

## **Appreciation of Classical Poems from the perspective of Micro-Films and Comparative Analyses**

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### **ABSTRACT**

There are often artistic skills hidden behind poetic images presented by classic poems. The things described in the two poems, “Sailing out from Yuputan at Dawn” by Chih Chiu (464-508) and “Entering Hsise to Present a Poem to a Colleague in Nanfu” by Hson Ho (480-518) are similar, such as wind, mountains, and water surface; yet, the techniques of writing are similar in differences and different in similarities. The poetic images are like the concept of micro films of creating associations with the scenery for readers. Thus, this study aimed to explore the artistic skills to create micro-film-like effects in scenery descriptions of these two classic poems. The research methods adopted are the content analysis method and concept analysis method, which are qualitative research methods. These methods were applied to analyse the similarities and differences between these two poems, in hopes of helping readers to learn more about the creative concepts of these classic poems.

**Key words:** Chih Chiu, Hson Ho, classic poem

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The skills applied to the descriptions in the two classic poems, “Sailing out from Yuputan at Dawn” by Chih Chiu (464-508) and “Entering Hsise to Present a Poem to a Colleague in Nanfu” by Hson Ho (480-518), are similar to the shooting skills used to shoot a micro film. The descriptions are natural and vivid, with rich and lasting charm. They can trigger readers’ association with some scenes so that the artistic conceptions of the poems can be more alive. It is as though readers are there on site to see everything with their own eyes.

“Sailing out from Yuputan at Dawn” by Chih Chiu (464-508) is a poem about scenery with some implied messages. In the beginning of the poem, the scenery was still. Then, with the boat sailed out dynamically, various images were, one by one, presented vividly. It is difficult to guess what the next line is about before reading it. The poem can make readers wonder and feel eager to explore. Most descriptions in this poem are visual. The image to be presented by every line was designed delicately to be true-to-life and vivid.

The image began with a misty dawn. There was no wind, thus the mist had not yet dissipated. Visually, there was nothing to see. It was all white. A red pavilion was described using the first two characters of the second line. It could be seen visually. The following three characters described the blowing wind, which was the reason the red pavilion could be seen. So far the poem illustrated the change from no wind at all to wind blowing. The third line described the sinning voice from the boat. The boat was paddled and began to move. The image with a moving boat and the singing voice is an image with both acoustic and dynamic descriptions. The description of the fourth line was even more vivid.

What came from the boat was not only the singing voice but also the bustling atmosphere with drumbeats. The last three characters described the sounds that could resound across countless mountains. This effect implied the quietness of the environment. This was why the singing voice and the drumbeats could be heard thousands miles away. This was the reason of the following fifth line. The children from the village by the river were seen gather suddenly as they wanted to know what these sounds were. The sixth line described both the children and the old men who raised their head occasionally and looked to the boat. The images in these two lines were close-range images. Only when the distance was short enough was it possible to identify whether the people were children or old men. Thus, the third, fourth, and fifth lines showed a zoom-in shot.

With the boat sailing away, the seventh line described the strange rocks in sight, and the eighth line described the peculiar shapes of the peaks. The focus of the description was moved from a low

point where the rocks were to the high mountain peaks. As the boat was sailing, the ninth line described the woods of dead trees on the broad and vast plain in the front after the boat sailed out of the area of rocks and mountains, a contrast to the strange scenes and consistent dead trees described by the seventh and eighth line. As the boat kept on moving, the tenth line described the beach before eyes rising gradually. The meaning and Romanisation of the characters are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 The meaning and Romanisation of the characters from “Sailing out from Yuputan at Dawn”

Line		Character in the original order				
		I	II	III	IV	V
1	A	Yutan		Wu	Wei	Kai
	B	Yutan (Name of the river)		Mist	Not yet	Dissipate
2	A	Chih	Ting	Feng	I	Yang
	B	Red	Pavilion	Wind	Already	Blow
3	A	Chao	Ko	Fa	Chung	Liu
	B	Paddle	Singing voice	Sail out	In	Sail
4	A	Ming	Ping	Hsiang	Ta	Chang
	B	Beat	Small drum	Resounding sound	Continuous	Mountain
5	A	Tsun	Tung	Hu	Hsiang	Chu
	B	Village	Child	Suddenly	All	Gather up
6	A	Yeh	Lao	Shih	I	Wang
	B	Field	Old man	Occasionally	One	Look

