

Discussion on the Types and Functions of “Contrast” Technique in Network Novels

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Abstract: From the birth of net writing to its development up to now, net writing has occupied half of the literary world. Because of its ability to attract a large number of readers, many scholars pay attention to and study the mystery of its writing. Contrast is one of the most commonly used techniques in web writing. Therefore, this paper probes into the types and specific functions of contrast techniques in today’s net writings, and studies the mystery of why net writings are popular.

Keywords: Web articles; Contrast method

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1. Introduction

Internet literature was born earlier in China. It has experienced more than 20 years of development since the 1990s, from its initial emergence and criticism to its flourishing and widespread popularity today. Internet literature has become a literary force to be reckoned with, attracting a lot of attention in the industry^[1].

In the course of its development over the years, online literature has created many novel themes and accumulated rich creative means. Although the literary content, aesthetic value, and artistic taste of online works are not highly evaluated by the audience, some online works can be hundreds of chapters, long and huge, and may even be filled with a lot of low-quality content, but still attract readers to read them tirelessly^[2]. Thus, it can be seen that network literature must have unique writing methods to attract readers tightly, and their writing skills are worth people’s deep thought and research.

In the creation of network literature, one of the commonly used creative techniques is the contrast method. This method generally appears in all kinds of subjects of web writing, whether the writings are for male or female readers, a lot of contrast creative techniques are used. Perhaps because it is too common, it does not attract the attention of scholars, so far there is little research on the contrast creation technique^[3-4].

2. The types of contrast method

The word “contrast” is a photographic art term, originally meant to refer to the degree of difference in the contrast between black and white in photographs or negatives. In literary works, the meaning of “contrast” covers a wide range. As long as the author conceives new ideas, the use of contrast techniques may increase.

According to the incomplete statistics of some web writing works, there are three types of contrast, which are: the contrast of character setting, the contrast of environment, and the contrast of story structure. But the above classification is only a rough classification, each type can also be subdivided into many types.

2.1. Contrasting personas

Character setting is the first step in successful novel creation. A good protagonist and supporting role setting can become the highlights of a novel story, quickly attract readers’ attention, and arouse their love for the characters.

The character setting includes many aspects, such as personality, career background, life background, age, appearance, clothing, language, action, and so on. If the created characters are the same, there is no contrast between each other, which can make the story appear dull and boring; while the strong contrast between the characters is easy to produce contradictions and contrasts, thus creating a sense of conflict for the story, forming a strong tension ^[5].

The most important point of web writing works is to catch readers’ eyes and attract them to continue reading, which can bring fame and profits to the works. Therefore, the authors of web writing often set the protagonists and supporting characters with strong contrasts. If the hero is set up as a lofty, less talkative, or even a little rigid character, the heroine’s character is often lively, naughty, and talkative. To further reinforce the conflict between the two, some writers will even design the characters of the two characters to be opposite, to create a dramatic effect ^[6]. For example, the male lead’s personality is rigid, while the female lead is flexible and flouting the rules. The male and female protagonists with a strong sense of contrast, no matter what plot they are placed in, will certainly produce relatively strong contradictions and conflicts, adding fun to the story ^[7].

2.2. Contrast of background and environment

The environment and background of the novel are the stages of the life of the novel characters, which play an extremely important role in promoting the development of the story, setting off the atmosphere, and portraying the characters.

The environment in novels can be roughly divided into two categories, the natural environment and the social environment. The natural environment includes the time, place, weather, and scenery of the characters’ activities. The social environment includes the historical background, social modality, and the relationship between people ^[8]. Engels once said: “Realism, as far as I am concerned, means, in addition to the truth of details, the true reproduction of typical characters in typical circumstances.” From this, it can be seen that the characters in the novel cannot live without the environment, otherwise, they are just an empty shell and cannot see the soul.

There is a close relationship between the concept of setting and the concept of environment in a novel, but there are also differences between them. The environment in a novel can only be a specific social or natural environment under a certain background, while the background of a novel refers to the specific era and historical conditions in which this specific environment can be produced ^[9].

There are a large number of online novels. Every year, a large number of works are published. More

and more authors join the team of writing online novels, which forms a fierce competition. To attract readers' attention, many writers strive to innovate and create novel selling points. Among them, some authors successfully place the environment and background in their novels in a position contrary to common sense, never bringing a sense of novelty^[10]. The circumstances and settings in a story are so different from reality that they can also create intense conflict and add suspense to the story.

