The Discourse Pattern of a Chinese Text of Literary Criticism

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1. Introduction

In Chinese culture, writing enjoys a status that English writing has probably never achieved. For centuries, writing was considered to be of such importance for the rule of the country that the selection of officials in the kējū (the Imperial Examination) was mainly based on the writing of a stereotyped essay. In contemporary times the importance of writing may be seen in the fact that Mao himself related the style of writing to the work style of the Party and denounced ‘stereotyped Party writing’ as poisoning the whole Party and jeopardizing the revolution: ‘its spread would wreck the country and ruin the people’ (Mao, 1942:62-63).

Over the centuries, the art of writing in China has developed its own styles. There has been a considerable literature on its principles and techniques. The unbroken chain of literary critics includes such great names as Confucius (551BC-479BC), Mencius (372BC-289BC), Cao Pi (187-226), Liu Xie (circa 465-532), Ou-yang Xiu (1007-1072), Liang Qichao (1873-1927), Lu Xun (1881-1936). Many of their works are still studied today. Although the Chinese written language underwent a fundamental change early this century, when the classical style of writing was replaced by a style closer to the spoken language, the essence of the traditional approach has carried on, and is still highly regarded.

In any culture, good writing must be well organised. In the Chinese writing tradition, much attention is given to and intricate techniques are developed with regard to the principles of organisation. In this paper I shall attempt to discuss the basic principles of organisation preferred in Chinese writing as shown in a particular expository text of literary criticism.

2. The basic organisational principles specified in Chinese writing literature

Most Chinese scholars recognise, as English scholars do with English writing, that Chinese writing is constructed with a beginning-middle-end structure. For example, many Chinese writers, when discussing the organisation of writing, cite from an ancient Chinese critic the principle of ‘phoenix head, pig’s belly, and leopard’s tail’, which means a beautiful opening, an extensive body and a forceful ending (Yu, 1985:645 and Liu, 1985:148-149).

The basic organisational principles in Chinese writing are often described in terms of qǐ ‘beginning’, chéng ‘transition’, zhuan ‘turning’, hé ‘synthesis’, and jié end’ (Liu, 1985:165).

Qǐ is the beginning. There are various ways to begin an essay. Some of the major types include ‘opening the door and seeing the mountain’ (direct method), ‘pulling up the headrope of a fishing net and opening the meshes’ (from generalisation to specific aspects), ‘entering the theme with a specific incident or a fable or a verse line’, etc. (Zhang, 1983:84-85).

Chéng means ‘transition’. In Chinese it may be realised by a paragraph, or a sentence, or a conjunction. What is most interesting here is the technique called ‘the hidden line’ (Yu, 1985:645). In expository writing, this means that a point, which is to become the centre of later discussion, is first touched upon explicitly or implicitly in the course of discussion, as if it were to lie in ambush only to emerge when the time came. This is a cohesive link to contribute to making the piece of discourse an interwoven whole.

Zhuan ‘turn’ is a much emphasised aspect of organisation. Yu’s assertion about the pattern of development is suggestive. He comments that Chinese writing favours the pattern of ‘a winding track in the mountains’. In other words, good writing should reflect the complex
nature of life, and therefore, ‘wén sì kàn shān bù xǐ píng’ (Writing is like enjoying the view of mountains; flatness is not appreciated). Instead it should be full of twists and turns and ups and downs (Yu, 1985: 646-648). This reminds us of Kaplan’s remarks on the Oriental (referring to Chinese and Korean) rhetorical patterns. Describing the thought patterns which English readers expect as ‘dominantly linear in its development’ (1972:10), he asserts:

‘Some Oriental writing ... is marked by what may be called an approach by indirection. In this kind of writing, the development of the paragraph may be said to be “turning and turning in a widening gyre”’ (op.cit.: 46).

Kaplan’s description does not exactly match Yu’s, but it is interesting that they both emphasise the turning pattern in Chinese writing.

He means ‘synthesis’. This is the part that winds up the discussion. Jié ‘the end’ refers to the concluding passage of the essay. There are two points to note here. First, hé does not occur only at the end of the text. It is also possible to have a summary in the middle of the text, as is shown in the discussion below. Second, hé and jié are not necessarily always separate parts; they may be one and the same thing, which may be properly called in English ‘conclusion’. In general, an essay may be concluded in the following ways: ‘winding up the whole text and bringing out the main theme’, ‘encouraging or urging the readers’, ‘being philosophical and plunging the readers into thinking’, ‘with delicate implied meaning which makes the readers enjoy it like savouring an olive’, or ‘with an abrupt ending like stopping a galloping horse’, etc. (Zhang, 1983:86).

These basic principles of organisation may be realised in many different ways. Specific techniques for organizing whole texts are detailed in Chinese writing literature (Liu, 1985; Liang, 1986; Yu, 1985; Zhang, 1983). It will suffice to mention just a few:

1) ‘painting the dragon and then dotting the eyes’ (bringing out the salient point, usually at the end of the essay);
2) ‘layers of clouds and hilltops’ (accumulation, usually for the development of argument);
3) ‘pulling up the silk from a single cocoon’ (following a single theme).

3. The Text
The text to be considered is an article from a Chinese national paper for an intellectual readership. Guangming Ribao (‘The Guangming Daily’) of May 29, 1986 contains the article Xiànxùn Xínlíng de Aòmì: shì tái Shèn Róng xiǎoshuō yīshì yìchǐ tu-pò (Revealing the Secret of the Soul: the breakthrough of Sheng Rong’s novel in art’) by a Chinese literary critic He Huoren. The appendix contains the original text in Pinyin, the official romanised form, with both word-for-word and free English translation.

