



NARRATIVE AND ITS EMBEDDED

叙事

嵌套

STRUCTURE

A STUDY OF

结构研究

中国科学技术大学出版社

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2002·合肥

内 容 简 介

叙事嵌套结构是叙事学研究的一个重要课题。西方文评界对叙事嵌套结构本质、形式及功能的界定、描述和阐述始于20世纪70年代。对于叙事嵌套结构,我国文艺理论界至今尚未作出全面深刻的探讨。本书作者不揣浅陋,试图为填补国内这方面学术研究的空白尽自己的绵薄之力。

本书由导论、第一至第五章、结论及参考文献四部分构成。导论指出研究目的和研究方法论。第一章界定叙事嵌套结构的本质。第二章讨论故事的构成要素:事件与行为者。第三章分析叙事话语的核心成分:时间、空间和叙述者。第四章尝试建构一种新的叙事嵌套结构理论模式:“互动方阵”。第五章用具体的叙事文学作品对上述理论模式作了初步的验证。结论简要归纳全书各章内容,并指出叙事嵌套结构研究的发展趋势。

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

叙事嵌套结构研究/邹颀著. —合肥:中国科学技术大学出版社,2002.12

ISBN 7-312-01384-8

I. 叙… II. 邹… III. 叙述-文学研究-英文 IV. I044

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2002)第 102033 号

中国科学技术大学出版社出版发行

安徽省合肥市金寨路 96 号,230026

电话:(0551)3602905 传真:3602897(发行科)

E-mail:press@ustc.edu.cn

中国科学技术大学印刷厂印刷

全国新华书店经销

开本:850mm×1168mm/32 印张:5.625 字数:153 千

2002 年 12 月第 1 版 2002 年 12 月第 1 次印刷

印数:1—1000 册

ISBN 7-312-01384-8/H·231 定价:20.00 元

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University of Science and Technology of China Press
2002 • Hefei

First Edition 2002

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ISBN 7-312-01384-8/H·231

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Published by

University of Science and Technology of China Press

University of Science and Technology of China, Hefei

230026, China

Printed in the People's Republic of China

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is based on my Ph.D. dissertation completed at Shanghai International Studies University in 2001. I wish, first, to pay sad homage to the late Prof. Hou Weirui, my Ph.D. program supervisor, who, apart from his academic excellence and pedagogical wisdom, showed me how decent a profession teaching could be and how much I had to learn if I were ever to go anywhere in literary studies.

I express my heartfelt thanks to Prof. Shi Zhikang, my dissertation supervisor. I am grateful to him for his invaluable help in clarifying my thinking on various issues concerned, and for his constant encouragement in times of frustration.

Deep gratitude is also expressed to Prof. Yu Jianhua, Prof. Li Weiping, and Prof. Wang Yiqun for their stimulating lectures and thoughtful suggestions. Thanks go to those who have, in one way or another, made my study at SISU a most rewarding experience in my professional development.

I am particularly indebted to my wife Zhang Xin, my daughter Yi Ran, and my parents. Without their love and support, this book would never have been written.

Zou Jie

December , 2001

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Chapter 1

Introduction

导论说明本书的研究目的和研究方法论。基本理论框架取自法国结构主义叙事学,尤其是 A·J·格雷玛斯的研究成果。

This study primarily concerns itself with the presentation of a theoretical model for analyzing narrative embeddedness. The conceptual framework in which the present study is situated is provided by the classical French narratology of the 1960s. The different issues may thus be discussed within the framework of one theoretical approach. However, one does not need to adhere to structuralism as a philosophy in order to be able to use the concepts and views presented in this study. Neither does one need to feel that adherence to, for example, a post-structuralist view of literature hinders the applicability of the analytical paradigm this study simultaneously aims for.

