the face of the bridegroom when he kisses the lips of the bride. But the thorn had not yet reached her heart, so the rose heart remained white”. For the appearing dawn, for finishing this work before the dawn, nightingale’s heart is approaching thorn step by step, eventually reaching it. Now, “the marvelous rose became crimson, like the rose of eastern sky. Crimson was the girdle of petal, and crimson as a ruby was the heart”. The impending of nightingale’s death as the transforming of rose-color, from pale to a delicate flush of pink, to crimson, such heavily fresh color indicates the gradual dying out of nightingale’s life as the gradual reaching of nightingale’s desire. To sum up, with the modifying of color, the ending that nightingale is willing-hearted to die for love appears more reasonable and possesses aesthetic perception, not losing the divine and lamentable characteristic.

Beauty has various aspects. In this fairy tale, whether form the surface layer of language and form, or from the deep layer of image, all embodies Wilde’s aestheticism. The image of the nightingale who is kind and compassionate is loved by many readers. Though ultimately ending up with the disillusionment of love, the nightingale still made beautiful songs of love. As the leader of aesthetic movement, Wilde has never give up his pursuit towards art and beauty.

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