The novella Rén Dào Zhōng Nián (‘At Middle Age’) depicts the life of a Chinese woman oculist, who dedicated herself selflessly to her work despite the unjust treatment she was given during the Cultural revolution. The main concern of He’s article is what he believes to be the stream of consciousness technique employed in the novella and its contribution to the development of the central theme of the story. The article argues that the technique is successful in the novella despite the fact that many previous attempts to use it in Chinese literature have failed and have been widely criticised. The reason for its success in this instance is that it is integrated with Chinese literary tradition and that it has special effects in revealing the spiritual quality of characters. Other merits are also discussed with all these being said to make it a breakthrough. The article concludes by pointing out that a
breakthrough requires artistic and ideological attainments on the part of the novelist. The novelist’s further success is anticipated.

4. Discussion
The discussion will take the systemic model of language as the basis for analysis. The text is to be analysed in terms of the linguistic properties which constitute it. Some of the main properties include lexical cohesion, conjunction, thematic structure, and schematic structure (Martin, 1985:85).

4.1 Schematic Structure
Schematic structure refers to the beginning-middle-end structure of texts (Martin, 1985:86). ‘The exact nature of this organisation depends on genre’ (Martin, 1985:86). According to Martin, expository texts consist of an Introduction, Arguments and a Conclusion. Using this model, the schematic structure of the text is presented in Figure 1 below:

It should be noted that the schematic structure of the text does not always correspond to its paragraph division. For instance, Argument I takes three of the seven paragraphs. On the other hand, the last paragraph contains both Argument 4 and the Conclusion. At the lower level of sub-arguments, the division is even more varied. Some are as long as a paragraph; others can be only a few sentences or a single sentence. This phenomenon indicates that there may be no reliable formal markers for the description of the schematic structure of a text.

A further point that attracts our attention is the structure of the ending paragraph. In this paragraph, there are three layers of meaning identified: (1) successes in aspects other than the technique of stream of consciousness; (2) the significance of artistic and ideological attainments in literary creation; and (3) anticipation for more success by the author. Complication arises with the structural role of the first layer. We have emphasised its semantic relations with other parts of the text. From such a point of view, this layer is regarded as the continuation of the Argument, constituting Argument 4. However, if the paragraph division is given greater weight in considering the schematic structure, the first layer can also be considered to be part of the conclusion. In other words, up to Paragraph 6, the Argument is completed, and the article is ready to conclude. However, owing to the special nature of the conclusion the writer wishes to draw (to raise the issue to a higher level of idealisation), some remarks on the novella’s merits other than the technique of stream of consciousness are required to pave the way for the conclusion. This interpretation, it seems to me, has the tendency to belittle the status of this passage in the whole of the text, and hence the other interpretation is preferred.

Now the questions to ask are: How are qǐ ‘beginning’, chéng ‘transition’, zhuǎn ‘turning’, hé ‘synthesis’ and jié ‘end’ realised in the text? What particular features does the text show in its organisation? To answer these questions, it is necessary to look into each part of the text.
FIGURE 1.

SCHEMATIC STRUCTURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARA. NO.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction Thesis (a question): What is Shen Rong’s breakthrough?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument: Argument 1 Breakthrough in technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a The technique is unusual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b The technique is identified as ‘stream of consciousness’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Previous use of this technique was criticised in China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d Shen Rong internalises the technique in her novel and succeeds in creating an artistic world that allows the reader to see the characters’ soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument 2 Success of novella in revealing soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a It is important to reveal the soul in literary work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b Revealing the soul is part of the Chinese literary tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c The technique of stream of consciousness has special strength in revealing the soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d The success of the novella is due to its effort to bring together Chinese tradition and western technique for revealing the soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument 3 Skilful use of the technique in harmony with Chinese aesthetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument 4 More than breakthrough in technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a Social significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b Its characterisation adds new figures to Chinese literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Its tone, organisation, plot, and language are praise-worthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion: Step 1 Significance of artistic and ideological foundation in making breakthrough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2 Belief in new breakthrough by the novelist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 The beginning

The beginning of the text is fairly short and direct; it ‘opens the door and sees the mountain’. Firstly, the particular novella and its author are pinned down immediately in the opening sentence. Secondly, the thesis, namely that a breakthrough is achieved in the work, is hinted upon through the words ‘rose to fame’. Similar ideas recur in the second and the third sentences, keeping the line running through: ‘attracted much attention’, ‘make such an impact’ and ‘popularity’. Finally, the thesis is stated as a question to end the Introduction.

The most interesting characteristic of the opening lies in the zig-zag course through which the thesis is arrived at. The opening sentence states a fact about Sheng Rong:¹

It is generally known that Shen Rong rose to fame through her novella At Middle Age. This is then countered by a statement introduced by the concessive qǐshí in fact’:

In fact, she had previously published two novels totalling 600,000 words, and a 100,000 word novella entitled Young for Ever - all had attracted much attention.

The first point is returned to with the concessive rán’èr ‘however’, which, in effect, ‘contradicts’ the previous contradiction:

However, it is At Middle Age, a novella published shortly after Young for Ever, which made such an impact throughout the country and gained her popularity overnight.

¹ Wherever possible, the text is quoted in the form of free translation for better readability.
The thesis of the article is then stated as a question or problem that requires investigation:

In what way, then, has that novella made an artistic breakthrough? The logical development in the opening paragraph seems to illustrate well how concessive conjunctions contribute to a turning pattern. The thesis has, in fact, been ‘generated’ by the counter-posing of statements based on two concessives. This method of developing an argument seems well described by Yu’s prescriptions (quoted above p.646-648) that good writing is like enjoying the view of mountains; flatness is not appreciated.

4.3 The middle

After the Thesis is stated, the Arguments begin. To make this development natural, transition, chēng, is needed. The second paragraph begins like this,

When we read *At Middle Age*, we feel that it is unusual and indeed unique...

It is obvious that the technique used here is the repeated reference to the idea contained in the thesis, but in a different form. This transition serves to connect what has gone previously and prepares the way for what is to follow (in Chinese we describe this as chéng shàng qì xià link-up-start-down’).

The same technique but with different features is also used between Arguments. For example, the ending words of Argument 1 are: ‘[a novella] which is able to reveal to the readers the very depth of her various characters’ souls’. Argument 2 takes up this cue and starts the theme of Soul. However, the transition here seems more subtle and there is a stronger sense of deliberateness on the part of the writer, natural as it is. The transition between Arguments 2 and 3 is realised in a similar manner.

