

Incompleteness in French Literature in the Past Century

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Abstract Literature is composed of a group of *Cinderella*'s whose miseries are brought about by their violent and abusive fathers, and whose incompleteness is due to their mothers' helplessness. Miseries come along one after another, but at the same time, plant seeds of love and hatred. Deficiency cries for remedies, and at the same time, brings forth talented youth. This paper aims to reveal the feature of incompleteness in French modern and contemporary literature by studying its awkwardness. Awkwardness would mean unnatural and uneasy in traditional culture, but it can also mean supernatural and super at ease in the context of drastic turns in the development of civilizations. French literature in the recent century is outstanding in terms of awkwardness. And this awkwardness not only acts as an antidote to repression, but also embodies the practice by men of letters. They write about absurdity and absurdly write, present helplessness and helplessly present, reveal all that is abominable and abominably reveal, and they rip up gentility and always rip up gentlemen-like. Not only does awkwardness embody incompleteness, but also feeds, repaired and developed incompleteness. To put this phenomenon briefly is that awkwardness lives by its awkwardness.

Key Words French literature; modern and contemporary condition; incompleteness; awkwardness

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Incompleteness makes literature. Imperfection is the nature of literature. Awkwardness, described as uncomfortable or unnatural, is the concentrated embodiment of the true nature of literature. Therefore, it can be said that the awkwardness for incompleteness gives literature a kind of character to get rid of vulgarity. Literary

awkwardness is the fermentation of tricky events or the embodiment of awkward psychological modality. What we call decent literature benefits from imperfections, which is tantamount to say that such literature is up to perfection by deficiency. In other words, imperfection is another way to express awkwardness. Literature would be inevitably less than its taste without it, at best, only the vulgar emotions wrapped in beautiful words. Excellent literature from all over the world cannot more or less be separated from such a quality. For example, *Homer's Epic*, *Book of Songs*, *Li Sao*, *Tian Wen*, and *Letter to Ren'an* by Sima Qian are the cases with such endowment; it is the same with the works like *A Dream of Red Mansions*, *Water Margin*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Don Quixote*. Furthermore, just as there is incompleteness literature, so come forth the theories like "poetry expressing aspiration," "poets out of anger," "release of sexual repression" and "symbols of anguish," etc..

Literature is the product of human beings' want, and the literature of all ethnic groups are no exception. Why only mention the modern and contemporary French literature, that is, French literature in the past hundred years? The author thinks that in ancient and modern literature, incompleteness is only the cause and yeast of formation, but in this particular period, French literature directly resorts to fragmentariness as literary symbol which is expressed incisively and vividly. From the point of view of traditional culture, awkward state is unnatural and uncomfortable; as far as the variables of civilization turning point are concerned, it is supernatural and super at ease. Here, we choose three Chinese characters "尴" (gan in pinyin, literally awkward, embarrassing, unnatural), "甘" (gan in pinyin, literally willing, sweet, righteous) and "敢" (gan in pinyin, literally dare) to summarize three key points of modern and contemporary French literature with incomplete quality.

The Literature Successfully Lives by Its Awkwardness to be Awkward

The Gan, ("尴", awkwardness, embarrassment) of literature is the first remarkable feature of French literature in the past hundred years. It is said that awkwardness is a true element of human literature. What it claims is the cause of literature---incompleteness. In the long process of literary development, the deficiencies as constituent elements have been decomposed and misappropriated, even obscured and annihilated. This priceless treasure, which was earlier than the existence of literature, beneficial to literature and was born with literature, has not received sufficient attention, nor has it been developed in multi-dimensions and in a large scope.

French literary world has been outstanding in terms of the manner of deficiency

in the past hundred years. The awkwardness of deficiency is not only the resistance to all repressive forces, but also personal practice of literary people who live by the awkwardness of incompleteness and write about this state. They write about absurdity and absurdly write, present helplessness and helplessly present, reveal all that is abominable and abominably reveal, and they rip up gentility and always rip up gentlemen-like. This awkwardness not only reflects incompleteness, but also feeds, repairs and develops completeness. To put it this phenomenon briefly, that is, literary awkwardness successfully lives by its awkwardness of incompleteness.

