

Shaping of Three-dimensional Narrative Space in *The Sound and The Fury*

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Abstract—The paper re-integrates narrative characteristics of *The Sound and The Fury* on the basis of previous research on it and comes to the conclusion of a dimensional space model of story-telling mode on the basis of previous single-track, plane and fragmented research. The model integrates multiple-perspective narrative, reliability and unreliability of narration, variability of time and step-by-step deficiency of narrative central figure, reflecting features in narrative skill, narrative characteristics and narrative function and peculiarity of *The Sound and The Fury* (a novel) in stream-of-consciousness novel.

Keywords—*The Sound and The Fury*; Faulkner; narrative characteristics

I. INTRODUCTION

In the history of novel, many changes in artistic characteristics appear and the change from linear narration to non-linear narration marks a turn in the 19th century. The most outstanding characteristics of *The Sound and The Fury* are its narrative structure and technique. Instead of using linear narrative structure in classic novel, it unfolds the story slowing to readers according to time sequence in the single-track narration. The novel builds a dimensional space of its own in non-linear narration, which is unachieved by many stream-of-consciousness novels and wins little attention from researchers. Therefore, on the basis of previous research, the paper integrates previous discussions on *The Sound and The Fury* in order to find out how the novel breaks away from traditional plane and single-track narration and shapes a dimensional narrative space model for *The Sound and The Fury*.

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF NARRATIVE MODEL

A. Multiple-Perspective Narration

Among several narrative techniques used by Faulkner in *The Sound and The Fury*, the one establishing the whole big environment is multiple-perspective narration. The novel falls into four parts in terms of identity of narrator. Part 1 is the unconscious and chaotic narration of Bangui as an idiot. Part 2 is Quentin's narration about the suicide day. Part 3 is the narration of Jsoon claiming profit first. Part 4 is the narration of Dilsey, a black housemaid, in the perspective of the third party. The reason why Faulkner chooses this kind of narrative pattern is that, "I start telling the story in the

perspective of a child idiot, because I think it makes the story moving to let a person who just knows what it is without knowing the whys and wherefores tell it. But upon completion of writing, I feel failed to tell the story clearly. Then I re-write the same story from the perspective of another brother, but still far from satisfaction. Then the third writing begins in the perspective of a third brother, still ending in unsatisfaction. At last, I combine the three parts and make supplements from my own perspective." [1] Purely in terms of artistic effect, Part 1 affords for thought. With the gradual enhancement of the narrator's consciousness, story plot becomes clearer and clearer and the following narration tends to supplement the previous part. However, it is unknown whether Faulkner chooses the setting out of pursuit of the artistic effect in his heart and whether the setting has flaws due to the efforts to achieve a kind of artistic effect. The paper aims to analyze some functions and effects of this narrative mode.

B. Characteristic One of Multiple-Perspective Narration -- Combination of Inner Perspective and Omniscient Perspective

Two kinds of perspective are adopted in the novel developed in four parts. Based on some researches, the first three parts adopt an internal focalization perspective, using sentences and paragraphs according with emotion, personality and level of intelligence of the figure. The last part adopts an omniscient perspective as a supplement to the first three parts of narration of personal style. But there is existed research claiming that since Bangui can't feel other people's emotion and can only record the external environmental change, the first part adopts an exterior focalization perspective; Quentin and Jsoon adopt an internal focalization perspective; Gelsi's narration in the last part adopts an omniscient and omnipotent perspective with zero focalization and without limitation [2]. Division of perspective exerts no influence on construction of model in the paper, therefore multiple viewpoints are provided here without the necessity of selection. Functions of these two perspectives can't be shown in the model; therefore no more discussion is made here. However, it is undeniable that one narrator adopting narration in the first person can only provide one part of the real or twisted fact, highlighting realness of the figure while omniscient perspective endows the novel with a stable environment, leaving the other three

kinds of narration wobbling freely without complete deficiency of realness. The four kinds of narration become juxtaposed art with mutual complementation and mutual denial, laying the foundation for model construction.

C. *Characteristic Two of Multiple-Perspective Narration — Hover between Reliability and Unreliability*

One inevitable artistic effect of narration in the first person is outstanding personality traits — namely, narration is unreliable. Chatman says, “Narrator is regarded as unreliable because there is great divergence between thoughts of the narrator and the implied author”. [3] At the same time of being unreliable, their narration revolves around the story itself, adding details verified by other chapters to the story, from which perspective reliability exists in narration. Like the trilogy in *Red, Blue and White*, a modern movie, each part is an individual story with its figure appearing in other stories. *The Sound and The Fury* has a high overlap ratio, four parts integrated into another whole story.

The hover between reliability and unreliability will also be put into the model constructed in the novel.

D. *Characteristic Three of Multiple-Perspective Narration - Variability of Time*

Many researches notice variability of time in *The Sound and The Fury*. Some researches start with phenomenology, containing the concept of “fractal of time in fictitious narration”, [4] rising to the more abstract theoretical research. But there are researches focusing on non-linear narration of text as the most basic characteristic and the unequal narrative time and text-time. [5] We start with the concept of “psychological time”: Instead of adopting traditional linear narration, thoughts are unfolded beginning at a certain time point in reality, introducing narration and forming a kind of “radioactive time structure”. [6] Thus, density of narration varies. As to Bangui and Quentin with quick flow of consciousness, their narrative density in unit time enlarges. As to Jsoon and Gelsi with tend-to-be normal narrative structure, their narrative density is relatively stable.