This technique may be examined in relation to the pattern of lexical cohesion. The lexical items can be identified in strings according to the associations people make between them. The kinds of associations possible are taxonomic (a rose is a flower is a plant), or collocational, for example, ‘dark’ and ‘night’ or ‘husband’ and ‘marriage’ (Martin, 1985:85). Analysis of the main lexical strings in the text shows that they relate to the following ideas:

- literary criticism technique: stream of consciousness
- the text soul
- the novelist and what she does national tradition: poetic conception
- the characters and what they do the reader
- breakthrough

For example, the introduction to the Chinese article contains the major strings shown in Fig. 2:² If we consider the distribution of such lexical strings throughout the text, we find that some of them show a feature of structural significance, that is, they not only contribute to the cohesion of the text as pointed out by Halliday and Hasan (1976) but also to the way the text is organised. Figure 3 below demonstrates how this happens with the strings of breakthrough, ‘technique’, ‘soul’ and ‘national tradition’.

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² The lexical items are given in the form of word-for-word translation.
First of all, we find that the string ‘breakthrough’ is the most significant of all: it is contained in all the paragraphs except Paragraph 3 and constitutes a major string in most of the paragraphs. This seems to point to the fact that the text is organised around the idea of ‘breakthrough’. What is more interesting with regard to the distribution of the lexical strings, however, is that here we see the technique in Chinese writing called ‘the hidden line’ at work. As has been discussed earlier, in this technique, an idea or topic is hinted upon when another is in focus; it gradually shades into the discussion and becomes the major concern; and then it fades away into what follows. Take ‘soul’ for example, Paragraphs 2-4 are concerned with the specific technique adopted in the novella, the stream of consciousness. However, within the discussion, ‘revealing soul’ is twice mentioned as part of the achievement the technique makes. Of particular importance is the second mention of ‘soul’ which comes at the end of Paragraph 4: it becomes a natural transition from the discussion of ‘technique’ in these paragraphs to the treatment of ‘soul’ in Paragraph 5. Just as ‘technique’ recurs in Paragraphs 5, 6, and 7, ‘soul’ is again mentioned in Paragraph 6. The same happens with ‘national tradition’. Here, we find a pattern comparable to the spectrum of the rainbow: there is not a clear-cut line between two colours; one colour shades into its adjacent elements. This technique serves to make the text transit naturally from one argument to another to form an interwoven whole, or ‘tiān yī wú fèng’ ‘like heavenly clothing, there is no seam’.
Hidden lines of this kind, it seems, give the text a wave-like pattern, with the major themes gradually emerging, developing fully and then shading into the next. Paragraph 6, for example, constitutes the main body of the ‘wave’ of national tradition. The ‘wave’ begins in Paragraph 5 with Clause 25:

The writers in our country have, over the centuries, gained rich experiences in language, actions, expressions, and the situational context in which they act.

As the ‘wave’ of soul ebbs away, the ‘wave’ of national tradition develops into ‘the writer’s attempt to draw on and merge the cream of both the Chinese literary tradition and the western literary technique’ in Clause 27. Paragraph 6 takes over the line of merging national tradition with foreign techniques, and eventually makes national tradition the central argument:

...but it [learning from other literary traditions] should be done with creativity and it has to take its roots in our national cultural soil. The originality and unusualness of the technique used in *At Middle Age* and yet its perfect harmony with the aesthetic tradition of the Chinese readers, it is argued, derive from the author’s quest in this regard.

After this argument is illustrated in terms of the national poetic conception found in the novella, the ‘wave’ ebbs away into a summary of the technique of ‘stream of consciousness’ in the novella.

The wave-like pattern is further strengthened by another interesting curvature in the text, shown in the Thematic structure. ‘The Theme’, according to Halliday (1985:38), ‘is the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that with which the clause is concerned.’ In Chinese, as in English, this element is indicated by its beginning position in the clause (Li and Tompson, 1974; Tsao, 1977). Since a free translation may alter the thematic structure of a clause, literary translation of the Chinese text is used in the discussion to follow (specifically Figures 4, 5).

The thematic structure of the text shows what may be called a general-to-specific development within each argument.3 A paragraph is often developed from a Theme that is more general or peripheral in nature. In Figure 4 the opening sentences of some of the paragraphs demonstrate clearly the way paragraphs in the Chinese text start.

**FIGURE 4.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARAGRAPH NO.</th>
<th>OPENING SENTENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Everybody that all know, (It is generally known)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>We read <em>Man to Middle Age</em>, ([When] we read the novel <em>At Middle Age,</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>People often say, writer is human soul’s engineer. (It is often held, that writers are engineers of Man’s soul.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>This gave us one important revelation: (This provides us with an enlightening insight:)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Writer not is craftsman, artistic creation also not equal to craftsmanship. (A writer is not a craftsman, nor is literary creation handicraft.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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3
From such general or peripheral statements, the argument develops gradually to the more specific Themes closely related to the thesis. Take Paragraph 5 as an example. The Themes and the Rhemes contained in it are presented in Figure 5 below.

**FIGURE 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CL. NO.</th>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>RHUME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>People often say, writer is human soul’s engineer.</td>
<td>(It is often held, that writers are engineers of Man’s soul.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Here so-called soul,</td>
<td>I think should include writer’s soul, work inside character’s soul and reader’s soul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Having experience’s writer</td>
<td>often very good at catching this three element between MOD4 meeting point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>This way, the reader</td>
<td>only can through own soul’s window, see writer and work inside character soul’s secret, make self soul receive shock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Standhal</td>
<td>once call self is “human soul’s observer”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Chernyshevsky</td>
<td>think Leo Tolstoy in creation most feel interest is “soul’s dialectics”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Old Tolstoy self</td>
<td>also say: ‘Art is microscope. Artist let it aim at self soul’s secret, to people show out for everyone is common secret.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Undoubtedly, writer</td>
<td>want be able to fully show soul’s secret, not can not rely brilliant artistic expressive device.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Our nation successive dynasty writer</td>
<td>through character’s language, action, expression, through environment atmosphere’s set-off etc. technique, come show character’s thought, feeling and personality, accumulated rich experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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4 MOD stands for modifier, signifying that the previous phrase modifies what follows. In this case, the phrase reads “the meeting point of these three elements.”
Meanwhile, also should see in showing character’s thought feeling, and psychological activity description inside MOD ‘consciousness stream’ technique (Here, it should be noted that the technique of the stream of consciousness has its merits and special effects in depicting the mind, feelings and personalities of the characters in general, and in identifying the meeting point of the souls of the writer, the characters and the readers in particular.)