7	A	Kui	Kuai	Shih	I	Hsiang
	B	Strange	Weird	Rock	Abnormal	Scene
8	A	Chan	Chueh	Feng	Shu	Chuang
	B	Brand new	Outstanding	Peak	Special	Shape
9	A	Sen	Sen	Huang	Shu	Chi
	B	Woods	Woods	Wild	Tree	Uniform
10	A	His	His	Han	Sha	Chang
	B	(A sound)	(A sound)	Cold	Beach	Rise

“Entering Hsise to Present a Poem to a Colleague in Nanfu” by Hson Ho (480-518) is a classic poem about the scenery above the river. The first line described the clear dew with a close-up shot, implying the time was around dawn. Then, the description of the cold wind blowing implied the gloomy and cold atmosphere. The second line described the first line in the morning with the camera toward the sky, implying that the broad sky was dark and the reflection on the river in a cool way. The third line described the sunset with the sunlight shone on the sky and clouds. Thin clouds appeared above the mountains.

The fourth line described the moon appearing on the waves in the sea. The fifth line described the gloomy group of peaks. The sixth described the sounds from the jet stream and the reflection of the moon on the ocean spray. The seventh line described the waves crashing on the shore, causing billows and loud sounds. The eighth line described the birds riding the wind. The author used the character “shi (play)” to illustrate the dynamic image with countless birds. The rhetorical skill applied here was personification, to highlight the bustling atmosphere as the reflection of the moon appeared on the water. The meaning and Romanisation of the characters are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2 The meaning and Romanisation of the characters from “Entering Hsise to Present a Poem to a Colleague in Nanfu”

Line		Character in the original order				
		I	II	III	IV	V
1	A	Lou	Ching	Hsiao	Feng	Leng
	B	Dew	Clear	Dawn	Wind	Cold
2	A	Tien	Shu	Chiang	Kuang	Shuang
	B	Sky	First light	River	Light	Cool
3	A	Po	Yun	Yan	Ji	Chu
	B	Glow of setting sun	Cloud	High and steep cliff	Edge	Appear
4	A	Chu	Yueh	Po	Chung	Shang
	B	First	Moon	Wave	In	Above
5	A	An	An	Lien	Chang	Yin
	B	Gloomy	Gloomy	Continuous	Mountains	Dark
6	A	Sao	Sao	Chi	Mo	Hsiang
	B	Strong wind	Strong wind	Rapid	Spray	Loud sound
7	A	Hui	Cha	Chi	Ai	Lang
	B	Echo	Floating wood in water	Rapid	Crash	Billow
8	A	Chun	Fei	Cheng	His	Kuang
	B	A flock of birds	Fly	Play	Fool around	Broad

The main reason this study chose these two poems is that the scenery described in these two poems is essentially the same. However, the static and dynamic visual effects of these two poems are different, and these differences can hardly be identified by readers. The differences are in the visual images created through the observations of the scenery based on static and dynamic characters.

These two poems are worth appreciating and studying, because important skills had been applied to them in the aspect of art performances. For example, from the viewpoint of the objective realism of landscape poetry, when describing the true and the beautiful of appearances and forms of objects (Yen, 1983), the most valuable features of textual performances include innovation, excellence, and responses from readers (Chang, 1987). Thus, all kinds of skills must be applied to show the ever changing landscapes (Yuan, 1994) and their momentum (Huang, 1998).

Poets often captured the colours, lines, and sounds in a specific split second (Yuan) when appreciating landscapes (Lo, 1988), to illustrate the artistic aesthetics. When poets wrote about natural scenery, their principle was to focus on the dynamic. That is, they were supposed to reduce the proportion of static descriptions and transform them into dynamic ones, which could create living images and effects (Huang, 1982). Moreover, readers' perception is easily touched by descriptions of time and space changes (Huang, 1980). Furthermore, the sounds presented in different images in a poem are like movie scores (Gu, 1987), helping readers to experience effects like going through a movie plot.

The value of aesthetic appreciation of landscape poetry is high (Gu, 1987). Both "Sailing out from Yuputan at Dawn" by Chih Chiu (464-508) and "Entering Hsise to Present a Poem to a Colleague in Nanfu" by Hson Ho (480-518) contained the above-mentioned artistic concept of aesthetics. Thus, this study aimed to further explore the beauty of nature presented in the artistic conception of the poems through appreciation and comparisons. Thus, the research questions included: (1) to find out which descriptions of scenery in these two poems were similar to poetic shots from micro films; (2) to compare the two poems in their image structures to identify the similarities and differences; (3) to identify the similarities of and differences in the materials being described between the two poems; and (4) to identify the similarities of and differences in the subjective and objective factors between the two poems.

