Text Context in the Field of Literature Research

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Abstract. Context is a term which used in literary research frequently. But we do not know the clear meaning of what the context is. The original meaning of the context is not only conducive to the use of normative context, but also to understand the context of generalization. The initial form of context is "text context" in literary research. The text context enters into the realm of literary research from linguistics and is formed in the context theory of I. A. Richards and the new criticism. This paper combs the textual context theory in the field of literature research, summarizes and reflects on the text of context theory.

Introduction

Context is a term which is used frequently in the humanities and academic fields. This is true especially in literary research. With the linguistics turn in 20th century, the linguistic terms of context entered the field of literature research. We often use "context" to organize the paper title, such as the look from the cross-cultural context generic modernism in China and discuss about the text in the western literary theory and social historical context and so on. In the field of literature research, context theory focuses on the I. A. Richards and his new criticisms. Although the new criticism in Richards is the guide, it cannot put it in the category of new criticism in a simple way. I. A. Richards is the first person who introduce context into the field of literature research and constructs the literary context theory preliminarily which is the text context theory. These ideas then were inherited and developed by the new criticism. It is helpful to review the origin of textual context in literature research and to understand the context of generalization.

The Text Context Theory of I. A. Richards

I. A. Richards has introduced the linguistic method into literary criticism, especially the semantics method. Semantics is the science of "meaning is established by what method is", and the meaning of text is also the pursuit of literary criticism. How to establish meaning, in linguistics, depends on the context of utterance or discourse, and in literary criticism, it depends on the context of text. So context becomes the key to the establishment of text meaning naturally. I. A. Richards also constructed the context theory of literary text when he introduced the semantic system into literary criticism and the text context and theory of the real meaning have been born since then.

In his book rhetoric philosophy, I. A. Richards deals with the concept of textual context in three dimensions:

The first is the "other word before and after the word," which is the context meaning in which we are familiar the most. The context of this meaning can be extended to the entire scope of the book.

The second is the context meaning of Richard’s further expansion. "The familiar meaning of 'context' can be extended to include any written or spoken circumstances furtherly, extended to include the word used to describe the other uses known method at that period, such as the words in Shakespeare's plays extended to everything which included, and everything related to our interpretation of the word." [1] To sum up, is actually everything that happens when the text happens and when it interprets the text. I. A. Richards does not advocate the use of this wide range of contextual meanings in literary criticism, but open up our view of the meaning of context.
The third is Richard’s context of "technical usage", "the context is used to represent a group of reappearance of the name of the event at the same time, setting of events what we can choose at any time, as a result of the reason and the required conditions." [1] This is the context which I. A. Richards uses the causal law to limit the context of the vast and unbounded world. This definition answer of the question is who chooses the context and where the event reappears. "We", that is, readers (and, of course, critics like I. A. Richards) are empowered to choose context. These events are also reproduced in the reader's reading psychological.

So we can see clearly that, actually, the context of the text is a combination of a horizontal and vertical context. The first context refers to the horizontal context, and the rest of two contexts reflect the vertical context in psychological reading. I. A. Richards expansion of the text context is unprecedented and has given the text context a grand view from the beginning.

The Expansion of the Text Context Theory by Wimsatt and Brooks

The analytical method based on the context theory provides the core content for the formation of new criticism. New criticism in semantic analysis of natural cannot reject the context theory at the same time; it applies context theory into their theories and is also an extension of context theory.

The idea of metaphor and irony is the most typical example of this.

The New Value of the Metaphor of Wimsatt

Wimsatt has put new value into metaphor: he thinks that the value of metaphor cannot not lie in the metaphors, but vehicle and tenor was put together to be meaningful and the significance is also likely to come from both conflict and contrast. In the past, we emphasized the fusion of vehicle and tenor, while ignored the new significance of the independence. The contribution of Wimsatt on metaphor is an emphasis on the independence of vehicle and tenor.