27 Man to Middle Age artistic expression’s success exactly lie in writer absorbed Chinese (and) foreign literary creation technique’s cream, melt into one furnace, keen create new, achieved out- unusual-gain-victory’s artistic effect. (The success of At Middle Age lies precisely in the writer’s attempt to draw on and merge the cream of both the Chinese literary tradition and the western literary technique. Her efforts have achieved unusual aesthetic effect.)

Here, the indirection of the thematic development is self-evident. Although the Themes of ‘writer’, ‘soul’, ‘reader’, and ‘stream of consciousness’ are not irrelevant to the discussion, they are all mentioned in general terms. It is not until the last Theme in Clause 27 that the specific concern of the article comes into focus. Indirection in Chinese writing has been discussed by both Kaplan (1972) and Matalene (1985). However, Kaplan, while looking into the macrostructure, bases his observation on intuition. Matalene, on the other hand, argues with examples, but what she is concerned with seems to be only the use of illocutionary speech acts and allusions. With detailed formal evidence, the analysis of At Middle Age demonstrates how indirection also works at the level of thematic structure.

As has been mentioned, Paragraph 6 ends with a summary. Here hé ‘synthesis’ is at work. But it is only the summary of the first three arguments; it is not yet the synthesis of the whole text. The function of this local summary is to prepare for the ‘turn’ in Paragraph 7. There are two major ‘turns’ in the development of the Argument. The first is seen at the beginning of Paragraph 4. Before considering Shen Rong’s success in applying the technique of stream of consciousness, the article takes a look at the criticism of this technique in the past, which serves to set off Shen Rong’s achievement by contrast. This, we may call a turn in the time perspective. The second occurs at the beginning of the last paragraph, when the article announces: ‘A writer is not a craftsman; nor is literary creation handicraft. It would be mistaken or at least superficial to regard the achievement of At Middle Age as nothing more than a breakthrough in the technique of expression.’ This, we may call a turn in the dimension of discussion, which leads to the discussion of the novella’s social significance, characterisation, plot, and language, etc.

It is important to note, however, that the second turn does not simply function as a balance as it may seem at the first sight. The discussion about social significance (its courageous and truthful depiction of social realities) and characterisation (a devoted intellectual who has gone through the thick and thin of life and a “Marxist-Leninist old lady”) is an effort to pave the way for the final distillation of the arguments, which is to come in the Conclusion. In fact, this discussion is so closely connected with the Conclusion that there is no paragraph division between them. It is even possible to consider it as a part of the Conclusion (see 4.1).
4.4 The end
The Conclusion in the text is double-layered. The first layer of conclusion is drawn on the basis of previous discussions. But, unlike that in the previous paragraph, it is not a simple summary; it is done at a higher level and from a new perspective. The juxtaposition of the ‘artistic’ and ‘ideological’ prerequisites for literary achievements makes the conclusion a ‘distilled’ synthesis, a macrostructural hé which serves to round up the various aspects of the Argument by bringing out the salient points: a technique called ‘painting the dragon and then dotting the eyes’.

At the second layer, the Chinese text shows a very interesting feature: while still staying on the topic by also referring right back to the Introduction, it is realised as a remark expressing the critic’s expectation, in the name of ‘we’. The critic’s effort to identify himself with the novelist is most clearly shown here. This is a feature not to be overlooked because it is surprising how often a jié end’ similar to this is used by Chinese critics: in a recent issue of Wényì Bāo (Art Weekly), 2 Out of the 5 articles on the literary criticism section end with similar expressions of the critic’s expectations (Wenyi Bao 1986, Dec. 20, p.2).

5. Conclusion
The main organisational features of the text may be summarised as follows:

a. The opening (qǐ) of the text is fairly direct, with an attempt to make it a ‘phoenix head’ which is small in size and delicate in shape. Its smallness is seen in its length and its delicacy in its turning pattern of thesis generation.

b. The main feature of its transition (chéng) is manifested in the hidden line. Cues for emerging idea are installed in such a way that they are contained in the very end of the previous paragraph, so that they can be naturally picked up and developed.

c. Apart from the zig-zag pattern in the ‘opening’, there are two more major turns (zhuàn): one in time perspective (a historical retrospection occurring in Paragraph 4); the other at the beginning of Paragraph 7 changing the discussion from pondering upon one single aspect of the novel to taking a more holistic look.

d. Hé ‘synthesis’ plays different roles in different places. A provisional summary occurs after the breakthrough in the use of the stream-of-consciousness technique is discussed; without it, the macro-structural turn in Paragraph 7 is impossible. The global synthesis is the main part of the Conclusion; it raises the discussion to a new level by bringing out the salient point: a breakthrough requires both artistic attainments and ideological cultivation.

e. The ending sentence makes an end (jié) of its own right. It is an exhortation which brings the time dimension to the future.

Matalene (1985) describes the ‘standard pattern’ of Chinese persuasive writing, which she finds in her students’ essays and China Daily (an English language newspaper) articles, as containing

‘an opening description of a specific incident, a look back at the usually unfortunate history of the issue or practice, an explanation of the current much improved state of affairs, and a concluding moral exhortation.’
(Matalene, 1985:800).