If we talk about the awkward state of French literature in the past hundred years, the first thing is the embarrassing and awkward situation created by the times, i.e. the absence, belatedness and perversion of positive energy over and again. In the 20th century, France experienced a series of wars, and literature and art in a broad sense was afflicted by torrential bloods and ferocious wars. Axis vs Alliance, Henri Philippe Pétain vs Gaulle, hot war vs cold war, suzerainty vs subordination, the left vs the right... Absurdity, a paradoxical theme, aroused surging tides and turbulence in literature one after another, thus making literature uneasy and unnatural. The subject matter of war and its trauma constitutes a haunting black memory. Secondly, literature was placed in the state of awkwardness for its incompleteness or, to say, the results of the mission of French culture. For nearly a hundred years, French culture is actually the mouthpiece of the Mediterranean culture. Although Europe was ravaged by fascism, unyielding literature based on France acts as the outpost. The voice of the Gallic rooster inspired and encouraged the Mediterranean cultural circle. French literati made a resounding sound without flinch. This is why the various voices can turn up in the literary forum. However, loud voices tend to be funny, and “the preacher tends to be poor” is also commonplace, embarrassing, yet impressive and lovely. Finally, the awkwardness of incompleteness comes from the free atmosphere of France. Freedom often makes the literati carried away, thus making it out of expectation. Does freedom have anything to do with incompleteness? The answer is yes. In addition to wars and other violence, freedom is also its catalyst. The modern and contemporary French literature reveals another paradox, that is, freedom fulfills no shortage of literary incompleteness and imperfections; on the contrary, freedom accomplishes the incompleteness in the absence of literary deficiency. Literary incompleteness has become fragmentary literature, just as countless Godot’s waiting makes the masterpiece of “waiting for Godot.” The unfettered French society put writers in an open environment. Especially after World War II when the whole French cultural environment seemed like the world of April with grass growing crazily and the warblers flying wildly,

full of spring light was in the literary garden where French writer groups spoke freely. The most beautiful literature fluttered here, and the ugliest creations were unbridled. The literary and artistic forms of incompleteness by French writers and French-based writers from all over the world, are not accidental, but commonplace.

Generally speaking, awkwardness can be said to be the beauty mole of French literature and art in the past hundred years, and even its barometer. It is the achievement of French literature and art. Embarrassing literature is imperfect in the ordinary world, but not all of them can be excellent literature. With its lurking in imperfections, the modern and contemporary French literature turns into the imperfection, the essence of which is to enter into another spiritual world, namely, the world of “god is dead”. Therefore, the deficiency becomes the deficiency of implicit ideal, and the deficiency literature becomes an epoch-making literature.

The Literature Successfully Lives by its Willingness to be Awkward

The character “甘” (gan in pinyin, literally willing, sweet, righteous) of literature is the second outstanding feature of French literature in the past hundred years. Many imperfections can be summarized by a Chinese character “甘” (gan in pinyin). It has a deep connection with 尴 (gan, embarrassment, awkward). It also means “sweet”, which dilutes the bitterness of the word 尴 (gan), its embarrassment and awkwardness. In addition, it means “willing”, glad of the embarrassing and awkward deficiency. Finally, the word means “righteousness”, bearing the grievance of an awkward state. As far as this is concerned, the feeling of 甘 (gan) is connected with 尴 (gan) the awkwardly deficient state. In the modern and contemporary French literature, the awkwardness of incompleteness is subtle in shape, and the feeling of 甘 (gan) is its perceptual temperament. There is an affinity in the process of awkwardness (尴 , gan) to willingness (甘 , gan) with some connection of true form; they are also different from each other in that awkward state is to focus on generative and endowing aspect, whereas 甘 (gan) regards bearing and receiving.

The incompleteness squeezes literature, and the squeeze makes literature. The differences of modern and contemporary French literature lie in its incompleteness, not afraid of suffering, and from the bitterness comes the wonderfulness. There are countless writers worldwide who suffer yet achieve. However, it also results in a limitation of long-term suffering and repression so that the accustomed literature has become an entity, over time just like the spring unable to recover after stretching up to an unbearable extent. Despite its advantages, it has its malpractice of nodules. At the beginning of the last century, most of the French literati were not steeped in hardship. They were immersed into the expressway of industrialization

and modernization, being either as the cultural trend riders or as the proud son of thought. They are also hosts in the ups and downs of war, in the economic take-off and dazzling changes of freedom, so they fully experience a mixture of tastes in awkwardness and free and easy in mentality and writing. Compared with their former generations, their endowment is worth pondering. The literati in the 18th and 19th centuries were bent over by the primitive accumulation of capital with a great deal of suffering. What they wrote was the literature tamped by suffering, going straight to the bottom of the society, being the entity literature of blood and fire. The masterpieces like *La Comédie Humaine*, *Les Misérables*, *Madame Bovary*, *Boule de Suif* all belong to this kind, and the incompleteness of literature coming downward to the bottom has not risen up, not to mention incompleteness literature with achievements. However, modern and contemporary writers, with less palpable love and hatred, have more beans-like description, more champagne-style foam humor, with an emergence of rare inaction, mischief, and uneasiness. So depressive as *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, unrestrained as *L'Amant*, boring as *La Nausée*, bitter as *La Peste*, being as ethereal in other world of life as in *L'étranger*... These works are no longer substantive works reflecting the status quo, but the spiritual embodiment of fate, war, prison, death and being. These things make literature into deficiency literature. At the beginning of the century, the writer were still able to recall the sweetness of Marguerite's snacks. From the middle to the end of the literary world, the works almost belonged to this type. Writers brewed various deficiencies and defects for sweet taste, turning awkwardness into willingness, feeling at home in that inadequate state.