## **2. METHODS**

The research methods adopted are the content analysis and concept analysis, which are qualitative research methods (Wang, 2001). The two poems to be appreciated and compared in this study were “Sailing out from Yuputan at Dawn” and “Entering Hsise to Present a Poem to a Colleague in Nanfu”. Words and lines of a classic poem must be collated (Huang, 1983). Both poems had been through various text collations of different versions before being compared. After making sure the text of the two poems is correct, the next steps are: (1) to clarify the Chinese pronunciations and meaning of the characters used in these two poems and list the Romanisation and their meaning; (2) to extract the parts with only descriptions of scenery in these two poems, and perform the following steps after identifying these parts and their content: (i) to identify the content materials being described in these two poems; (ii) to analyse these content materials from the two poems and record the concepts obtained from the analysis results; (iii) to perform concept comparisons after obtaining the concepts described in these two poems and record the comparison results; (iv) to summarise the concepts after obtaining the concept comparison results and analyse the writing principles the authors followed when writing these poems; (v) to identify the essence or property of these identified writing principles; and (vi) to list all the indicators for comparison and the corresponding contents of these two poems.

### 3. RESULTS AND ANALYSES

#### 3.1 The Analyses on the Micro-Film-Like Poetic Shots

##### 3.1.1 The Ten Main Scenery Shots in “Sailing out from Yuputan at Dawn”

The first shot is a scene at dawn with thick mist over Yutan with vague views from all directions. The second shot is a red pavilion, showing that there had already been wind blowing. The third shot is a boat paddled forward on the water with someone singing on the boat. The fourth shot is the drumbeats accompanying the singing voice from the boat, resounding across the mountains. The fifth shot is many children gathering and looking to the boat. The sixth shot is the old men in the field also raising their head to look. The seventh shot is an amazing scene with rocks of strange shapes. The eighth shot is a scene of mountain peaks of all kinds of shapes the author had never seen before. The ninth shot is a vast plain with dead trees. The tenth shot is the beach appearing above the water gradually and clearly, and rising. The tenth shots above are related to the focus, effect, form, and angle of the corresponding images, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 The analyses on the micro-film-like poetic shots for “Sailing out from Yuputan at Dawn”

Shot	What was in the shot	Focus	Effect	Form	Angle
1	Think mist	Yutan	Mistiness	Dynamic	From all directions
2	Redness	Pavilion	A clear sight, wind blowing	Dynamic	From the red pavilion
3	A boat moving above the water	Paddling	Humming	Dynamic	From nearby to faraway
4	Drumbeats from the boat	Beating a drum	Drumbeats	Dynamic	Closing up to where the drumbeats came from
5	Many children	gathering	Suddenness	Dynamic	Toward the boat
6	Old men in the field	Raising head	A glance	Dynamic	From raised heads
7	Rocks	Strange shapes	Being surprising	Static	Continuously moving
8	Shapes of the peaks	Uniqueness	A great variety	Static	Continuously moving
9	Vastness	Branches	Desolation	Static	From a focus to a large range
10	Beach	A clear view	Gradual appearance	Dynamic	Higher and higher gradually

### 3.1.2 The Eight Main Scenery Shots in “Entering Hsise to Present a Poem to a Colleague in Nanfu”

The materials forming the shots included sunlight, clouds, water surface, moon, layers of mountains, a jet stream, and flying birds. With the combinations of different focuses, effects, forms, and angles with these materials, amazing shots like from films were presented. The combinations are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4 The analyses on the micro-film-like poetic shots for “Entering Hsise to Present a Poem to a Colleague in Nanfu”

Shot	What was in the shot	Focus	Effect	Form	Angle
1	Weak sunlight at dawn	A dewdrop	Shining luster from the dew	Dynamic	Top down
2	The first light shining on the river	Sunlight reflected on the surface of the river	Glittering water	Dynamic	Top down
3	Thin clouds appearing above the mountains	Appearing clouds	Sunshine on the clouds	Dynamic	Bottom up
4	The moon rising from the sea level	Appearance of the moon	Appearance of moonlight in the night sky	Dynamic	Bottom up
5	Layers of gloomy and dark mountains	Mountain peaks	Darkness and gloominess	Dynamic	Horizontally moving
6	Surging water	Waves	Loud sounds caused by the impact of the waves	Dynamic	Horizontally moving
7	Billows rolling up	Billows	Rolling billows	Dynamic	Circularly spinning
8	Many birds soaring in the sky	Birds	Riding the wind	Dynamic	Bottom up