Her description is interesting. It seems no coincidence that a historical look-back and a certain form of exhortation are also found in our sample text. Nevertheless, such a description seems to be over-general. The ‘standard pattern’ she describes seems to mainly pertain to
discussions of contemporary social problems of a specific kind. Most likely, for example, they are arguments to the effect that things are much better today than in the past. Texts of a different nature may not follow such a four-part organisation.

In general, it seems more enlightening to describe the organisational features of a text in terms of qǐ ‘beginning’, chéng ‘transition’, zhuǎn ‘turning’, hé ‘synthesis’, and jié ‘end’. Furthermore, while every one of these is interesting, the defining feature seems to be the emphasis on the ups and downs, twists and turns, of the argumentative development. Viewed from such a perspective, Matalene’s texts are characterised by the contrasts made in their argument: a ‘down’ in belittling the past (a look-back at the usually unfortunate history of the issue), an ‘up’ in enhancing the present (an explanation of the current much improved state of affairs), and by the turns in the time perspective: present-past-present. So is the case with the text under consideration. Its central feature seems to be the waxing and waning of ideas as well as the turns in the opening paragraph, the historical look-back, and the change in dimension before the conclusion.

Contrastive studies have shown that there are discernible features in some foreign/second language learners’ writing which native readers may find distinctive from their own, and that such features may be attributed to discourse patterns preferred in the learners’ culture. There are, for example, Connor and McCagg’s (1987) study of the different discourse patterns preferred by English, Japanese and Spanish students in their recall performance of an English expository prose, Jekins and Hind’s (1987) study of the differences in English, French and Japanese business letter writing, Egginton’s (1987) study of the written academic discourse in Korean, and Ostler’s (1987) comparison of English and Arabic prose. With special reference to writing by Chinese students, Kaplan (1972) and Matalene (1985) have made some interesting comments. From my own experience, I feel that I have to agree with many native speakers of English teaching in China when they comment that the Chinese students of English often write ‘Chinglish’ instead of English. Of the many factors that constitute the Chineseness of the students’ writing, I believe, that of the discourse patterning preferred in Chinese writing is one of the most important. However, as Mohan and Lo (1985:520) point out, a conclusive answer about the nature of the special features shown in L2 learners’ writing demands, apart from anything else, a good understanding of the specific discourse patterns favoured by a particular culture. With a view to contribute to such an understanding, this paper has discussed the organisation of a Chinese text in terms of the basic Chinese discourse pattern of qǐ-chéng-zhuǎn-hé-jié. Any conclusion drawn from such a limited study of one text can only be tentative. However, it seems reasonable to hope that this study may promote our understanding of the special features of the Chinese discourse and throw light on defining the difficulties that Chinese students of foreign languages have.
References


APPENDIX

THEMATIC STRUCTURE OF

Xiǎnxiàn Xīnǐng de Aòmì
Revealing soul POSS* secret

Revealing the Secret of the Soul: a breakthrough in art in Shen Rong’s novel.

1 Zhòng suǒ zhōu zhǐ, Shēn Róng shì yǐ chuàngzhuò
Everybody that all know, Shen Rong is by creating
zhōngpían xiǎoshuō Rén dào Zhōng Nián ěr fēishēng wéntán de.
medium-length novel Man to Middle Age therefore fame literary arena PART.

It is generally known that Shen Rong rose to fame through her novella At Middle Age.

2 Qǐshì, zài cǐ zhǔqiān, tā yǐ chūbān le, gòngjì hùshì duō wàn zì
In fact, at this before, she already publish PASP, total 60 more ten-thousand words
de liáng bù chángpían, fābiāo le yǐn-rén-zhùmù de
REL. two volume long-piece, publish PASP cause-man-fix-eye REL.
shí duo wàn zì de zhōngpían Yǒngyuǎn shì Chūn tiān.
10 more ten-thousand words MOD medium-length For Ever Is Spring.

In fact, she had previously published two novels totaling 600,000 words, and a 100,000
word novella entitled Young for Ever--- all had attracted much attention.

3 Rán’ér, bìng jīng shì jì Yǒngyuǎn shì Chūn tiān zhǔhòu bù jǔ wènshì de
However, after all is following For Ever Is Spring after not long appear REL
Rén Dào Zhōng Nián, gè wèi yǐnqǐ hōngdòng, shǐ tā yījūchéngrìng.
Man to Middle Age, especially cause sensation, made her one-stroke-become-famous.

However, it is At Middle Age, a novella published shortly after Young for Ever which
made such an impact throughout the country and gained her popularity overnight.

4 Nǎmò, zhè piàn xiǎoshuō de chuàngzuò zài yǐshū-shāng
Then, this piece novel POSS creation in art-aspect
dào de yǒu shénmò tūpò ne?
after all have what breakthrough QUES?

In what way, then, has that novella made an artistic breakthrough?

5 Wǒmen yuèdú Rén dào Zhōng Nián,
We read Man to Middle Age,
5b diquè gǎncǎo feicháng xīnyǐng, dúè, bù-tóng-fán-xiǎng,

* Abbreviations:
ADVP Adverbial particle IASP Inchoative aspect PASP Perfective aspect
CL Classifier MOD Modifier POSS Possessive
DASP Durative aspect PART Particle QUES Question marker
REL Relative marker
9 Bú nán kànchū, zuòzhè zài zhè piàn xiǎoshuò de chuàngzuò-zhōng.
Not difficult see, writer in this piece novel POSS creation-inside,
dápò le wò guó xiǎoshuò an rénwù huódòng

děng féi yǐn xíng, yījìng, yù-lik-common-sound,
Indeed feel very fresh, unique, not-like-common-sound,
When we read At Middle Age, we feel that it is unusual and indeed unique;

6 qízhòng hén zhòngyào yì diàn jiù shì nà zhòng
in it very important one point just is that kind
“diàndiàn-dàdìáo, xūxū-shǐshí” de xièfā.
“reversed, unreality-reality” MOD writing method.
what strikes us most is the technique of inverting the narrative order and the mixture of reality and unreality.

