Abstract

The focus of this dissertation is on the figure of speech, namely metaphors and similes in Qian Zhong Shu’s novel, *Wei Cheng* (《围城》). This area is particularly interesting because it contributes significantly to the stylistics features of the novel. The metaphors and similes appear in high frequency and deviate from the usual figure of speech. Many researchers have worked on this area following the tradition of rhetoric and stylistics. They normally single out the figure of speech and concentrate only on its rhetoric value. The dissertation, however, adopts the structuralist and semiotic schools of thought, which represent a new perspective taken in this area of study. The figure of speech was examined as a semiotic system in the textual context. In this way, this study aimed to re-evaluate this figure of speech in an attempt to give it its rightful place.

This dissertation is divided into four chapters. The first chapter deals with the aims and the methodology used. The second chapter expounds on the patterns shown by the figure of speech. Here an atomistic view is taken. The metaphors and similes are categorised according to their relationship between their components. In the third chapter, a holistic view is adopted. The figure of speech is looked upon as a system and a code. Its role in the text is examined. The last chapter highlights the significance of this new perspective.

The two main parts of this dissertation (chapter 2 and chapter 3) examine *Wei Cheng*’s figure of speech in different dimensions. The first part concentrates on the patterns which demonstrate the uniqueness of Qian Zhong Shu’s metaphors and similes. The most significant properties are their density and the tensive relation between the tenors and vehicles. This tensive relation reveals the double articulation of figure of speech. One is to explain the tenors, the other is in line with but independently motivated of the textual meaning. The latter function is explored further in the second part which examines the figure of speech under a semiotic approach. It is found that this expressive device bears an iconic relationship with the theme of the novel. This shows that the figure of speech plays an important role in setting the mood of the text, which is compatible with the anti-romanticism style of the author. The significance of figure of speech on the textual level is thus evident.