### 3.2 The Differences in the Shot Structures

The difference in the basic structures of the two poems is that the authors were in different positions and locations. The author of the first poem, “Sailing out from Yuputan at Dawn”, was on the boat. He described what he saw as the boat sailing. The author of the second poem, “Entering Hsise to Present a Poem to a Colleague in Nanfu”, was by the shore. He described what he observed from the shore. Thus, the structures of the images are different, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5 The difference in the description structures of the two poems

Title Description structures	“Sailing out from Yuputan at Dawn”	“Entering Hsise to Present a Poem to a Colleague in Nanfu”
Observation vision	Moving	Fixed
Author’s position	On the boat	By the shore
Observation angle	Views from the boat as the boat sailed	Views from the shore
Description scope	Different areas	The same area
Form of scenery	Dynamic	Static

### 3.3 The Differences in Leading Roles and Supporting Roles of the Materials

#### Described

The two poems have something in common in their descriptions: (1) The scenery described both poems was above the water; (2) The descriptions in both poems started at dawn; (3) The natural scenery descriptions in both poems contained wind, mountains, water surface, and layers of mountains; (4) The sensual descriptions in both poems were mainly visual descriptions; and (5) The description orders in both poems followed the order of time. Moreover, in both poems, there were leading roles and supporting ones among the materials, including wind, mountains, water surface, and layers of mountains. In the descriptions of wind, the role of wind was not important in the first poem but wind played an important role throughout the second poem. In the descriptions of mountains, the shapes and contours of the mountains were illustrated as ever changing in the first poem but boring and dull in the second poem as a supporting role. In the descriptions of water, there was nothing special in the first poem, while the second poem illustrated the changes of the water surface as majestic and shocking, as a role at the core of the poem. The roles of the materials are summarised in Table 6.

Table 6 The roles the common scenery materials described in the two poems played

Scenery	Role	“Sailing out from Yputan at Dawn”	“Entering Hsise to Present a Poem to a Colleague in Nanfu”
Wind	Leading role	○	✓
	Supporting role	✓	○
Mountains	Leading role	✓	○
	Supporting role	○	✓
Water surface	Leading role	○	✓
	Supporting role	✓	○
Layers of mountains	Leading role	○	✓
	Supporting role	✓	○

“✓” – A leading role; “○” – A role in the poem other than the leading role

### 3.4 The Similarities of and Differences in the Subjective and Objective Factors

The differences in the subjective and objective factors among the scenery descriptions in two poems can be analysed based on the text. The objective factors include characters, animals, areas, and time described in the poems, while the subjective factors include visions, hearing, emotional perception, and emotional response, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7 The subjective and objective factors in the scenery descriptions

Factor	Comparison	“Sailing out from Yuputan at Dawn”	“Entering Hsise to Present a Poem to a Colleague in Nanfu”
Sensual feeling	Vision	✓	○
	Hearing	○	✓
Human and animal	Human	✓	○
	Animal	NA	✓
Area	Different	✓	○
	Same	○	✓
Perception	Warm	✓	✓
	Surprised	✓	✓
Time	Daytime	✓	NA
	Night	NA	✓

“✓” – A significant concept;

“○” – An existing but not significant concept;

“NA” – Not applicable.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

Poems can bring readers different perceptions through different sensual descriptions and different momentum of descriptions regarding scenery. For example, the first poem's description about the mist dissipating due to the wind was a visual description. The second poem's description about the feeling related to the wind was a description of touch. The two poems were different in the momentum of the descriptions of sounds, leading to completely different atmospheres. The description in the first poem was about human singing voice and the accompanying drumbeats, with a warm feeling. The description in the second poem was about the momentum of the terrifying waves at night, which was rather shocking.

Although the descriptions in both poems were mainly dynamic descriptions, the extents were quite different. The dynamic description in the first poem presented continuous images slowly and gradually. The dynamic description in the first poem was also slow. However, the appearance of the clouds and that of the moon was described with a surprising feeling. The final four lines formed a fierce and sudden dynamic description, which can trigger readers' association to the scenery more easily, resulting in a shocking effect as they feel like they can see the scenery with their own eyes.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The artistic skills applied to the poetic images in classical poems are similar to the shooting skills used in micro films nowadays, which are very impressive. The time difference between the age the authors lived and the current age with micro films becoming more popular in the recent years is about 1,500 years. This observation shows the wisdom of the ancient people. They not only had good logics but also were able to make dynamic observations and apply dynamic description skills. It is hoped that, through the results of the analyses and the comparisons regarding these two poems, readers can learn more about the delicate art in Chinese classical poem creation.

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