One popular TV series in recent years, *The Legend of Chen Qianqian*, is adapted from Nanzhen's novel *The Legend of Three Princesses*. The author creatively sets the hero's life in a society that is contrary to reality. In ancient society, men were generally respected. Men could take the imperial examinations and easily obtain a high social status. Women, on the other hand, had a low social status and were bound by many shackles, such as not being able to wear revealing clothes in the street, not being able to work, not being able to go to school, and so on. In the novel, the protagonist is living in the same situation as the ancient Chinese society in the city of Xuanhucheng. The protagonist is the little king of the city of Xuanhucheng, who should enjoy the treatment and honor of the royal nobility in their own country, but unfortunately gets a heart disease, so has to go to the neighboring city of Huayuan to seek medicine^[11-12].

However, the social situation in Huayuan City is completely the opposite of that of Xuanhu, in which women are respected. When the hero first went there, he made a lot of jokes because he was not used to the customs and rules of Huayuan City. The author makes use of this conflict to create a series of humorous events and conflicts, which make the audience unable to stop watching, but also cause people to think about some social phenomena that are unfair to women today.

Another popular time-travel novel, *Qing Yuren*, transports the background and environment of modern people to ancient times. Despite the author's innovations, this ancient world is a human society that started again after the destruction of the earth. It is the same as life in ancient China, but it still looks and feels like an ancient society^[13]. The protagonist travels to the ancient times of the future and brings the advanced ideas of the modern age. He also uses his mother (who is also a modern person) to travel to the things and contacts left by the ancient times and leads a smooth life. He passes through all the obstacles and easily defeats the enemies who are stronger than himself. His smooth experience also virtually created a great sense of enjoyment for the audience, because the protagonist is a modern man, it is easy to narrow the distance with the protagonist, everyone follows him in another world to experience the strange life, as if they are experiencing these magnificent journeys.

2.3. The contrast in the story structure

Compared to the above two types of contrast, there are relatively more studies on contrast in story structure. Nowadays, "Shuang Wen" is very popular in network literature, and many writers are accustomed to using the contrast of the story plot to create a sense of enjoyment. Many scholars even believe that Shuang Wen is actually a sense of contrast, giving readers a sense of excitement.

For example, scholar Wang Zhaosheng wrote in his article "The Artistic Charm of Contrast technique": The biggest advantage of "contrast" technique in novels is that it has a strong contrast effect, which is easy to give people shock and infection. There are many contrast techniques in the story structure, and they may become more due to the creation of the author. At present, the most commonly used methods of contrast in story structure include first suppression, then promotion, escalation, goldfinger, and twist^[14].

First suppressing then raising and pretending to be a pig eating a tiger are very common writing techniques in web articles. What they all have in common is that they try their best to belittle and suppress the protagonist

at the beginning of the plot. When the reader has accumulated a certain amount of sympathy, dissatisfaction, pain, and resentment, then find a suitable plot to make the main character turn around. At this time, the emotions mobilized by the readers are released, resulting in a cool scenario. The greater the contrast, the stronger the feeling.

But the difference is that the protagonist is passively in a bad situation, such as the character traveling through time and becoming a person with a very low status in ancient society, or the protagonist himself experiences a very tragic thing such as the collapse of his family at the beginning of his life. Playing a pig and eating a tiger is that the protagonist takes the initiative to deliberately hide his strength at the beginning of the story, pretending to be weak in the eyes of everyone, and then finds a suitable time to show his true face, and beat the enemy who once looked down on him and hurt him, to create a sense of contrast for the reader.

There are many kinds of Goldfinger, often the protagonist inadvertently obtains treasures, secrets, and abilities or meets powerful people, their appearance is to save the protagonist in the fire and water, for the protagonist to bring a completely different life experience. Whenever Goldfinger appears, the protagonist's life usually changes a lot, thus forming a contrast with his previous life situation.

For example, in *Breaking the Sky*, the protagonist encounters many golden fingers. Each time he gets a golden finger, the protagonist's situation gets better, and sometimes it is even a big difference from the previous life. Also, the greater the contrast, the more enjoyable the reader will feel.

The twist method is common in any kind of novel. Web novels require a high level of plot setting, and the authors like to use this method to add color to the article. Some authors even design a turning point in each chapter, which greatly whets the readers' appetite and attracts them to continue reading the novel.

This method often designs a threat first, such as the protagonist being forced to the cliff, being kidnapped by the enemy, and a series of life-threatening situations, mobilize the reader's emotions, and then through some methods make the protagonist turn the crisis to safety. This kind of plot design can be varied, but all must let the protagonist in a very low position before, and then the rebound will be very strong.

3. Conclusion

The creation of a novel is a complicated process. The author often uses a variety of techniques to increase the attractiveness of the story in the article, among which the use of contrast is one of the most frequent techniques, and it is also one of the more complex and changeable means. In the vast sea of web articles, contrast techniques may not be limited to these several types, and new contrast techniques will continue to develop in the future, which is worthy of people's attention and thinking^[15].

Disclosure statement

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