As the central structural device of story-telling, narrative embeddedness is found in the literatures of all cultures and periods, but its nature, form, and function have only begun to be sketched. The last twenty to thirty years have

witnessed a remarkable growth of studies in narrative embeddedness in many parts of the world, especially in France, Holland, Israel, Germany, and America. These include Gerard Genette's *Narrative Discourse* (1972), Susan Lanser's *The Narrative Act* (1981), Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's *Narrative Fiction* (1983), Mieke Bal's *Narratology* (1985), Patrick O'Neill's *Fictions of Discourse* (1994), Monika Fludernik's *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (1996), and William Nelles's *Frameworks* (1997).

Although these studies prove more or less useful for our study of narrative embeddedness, they fail to establish a general model which could give an adequate description of the system governing the operations of narrative embeddedness. For no two scholars of narrative embeddedness appear to define it in quite the same way. Each theorist has concepts or categories of his own, which never seem to be adopted for use by any subsequent critic. The wide range of conflicting definitions of terms used by different theorists makes it impossible to begin this study of narrative embeddedness at any apparently logical starting point. The fact is that the definition of narrative *per se* has never been settled. Thus I have to approach the topic of narrative embeddedness by first discussing a series of other relevant issues. The logical order in which these problems arise has dictated the organization of this study.

Chapter 1 states the purpose of the study as well as the conceptual framework in which it is situated. Chapter 2 gives a definition of narrative. Chapter 3 examines story, with special attention to its two essential components: event and actor. Chapter 4 explores discourse, focusing on its key elements: time, space, focalization, and narrator. Chapter 5, based on the discussion in the preceding chapters and a critical survey of the interpretative strategies typically invoked by Genette, Lanser, Rimmon-Kenan, Bal, O'Neill, Fludernik, and Nelles, makes efforts to establish a new model of narrative embeddedness in an attempt to answer a question of central concern to narrative theorists: what are the features of narrative embeddedness which allow us to characterize its possible manifestation in pertinent terms? In Chapter 6 the theoretical model is tested out to see what its particular scheme of concepts permits or encourages us to say, in practical criticism, about individual works. Finally, a short conclusion summarizes the main points of this study and points out recent trends in narrative analysis.

Chapter 2

Narrative: Definition

本章分析了有关叙事本质的不同观点,指出叙事主要是指讲述故事的口头或书面话语。

Although definitions of narrative vary from one theory to another, there are two major lines of analysis that have been proposed for the conceptualization of the ideas of narrative.

The first of these two schools holds that a narrative is made up of two major components: content and form, that is, a story and a mode of presentation. As Aristotle maintains, “it is possible for the poet on different occasions to narrate the story ... or to have the imitators performing and acting out the entire story” (1968:6). In the former case the content assumes non-dramatic form as an epic; in the latter the content is in dramatic form as a tragedy or comedy. In the 1920s the Russian Formalists codified the applications of this binary model for narratology under the terms *fabula* (story) and *sjuzet* (plot). ‘fabula,’ or ‘story,’ and ‘sjuzet,’ or ‘plot.’ Boris Tomashevsky outlined the distinction in a 1925 essay: “Plot is distinct from story. Both

include the same events, but in the plot the events are arranged and connected according to the orderly sequence in which they were presented in the work" (1965:67).

French and American structuralists have since elaborated upon these concepts and have provided terms for them in their own languages. The difference in order of events has continued to be seen as fundamental despite changes in terminology. As Tzvetan Todorov explains,

The easiest relation to observe is that of *order*: the order of narrating time (the order of discourse) can never be perfectly parallel to the order of time narrated (of fiction); there are necessarily interversions in the "before" and the "after". These interversions are due to the difference in nature between the two temporalities: that of the discourse is one-dimensional, that of fiction, plural. (1981:30)

Seymour Chatman has further analyzed the components of story:

Structuralist theory argues that each narrative has two parts: a story (*histoire*), the content or chain of events (actions, happenings), plus what may be called the existents (characters, items of setting); and a discourse (*discours*), that is, the expression, the means by which the content is communicated. In simple terms, the story is the *what* in a narrative that is depicted, discourse the *how*. (1978:19)

According to this view, the same story may be presented by different discourses to make up different narratives. The story of the King of Oedipus, for example, can be told as a play, a ballet, a film, or a symphony. All these would be narratives. The live performances, the images passing on the screen, the sounds recorded on tapes are discourses just as much as a novelization of Sophocles's play *Oedipus the King* (409 BC) would be; the story, as presented in a summary of the plot, may be the same for each discourse.