7 Xiǎoshuò kǎipiān jiù bù yāngwò zài chuàng-shàng de chū yú bīng wèi hūnmí
Novel opening right let lying in bed-on REL staying in illness severe coma
zhúntái zhòng de yànkō nǔdāfū Ú Wěntīng tū dào wòmèn miǎnqián,
state-inside REL eye woman-doctor Lu Wenting push to our front,
yīxià jīn jǔzhí wòmèn de xīn.
at once tightly grasp-PASP we POSS heart.
The story begins with Dr. Lu Wenting, an oculist, lying unconscious in hospital ward, a situation that immediately plunges us into anxiety and concern.

8 Ránhòu, zuòzhè tōngguò Ú Wěntīng hūnmí-zhōng de yǐshī huódòng.
Then, writer through Lu Wenting coma-inside REL mental activity,
tōngguò zài bǐngfāng huò tān wàng tā de qīn rèn, méngyǒu, tōngshí, lǐngdào de
through in ward attending or seeing her REL relative, friend, colleague, leader POSS
yǎntān, jùzhí, biǎoqíng yǔ húiyì, cóng bùqūng cǎi mǎn hé jiào dū,
words, behavior, facial-expression and recollection, from different perspective and angle,
jīuáng Ú dùfū dàidìái shìyè, gōngzuò, diàochéng de jiāng de lǎidū yú gān qíng,
let Lu doctor treating career, work, love and family REL attitude and feeling,
jīuáng tā shènghuó jīnglì-zhòng zài dònggrénde bùfèn, yī zhúang zhuàng, yì jiàn jiàn,
let her life experience-inside most moving part, one event event, one piece piece,
yī gé huámiăn yī gé huámiăn de biǎoxiǎn chūlái,
one CL picture one CL picture ADVP show out,

8b sī dūzhī qǐngxié kǎndào Ú Wěntīng fèngmàn de jīngshén shìjié de shāngwúang.
make reader clearly see Lu Wenting full spiritual world POSS brilliance.

. Then, the author, through the description of Dr. Lu’s dreamy thoughts in her stupor, and the reactions and recollections of her relatives, friends, colleagues and leaders, depicts from different angles the various aspects of her life: her feelings and attitudes towards work, love and the family, and one by one the touching events she has gone through are presented. In this description the reader is presented with a clear picture of the richness and the splendour of Lu Wenting’s spiritual self.

9 Bú nán kànchū, zuòzhè zài zhè piàn xiǎoshuò de chuàngzuò-zhōng.
Not difficult see, writer in this piece novel POSS creation-inside,
It is not difficult to see, that in the writing of this novella, the author, has discarded the traditional approach of constructing the story in the chronological or spacial order of the protagonist's activities. Instead, the technique of writing she uses brings out not only the physical situation of the protagonist, but also her psychological activities such as recollections, associations, imaginations and illusions; the plot is constructed and the heroine is characterised in relation to her psychological activities.

Here, it is obvious, the author has exploited certain aspects of the western technique of the 'stream of consciousness'.

At first, Shen Rong felt uncertain about this approach, for fear that readers would find it difficult to accept.

Her worries were not without reason.
reverse-three-reverse-four, let people not know what said, greatly spoil appetite.

In fact there had been writers whose works gave the impression that the stream of consciousness was to flow randomly without rules, that it was most easy to practice, and that it was of such disorderly and bewildering quality that it ultimately spoiled the reader’s interest.

15 Nàmò, weishénmò Rén dào Zhòng Nián lì ‘diǎndiǎn-dàdào, xūxū-shǐshí’ de Then, why Man to Middle Age inside ‘reversed, unreality-reality’ MOD xièfǎ, bù jǐn ràng dúzhě ‘wánquán kēyǐ jiēshòu’ ěrqí shǐ rén gǎndào writing-method, not only let reader ‘completely can accept’, also make people feel nàyàng qǐnqì, zírán, pǔshí, nàyàng xǐnxǐn dōngrén, so familiar, natural, unsophisticated, so fresh moving, bie-kāi-shěng-miàn ne? specially-open-unfamiliar-aspect QUES?

Why, then, the success of At Middle Age in which the events are arranged in this flashback form and yet present something the readers find ‘completely acceptable’, and even make the readers feel that it is familiar, natural, unsophisticated, moving, and nevertheless unusual?

16 Kǎnlái, guānjùàn zài yú zuòzhě jiējiān ‘yǐshí’ liú shǒufa bù shì Seem, key lie in writer borrowing ‘consciousness stream’ technique not is shèng-tūn-huò-bō xué qǐ pí maó, ěr shì jīngguò le raw-swallowing-alive-skinning learn its fur hair, but is undergo PASP zǔjué hé xiāohuà, chewing and digesting.

16b yǐncǐ yùnyòng qǐlái nàyàng dé-xīn-yìng-shǒu, tiān-yī-wú-fèng, so use IASP so get-heart-correspond-hand, heaven-clothing-no-seam, nàyàng dàdān, qiǎomíào hé fù yǔ chuàngzào xìng, so bravely, clever and rich in originality,

16c cóng ěr shǐ zhè piàn xiǎoshuō chuàngzào chū yì gè shēnsú de yǐshì yìyǐng, thus make this piece novel create out one CL profound artistic conception,

16d kāipí le yǐ piàn mírènde yǐshù tiǎndì, open PASP one CL fascinating artistic world,

16e ràng dúzhě chóngfèn de kūjìqiàndào qízhōng let reader fully see in it huódòng zhòu de gězhōng rénwù de xīnǐng de àomí, acting DASP REL various character POSS spirit POSS secret.