If many writers in history write because of such incompleteness, then most of the writers since the 20th century have directly turned themselves into incompleteness, with no regrets and willingness to do so, just as Sisyphus pushed the boulder up the mountain, placed in the state of deficiency, of becoming it, of willingness to it. It becomes a style of incompleteness.

The Literature Successfully Lives by Its Daring to be Awkward

It is commendable for one to be willing to be in an awkward incompleteness. It is more valuable to dare to be so (敢 , gan, literary dare to do). The spirit of modern and contemporary French literature in daring its awkwardness is worthwhile writing a great deal. The awkward quality of incompleteness is a special quality of literary variables. It is difficult to reveal its tender buds in a repressive society, so it has never been highlighted in history. In other words, only when the various political constraints and human nature are unlocked with an open and free culture booming,

can it show its true appearance. The author has always believed that literature is a multifaceted god, a nine-headed monster, a root grass, or a nebula song; in a word, it is a great humanistic luxury of incompleteness. These deficiencies often happen accidentally in a certain way, rarely together, not to mention gathering of various groups of deficiencies and resonance of various kinds of awkwardness. However, awkward literature in the modern and contemporary French literature and culture has emerged rapidly and brilliantly, with its subtlety, its reason, and its extremes, daring to be awkward.

Daring to be awkward and embarrassed is the most prominent strength of character of French literary people and even of many cultured people. André Breton, Duras, Sartre, Camus, Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Simon, Michael Tournier—the array of writers are all warriors with the fragmentary quality of awkwardness. They not only dare to reveal their shortcomings and ugliness, but also dare to defile their own names and to displace themselves. As far as the mind is concerned, only a few literary heroes have this style in the history of human literature. For example, Lu Xun of China is a great man of this kind. The reason why we are optimistic about the awkward literature of France for nearly a hundred years is that this kind of literature has prevailed throughout in this respect. They are the most daring to expose their precious self, not afraid of foul publicity; Most daring to dissect deep-rooted bad habits of the people regardless of pressure; the most daring to shake away the burden of achievement, not hesitating to tear open the hypocrisy of freedom, equality, and fraternity; the most daring to reveal the other side of truth, goodness, beauty and sanctity, which is as respectable as those who reveal the blood of capital; the most daring to break through stereotypes and old habits in the area of style clearance, even as into no-style territory; the most daring to push the literary frontier to the boundless horizon, letting the otherness literature become popular, and as to the melting-casting action in pure literature, miscellaneous literature, pan-literature para-literature, bad literature, and non-literature, literary people almost do whatever it takes to do everything; the most daring to be open to the diversity of linear time and space and dynastic culture so that in recent decades it has been difficult to cage literature with modernity or post-modernity; the most daring to break away from the boundaries of cities, countries and states, as writers in France are like the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) in Paris not only feel at home, but also can learn from the past and the present and inspire the writing... We have used so many positive expressions of “most” as polar rhetoric in one breath, because a cultural occasion can push shortcomings to the center, which can really be described as a cultivation of humanistic world with no center. And among

them the most considerable is the awkward deficiency literature, which is the most difficult to taste. The audacity of French modern and contemporary literature is a symbol of the center-less humanism.

Needless to say, such open literature benefits from the accumulation of the humanities and history of France, from the catastrophic events of the last century, from the wide opening of religious restraints, and from the rapid economic development since the middle of the last century, from the unprecedented openness of politics and the full inclusion of culture and education; of course, there is also an adjustment of awkwardness in the multiplicity of human nature and standing-out of incompleteness.

Generally speaking, Literature is composed of a group of *Cinderellas*, whose *miseries* are brought by its tyrannical father, and whose defect is due to her mother's helplessness. Miseries come along one after another, and at the same time, plant seeds of love and hatred. Regretful incompleteness cries for remedies, and meanwhile brings forth talented youth. Incompleteness forces awkwardness which reversely is reflective of fragmentary character. Awkwardness has a great deal of enchantment, of contradictions, of changes, and of transformation. As an embodiment of imperfections, its attendance is actually its absence, and its deficiency is its abundance. Its quality and level are expressed by the presence of awkwardness, a paradox of both yes and no. The author has advocated the general transformation of literature, and expounded on the otherization and para-interpretation of literature. The awkward literature of incompleteness in France for nearly a hundred years is tantamount to the evidence of such thinking. Literature is shown in non-literature, in Phoenix Nirvana, with the quality of having both yes and no, of being in coexistence of both life and death.