E. *Characteristic Four of Multiple-Perspective Narration -- Absence of Central Figure*

Among the four people's narration in *The Sound and The Fury*, Katie appears as the central figure of Bangui throughout the whole narration that follows. But the novel gives no chance to Katie for vindication and she appears as a hollow others-image in figure narration. Readers can only see what Katie looks like in other people's eyes without knowing her inner monologue. Most researchers notice this and regard Katie as the focus of the story though she is not a narrator. In articles of Hong Zengliu and Tian Ping, a more delicate and meticulous perspective is provided, discussing the existence of Katie's "value experiencing a gradual drop from the greatest in Part 1 to zero in Part 4[7]". Narrators are destructed from the following two aspects, "The first is constant adjustment of narrative distance, namely centrifugal force; the second is Katie's story, namely central control

force [7]." The paper agrees that the research conclusion is of great significance with in-depth exploration on the universal conclusion that narration is "Katie-centered". Although significance of gradualness remains to be discussed, we need to pay attention to and learn from this kind of gradualness.

III. MODEL CONSTRUCTION

A summary model of above characteristics is designed in the paper. Although the four people's narrations are juxtaposed, they all surround the story of the Compsons. Therefore, we set the story they tell as a circle.

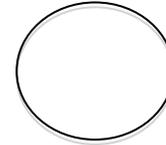


Fig. 1. Story of the Compsons.

On the periphery of the circle, it is evident that the four people's juxtaposed narrations constitute the whole story.

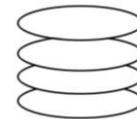


Fig. 2. Juxtaposed relationship of the four figures.

Narrative characteristics intended to be shown in the model are explained above. As to time characteristic of narration, unconscious narrative density of Bangui and Quentin is high; especially that Quentin has undisrupted flow of thoughts during the short period of time before suicide, totally caught in self-awareness. As to this situation, curves with high density are used in the model to represent thinking density in unit time. In addition, among the four kinds of narration, the first three kinds of internal focalization perspective hover between reliability and unreliability, deviating from the relatively reliable narration in the fourth kind of perspective to a large extent. Therefore lines are used in the model to distinguish their different degrees of unreliability. Thus, the model is shown as "Fig. 3".

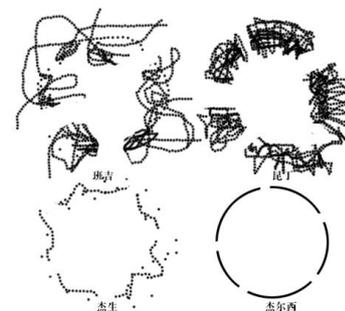


Fig. 3. Unreliable degree shown in four kinds of lines.

Transformation is explained as follows:

Reliability. We regard the most reliable Dilsey's narration as the most stable narration and make the first three unreliable narrations experience deviation from it as the axis. We can see Gelsi's narrative outline clearly. We use an outline to describe stability and reliability of narration, and the other three people's outlines can be seen with slight deviation. Here we use deviation to represent unreliability of narration in the first three kinds of perspective. Since Bangui's unconscious degree is the highest, his deviation degree is also the highest.

Scatteredness and one-sidedness. Due to different narrative perspectives, each person's narration only emphasizes on the part from his/her own perspective without telling the whole story. Therefore, broken lines are used to represent the incomplete story telling.

Variability of time. As said before, people have different thinking density in unit time, with stream of consciousness of Bangui and Quentin as of the highest degree. Thought changes with seen scenery and experiences, entering another part of broken story. Therefore, dot density is used to represent thinking density. The area with high density represents highly centralization of stream of consciousness. Large sections of confession consciousness of Quentin before death beat all other narration in the novel, becoming the part of consciousness with highest centralization, therefore Quentin's dots are in the highest density. Bangui's record is mostly about what is seen in broken pieces without any personal feeling and with high interference from the outside, therefore there are many direct interruptions from the outside, changing thought trend of Bangui.

In addition, gradual absence of Katie as the central figure is also shown in the model. We have mentioned in the above text that Katie is regarded as the center of Bangui's narration, with central degree gradually reduced in the following narration. As shown in the model, Bangui's narrative semidiameter is the shortest while Gelsi's is the largest, between which there is two-stage progressive increase. Then the model is changed into "Fig. 4", obtaining the final model construction as "Fig. 5".

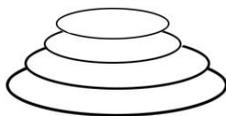


Fig. 4. Two-stage progressive increase.

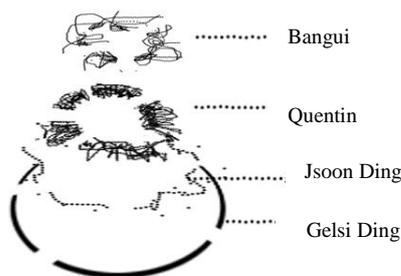


Fig. 5. Final model construction.

IV. CONCLUSION

On the basis of previous research, the paper integrates features of various researches on *The Sound and The Fury*, constructing a model of narrative characteristics of the novel. The model is a bold attempt, making a clear summary of narrative characteristics of the novel with numerous and complicated textual features. However, the model fails to show exploration on theme and figure, which is a flaw of text structure research and can't be avoided by the model itself. But, with the development of research, formal structure analysis can bring about constant improvement on comprehensive interpretation of text. The paper tries to produce its own interpretation in the whole development process.

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