It seems the secret lies in the fact that the writer, in drawing on the stream of consciousness, is not content to imitate it superficially; she has instead internalised it to make it part of her own art. Therefore, she is able to apply it with such daring, perfection, and originality as to produce a novella of profundity and power, which is able to reveal to the readers the very depth of her various characters’ souls.
17 Renmen chang shuo, zuoji shi renlei linghun de gongchengshi
People often say, writer is human soul MOD engineer.
*It is often held, that writers are engineers of Man's soul.*

18 Zheyi suowei jinghun, wo yiwei yingdang baokuo zuojia de jinghun,
Here so-called soul, I think should include writer's soul,
zuopinzhong renwu de jinghun he duzhe de jinghun.
work-inside character POSS soul and reader POSS soul.
_The 'soul' here, it seems to me, should encompass the soul of the writer, of the characters created in his work, and of the readers._

19 You jingyan de zuojia wangwang hen shan yu puzaohuo
Having experience REL writer often very good at catching
zhe san zhe zhijian de jihedian.
this three element between MOD meeting point.
_An experienced writer would be an expert at locating the point where the souls of the above three come to be engaged._

20 Zheyang duzhe cai neng tongguo zijide xinling de chuankou, dongcha zuojia
This way, reader only can through own soul POSS window, see writer
he zuopinzhong renwu xinling de mimu, shi zi jixinling shoudao zhendong.
and work-Inside character soul POSS secret, make self soul receive shock.
_Only when this is so, can the reader, through his own mind's eye, perceive the secret parts of the souls of the writer and his characters, and often with a jolt, come to a discovery of his own._

21 Shangda ceng ziji shi 'renlei xinling de guanziaye'.
Stendhal once call self is 'human soul MOD observer'.
_Standahl said once that he was 'an observer of man's soul'.

22 Cheerniuhefujia renweili Liefu Touershai
Chernyshevskiy think Lev Tolstoy
zai chuangzuo zhong zui gan xingqu de shi "xinling de bianzhenfag".
in creation-inside most feel interest REL is 'soul POSS dialectics'.
_Chernyshevskiy remarked that what Leo Tolstoy was most interested in was the 'dialectics of the soul'.

23 Laotouershai zijyi yeshuo: "Yishu shi xianwe-jiing. Yishujia ba ta dui zhun
Old Tolstoy self also say: "Art is microscope. Artist let it aim DASP
ziji xinling de aomi, xiang renmen xianshi chu duiyu da jia shi gongtong de mimu".
self soul POSS secret, to people show out for everyone is common REL secret".
_Tolstoy himself also said that 'art is a microscope, which the artist directs at the secret of his own soul, and uses to bring to light the secrets that we all share'._
24 Wúyí zuòjǐa yào nèng chōngfèn xiǎnxìan xīnǐng de àomì, Undoubtedly writer want be-able-to fully show soul POSS secret,
not can not rely brilliant artistic presentation device.
Doubtless, the writer, if he is to reveal the secrets of the soul, has to depend on outstanding techniques of artistic representation.

25 Wǒ guó lì dài zuòjǐa tōngguò rénwù de yǔyán, dōngzuò, biǎoqíng, Our nation successive dynasty writer through character POSS language, action, expression, tōngguò huánjìng qìfèn de hōngtuō dēng shǒuà, lái biǎoxiān through environment atmosphere MOD set-off etc. technique, to show rénwù de sǐxiǎng, gǎnqíng hé xǐnggé, jūlèi le fēngfúde jīngyàn. character POSS thought, feeling and personality, accumulate PASP rich experience.
The writers in our country have, over the centuries, gained rich experiences in depicting the mind, the feelings and personalities of the characters, through their language, actions, expressions, and the situational context which they act.

26 Tōngshì, yě yīngdàng kǎndào, xǐnǐ huòdòng miǎoxiě zhōng de Meanwhile, also should see, psychological activity description inside MOD yǐshì liú shòuá zài biǎoxiān rénwù de sǐxiǎng, gǎnqíng, 'consciousness stream' technique in showing character POSS thought, feeling, hé xǐnggé fāngmiàn, tèbiè shì zài tānsù zuōjǐa, rénwù hé dúzhě and personality respect, especially is in exploring writer, character and reader xīnǐng de jīhè diǎn shāng, quēshì yǒu zhuō xǔduó chāngchù hé tèshū gōngxiào. soul POSS meeting point on, indeed have DSP many merit and special effect.
Here, it should be noted that the technique of the stream of consciousness has its merits and special effects in depicting the mind, feelings and personalities of the characters in general, and in identifying the meeting point of the souls of the writer, the characters and the readers in particular.

27 Rèn dào Zhōng Níng yǐshì biǎoxiān de chénggōng, zhèng zài yú zuòzhě Man to Middle Age artistic presentation MOD success, exactly lie in writer xiǎqū le zhōng wài wénxué chuàngzuò jǐqiáo de jǐngsū, róng wéi yī lǐ, absorb PASP Chinese foreign literary creation technique POSS cream, melt into one furnace, rúyì chuàng xīn, qūdé le chū-qi-zhī-shèng de yǐshì xiàoguǒ. keen create new, achieve PASP out-unusual-gain-victory MOD artistic effect.
The success of At Middle Age lies precisely in the writer's attempt to draw on and merge the cream of both the Chinese literary tradition and the western literary technique. Her efforts have achieved unusual aesthetic effect.

28 Zhè gěi le wǒmén yī gè zhòngyàode qīshì: wénxué chuàngzuò de tūpò, This gave PASP us one CL important revelation: literary creation MOD breakthrough
Gui zai shan yu xishou he duchuang, erqi bixu precious in good at absorption and originality, also must
shenshen zha gen yu women minzu de turang zhi zhong deeply take root in our nation POSS soil POSS inside.

This provides us with an enlightening insight: to achieve a breakthrough in literary creation, it is important to learn from other literary traditions, but it should be done with creativity and it has to take its roots in our national cultural soil.

29 Ren dao Zhong Ni de xiefa qiao er qi, Man to Middle Age POSS writing-method clever also unusual,
rang ren er-mu-yi-xin, you feichang shihuo wo guo guangda duzhe de make people ear-eye-completely-fresh, also very suit our nation massive reader POSS shenmei xinli xiguans, yinggai shou yu zuoze de zhe yi yishu aesthetic psychological habit, should say to writer POSS this one artistic zhuiqiu hen you guanxi.
quest very have relation.

The originality and unusualness of the technique used in At Middle Age and yet its perfect harmony with the aesthetic tradition of the Chinese readers, it is argued, derive from the author's quest in this regard.