So how does metaphor happen? Wimsatt argues that the metaphor takes place in the new context. The meaning of metaphor is generated by the distortion in the new context. New context is indispensable to metaphor in power, "it arranges keywords A (tenor) and B (vehicle) to make their respective clearly, explains to each other and does not fall into the literal meaning." [1] Wimsatt not only uses context as the structure of metaphor, but also points out that context is the source of metaphor and the source of vitality. "It is only when metaphors are arbitrarily repeated and abused that they become easy to simplify, to be literal and to be cliched." [1]

Wimsatt expands his discussions furtherly. He thinks that metaphor is not the only one. There are many other things such as labels, idioms, proverbs and aphorisms, and the form of poetry. Even every words in the poem has experienced the same mechanism: they create new value in his works, because they are distorted in the new context while preserve their original meaning. The key to the context is that. Without a new context, there is no distortion of the place and the force of distortion.

Brooks' Ironic Thoughts

Brooks' definition of irony also uses and develops contextual theory. "Context is an obvious distortion of a statement which we call irony." [1] That is to say, "use words to express the opposite of their literal meaning, with some sort of irony."[2] According to the argument of contemporary British ironic rhetoric D.C. Muecke, irony can have many different levels, different angles, different effects of the difference, but its basic meaning is that the words are not consistent.[3] “The context plays a similar role in irony and metaphor. The pressure of the context causes words to produce literally opposite meanings, which makes the irony true. If detach from the context without the place of metaphor, it must also go to "death".

Brooks has more emphasis on context than Wimsatt especially in emphasizing the importance of context.

"The unforgettable verse of poetry--even those verses that seems to contain an inner 'poetic' which are poetic from their relationship with the basic special context. Indeed, the word 'no' repeat five times as the most poignant word in 'King Lear', but it was supported because of the context in which it was. Even the 'meaning' of any particular factor is subject to contextual correction." [1]
Brooks also mentioned the stability of context. The context is a whole with balance, and even in "integrated poetry", it retains its stability. A comprehensive poem refers to a poem that contains its dominant emotional antagonism. Irony is one of the antagonistic factors that undermine the balance. But in the face of an attack of irony, the context is as balanced as the structure of the bow. Brooks in the understanding of poetry admitted: "poetry is a reaction and comment to our experience of the objective and noisy world, is our view of it. It is concerned with the way we feelings, emotions, and reasons to reflect the world."[4]

In modern criticism, irony mostly refers to a language of "camouflage and shelter, but the purpose is not to deceive, but to achieve all kinds of rhetoric and artistic effect."[5] Brooks argues that the poem is insinuation, and irony is the basic principle of poetic language, even the basic idea, method and philosophical attitude of poetry. From this angle, Brooks not only gives the irony, but also endows the context with the meaning of the poetry ontology. From the discussion of the context from Brooks and Wimsatt, we can see the development of context theory by new criticism. The context is not only the key to the "meaning" but also the foundation of poetry and literature.

When we see the development of the new criticism on the theory of context, we should also pay attention to the fact that there is a contradiction between the new criticism of text ontology and context. From the context definition of I. A. Richards, we can see that the context moves from the inside of the text to the outside and always maintains a connection with the outside world. The semantic criticism of I. A. Richards use context as these. For example, he lists ten reading barriers in pragmatism criticism, such as the reader's love, emotional suppression, unrelated memory, many are closely related to the outside of the text, the psychological world. But these are precisely the new criticism of the severe accusations.

As we all know, the new criticism of the text ontological concept is: the text is an independent and self-contained as a whole, so in criticism to completely exclude the author's intention and the reader's feelings, So as to make scientific and objective criticism of the text. This text ontology defines the scope of criticism within the text, but still uses the contextual approach. New criticism is a textual or formalist criticism, and we see in linguistics and stylistics that the context is precisely to overcome this textualism. So the contradiction between the new criticism and the context can not be resolved, which also destined the new criticism on the development of the text context theory is limited.

The textual context concept of I. A. Richards is the application of four contexts: linguistic context, situation context, cultural context and cognitive context in literary studies. He not only saw the author, the reader's culture, the situation context, but also the cognitive context in the process of reading and criticism. However, although the new criticism is also involved in the practice of criticism, but in theory strongly reject these two types of context, and therefore left only in the context of the linguistic context.

The four contexts in linguistics can be grouped into three kinds of literary studies-linguistic context, situation context (including cultural context) and cognitive context. Because of the generation of literature text and the way of reading, which is different from the ordinary discourse, the situation context of literature can be equal to the cultural context to a certain extent, and because the term "culture" in the cultural context is controversial, so we put the cultural context into the context of the situation context.

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References