The most important application of narrative theory to a largely nonverbal medium has been the study of narrative film. A still newer development has been the study of narrative in music. For the purpose of my study and the theoretical model I am trying to develop, and without ruling out the possibility of wider application, I will generally limit my examples and discussion to verbal discourse. Given this restriction to verbal discourse, a narrative might be defined as *any spoken or written text that tells a story*. Being an essentially divided endeavor, a narrative involves the story (or narrative content) and the discourse (or narrative presentation).

Chapter 3

Narrative: Story

本章首先界定“故事”的概念，然后探讨故事的两大构成要素：事件与行为者。

In this study, *story* refers to a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors (Bal, 1997: 5). As a sequence of actions or events, *story* is conceived as independent of its manifestation in discourse (Culler, 1981:170).

3.1 Event

An *event* refers to the transition from one state to another state “manifested in discourse by a process statement in the mode of *Do* or *Happen*” (Prince, 1988:28). The word transition stresses the fact that an event is a process, an alternation. However, it is not so easy to establish which sentences in a text represent an event. According to Mieke Bal (1997), there are three criteria, namely *change*, *choice*, and *confrontation*, which may help us to identify and in-

investigate events.

Let's begin by comparing these two sentences:

- a. John is ill.
- b. John falls ill.

The first sentence describes a condition, the second a change. The difference can be seen in the verb. So we can begin by examining the series of events in which sentence b might occur. Imagine that the preceding text segment read as follows:

- c. John was cleaning his house.

John's illness interrupts his activity and, as such, indicates a change. But in that case, sentence c can precede either sentence a or sentence b equally well.

- d. John was cleaning his house. John is ill.

is just as intelligible as

- e. John was cleaning his house. John falls ill.

In both cases the cleaning activities are interrupted, although in neither case is this explicitly stated. Sentences d and e differ in the same way from, for example, a text seg-

ment such as:

- f. John was cleaning his house. John fell ill and therefore had to stop cleaning.

The explicit relationship established in segment f is only implied in d and e. The relationship between c and a, or between c and b, is decisive for an analysis of the events; it is only in a series that events become meaningful for the further development of the story.^①

Events can also be distinguished between functional and non-functional. Functional events open a choice between two possibilities, to realize this choice, or to reveal the results of such a choice. Once a choice is made, it determines the subsequent course of events in the developments of the story. Compare the following text segments:

- g. Joan leaves her house to go to work.

She turns left and walks straight ahead.

She arrives at eight-thirty.

- h. Joan leaves her house to go to work.

She walks straight ahead, and crosses the street.

① Although single-event narratives are theoretically (and perhaps also empirically) possible, a series of events suggest that narratives usually consist of more than one.

Unconscious, she is carried into a hospital at eight-thirty.

Again, something is implied in both text segments: in g, that Joan successfully covers a certain distance; in h, that she is run down while crossing the street. But in segment h, something happens that most probably has consequences for the rest of the story. The *actor*^① is run down, something that would not have happened if she had chosen the other route. In turn, the accident presents a number of alternatives. Is Joan hit intentionally or not? If so, by an acquaintance or by a stranger? Obviously, the sentence “She walks straight ahead and crosses the street” indicates a functional event.

The third criterion for selecting events has been suggested by William O. Hendricks.^② Hendricks presents a promising method for extracting the structure of the story from the discourse via formal procedures. Hendricks’ point of departure is that the structure of the story is determined by confrontation. Two actors or groups of actors are confronted with each other. Every phase of the story — every functional event — consists of three components: two actors and one action. Linguistically, it should be possible to formulate this unity as two nominal components and one verbal

① The term *actor* is defined in the next section.

② Hendricks, William O. “Methodology of Narrative Structural Analysis” *Semiotica* 7, 1973. 163~184. (quoted from Bal, 1997:185)