30 Womenn gandao, xiaoshuo-zhong yunhan zhuo zuzhe qiangliede minzu shimen yiishi, We feel, novel-inside contain DASP writer strong national poetic conception,
er you yu "yishi liu" shoufa ziran ronghe, yet also with "consciousness stream" technique naturally merge,
si renwu xinling shenceng de guangcai shanyao le chuailai. make character soul depth POSS splendour shine PASP out.

We find that in the novella there is a strong consciousness of our national aesthetic awareness on the part of the writer, which is nevertheless in natural harmony with the technique of stream of consciousness. And working together they contribute to the very boring of the souls of her characters.

31 Lu wenjing de qingcao, pingci qizhu yu ta yu Fu Jiajie de aiqing. Lu wenting POSS sentiment,morality, temperament and she and Fu Jiajie POSS love,
queshi shi yi shouyoumeide shi, indeed is a CL beautiful poem,

Lu Wenjing's sentiments, characters, dispositions, and her love for Fu Jiajie indeed compose a poetry of exquisit beauty,

32 Zuopinzhong na fan shuxian de Beiduo de shiju he Beihai xue jing, Work-inside that repeatedly appearing REL Petofi POSS verse-line and Beihai snow scene,
shifen tieqi jie hongtuochu zhe zongyoumide shide yijing, very appropriately set-off out this kind beautiful poetic conception.
and the recurrent quotes from Petofi together with descriptions of the scenery of Beihai Park in snow, set off with perfection the poetic conception contained in the novella.

33 Xiǎoshūō kāitòu de jīngcái, yě zài yú tǔ shì jiāng rénwù yìshì de liúdòng Novel opening POSS brilliance, also lie in it is to character consciousness POSS flow yòng fù yú shíyì de yùyán, use rich in poetical-conception REL language, shènzhī yòng xiǎngdàng jiàngjiùde dùizhǎng hé yǐnlù de kōngqiāng biǎoxiàn chūlái, even use quite sophisticated couplet and sound MOD resonance show out.

The merit of the opening episode lies precisely in the poetic language which is enhanced by a sophisticated rendering of parallelism and euphony.

34 Zuòzhě dùì jié yǔ jíe zhījiān de zhūānhuàn, Writer in chapter and chapter between MOD transition, dùì shòu wèi de zhàoyìng, dōu shì bié-chǔ-xīn-cái de. in beginning ending MOD coordination, all is specially-producing-mental-planning PART.

Moreover, the author also demonstrates originality in manipulating the transitions at different levels and the recurrence of theme at the beginning and the ending.

35 Zōngzhǐ, zhě piàn xiǎoshūō kàn sì chūchù yòu yìshì de liúdòng, In short, this piece novel look like everywhere have consciousness MOD flow,

35b èr yòu wúchù bù shì zuòzhě cóng chōngfèn xiǎnxiàn rénwù xīnlíng de yet also nowhere not is writer from adequately revealing character soul REL

xùyào chūfá, dùi yīshí huòdòng jīnxing jīngxuè qūlàn, jiànncái hé zhūāngzhì, need proceed, to mental activity conduct meticulous extraction, tailoring and installation,

In total, it appears that the stream of consciousness is everywhere throughout the work, and yet always tailored, refined and handled with meticulous care,

36 zhēn shì jīng-diào-xì-zhuó, really is precise-sculpture,

36b èr yòu wán-rú-tiān-chéng, yet also just-like-nature-creation.

resulting in an exquisite and at the same time natural piece of work.

37 Zuòjiā bù shì jiànggrén, Writer not is craftsman,

A writer is not a craftsman,

38 wényì chuàngzuò yě bù dēng yú shōuyì, artistic creation also not equal to craftsmanship.

nor is literary creation handicraft.

39 Rúguǒ yǐwèi Rén diào Zhōng Nián zài chuàngzuò-shàng de lúpò jiàn shì biāoxiàn If think Man to Middle Age in creation-aspect MODbreakthrough only is presentation
It would be mistaken or at least superficial to regard the achievement of At Middle Age as nothing more than a breakthrough in the technique of expression.

In fact, its merits are multi-fold.

It offers a daring and exact exploration in the social realities of the new era.

And the characterisation of Dr. Lu Wenting and the "Marxist Old Lady" Qin Bo has created literary figures who are widely representative, adding unique images to the gallery of Chinese contemporary literature.

The novella also features in its solemnity of tone.
48 Œr yòu jiānshí de sīxiàng, yìshù jīchù de zuòjiā.
And have solid ideological, artistic foundation REL writer,
xīngzài chuàngzuò shàng qūdé tūpò,
want at creation-aspect achieve breakthrough,
yòu bìxū shàn yú zhǎo dào ījīde tūpǒdiàn.
also must good at finding own breakthrough-point.
And a writer with such attainments must be adept at finding his own breakthrough point.

49 Shèn Róng zhèng shì zài "zhōngpiān xiǎoshū de jiéguò fāngshì"
Shen Róng precisely is in 'medium-length novel POSS organisational pattern'
jiéguò fāngshì shàng zhǎo dào le
organisational pattern aspect find PASP
shàng zhǎo dào le Rén dào Zhōng Nián de tūpǒkǒu.
aspect find PASP Man at Middle Age POSS breakthrough-point.
It is in the structural mode of the novella that Shen Róng has found her breakthrough point for At Middle Age.

50 Wòmèn shèn xīn, shènghuò jíèi fēngbào,
We deeply believe, life accumulation abundant,
fù yòu jǐngyàn hé cáihuà de zuòjiā Shèn Róng Tóngzhì,
richly have experience and talent REL writer Shen Róng Comrade,
zhèngzài yùnǎng zhǔo xiǎoshū chuàngzuò de xīn de yìshù tūpò.
presently brewing DASP novel creation MOD new artistic breakthrough.
We are deeply convinced that Comrade Shen Róng, a talented writer of rich experience in life and literary composition, is aiming at breaking new grounds in novel writing.