

An Interpretation of the Spatial Forms of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro"

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ABSTRACT

With the help of relevant theories and methods of spatial narratology, this paper discusses Ernest Hemingway's classic novella "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" from three aspects: geographical space, realistic space and psychological space. With the help of the narrative mode of stream of consciousness, the novel breaks through the space-time boundary between reality and fantasy and constructs multiple narrative spaces. The writer uses image juxtaposition to present geographical space and scene dialogue to present real space, and reproduce mental space through memory and fantasy, which expands the capacity of the novel within a limited space and makes the work a literary classic.

Keywords: *"The Snows in Kilimanjaro", spatial narrative, scene dialogue, recalling narrative*

I. INTRODUCTION

"The Snows in Kilimanjaro" is a novella by Ernest Hemingway, a famous American novelist. The novel tells the story of the writer Harry who wants to get rid of the decadent life, came to the happiest place he thought — Africa, but the car broke down on the way of hunting, and he unfortunately contracted gangrene due to bruising his leg, and finally died without waiting for the plane. In the process of reviewing many of his life experiences, women and careers became the main content of his memories, and the elusive mountain Kilimanjaro became the symbol of his life goals. The narrative time of the novel focuses on the afternoon and evening of Harry's last day before his death, but the story time presented to the reader is his whole life.

"Death" and "facing death" are the themes of the novel. The novel uses the stream of consciousness description of reality and dream, which breaks the linear time of the novel, shuttling back and forth between reality and space, memory and fantasy. In a certain sense, it weakens the plot of the novel and affects the compact rhythm of the novel, but forms a complex, superimposed, multi-level spatial form effect, which highlights the theme of life and death in the work. In the confrontation between the difficulty of life and the approach of death, it strengthens the psychological time of the novel and causes more resonance among readers. This paper will use the spatial formalization theory of the novel to discuss the spatial formalization characteristics of the novel from the three aspects of geographical space, realistic space and psychological space in the novel. In the juxtaposition of time and space, the confrontation between life and death, and the

multiple fears of mind and body, the author shows "grace under pressure" through narration.

II. JUXTAPOSITION OF GEOSPATIAL IMAGES

In the 18th century, Lessing divided art into time art and space art in "Laocoon" by virtue of the contrast between poetry and painting. In the traditional sense, most novels are narrated according to the time clue or causal relationship. Therefore, the reading experience of novels is mostly based on the reading perception of linear time. Meanwhile, the spatial dimension of novels is not so attractive. However, the characters in the novel are after all living in a certain natural and social environment, and they have their own activity space, so any novel cannot do without space. The geographical space of the novel is "an important field for character shaping, story development and theme expression, so it plays a pivotal role in the narrative activities of the novel"¹. The geographical space of the epilogue includes three interrelated aspects: natural environment, social environment and regional place. This kind of geographic space consciously constructed by the author not only contains pure natural factors and social environment background, but also contains certain symbolic significance, which requires readers to explore the experience in reading.

In this novel, the hero, Harry, is no longer able to walk, so the characters' room for movement is greatly restricted. Therefore, the geographical space in which he lives is almost the only space in which he exists.

¹ Deng Yingling. A study of the Spatial Poetics in the 20th Century British and American Novels [M]. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2018: 29.

How to realize the space jump and expand the narrative space of the novel is the problem that the writer needs to solve. Of all the geographical Spaces Harry travels through, the author chooses the two that stand out the most: Mount Kilimanjaro, the mountain that appears at the beginning of the novel, and the plain before Harry. He transformed the juxtaposed two geographic spaces into two aesthetic images, which, even to a certain extent, epitomizes Harry's life. They are repeatedly presented, randomly switched, and mirror each other, thus highlighting the theme of the work.

At the beginning of the novel, the author mentions Kilimanjaro, the most representative mountain in Africa. It is described by the author as the highest mountain in Africa and is covered with snow all the year round, with the most prominent alpine feature. But there is a leopard in the alpine mountain that has been freeze-dried forever. In order to find prey, the leopard can brave to climb to the top despite the cold. Although it has been freeze-dried, it has challenged itself, to achieve a spiritual victory, and will live on in spirit. However, in the plain where Harry lives after he gets ill, it is scorching with blazing sunlight, and vultures and hyenas are often on the lookout for the sight of rotting meat. This passive waiting and the leopard's active pursuit are completely two extreme attitudes towards life. Therefore, as highly symbolic aesthetic symbols, they confront each other in the same space scene, which actually expands the narrative space and enriches the narrative content direction. The plain where Harry is living, is just like himself, who, unable to move, can do nothing but lying on the cot and waiting for death. In addition, Harry had already fallen in spirit before he came to Africa for hunting. In fact, he came to Africa this time in the hope that he could get rid of the fat in his heart and start from scratch to find the fallen soul. Therefore, the plain also carries Harry's degenerate spirit of abandoning pursuits and seeking pleasure before he has gangrene. At the end of the novel, Kilimanjaro reappears in front of Harry, and he realizes that he has been liberated from the degeneration and decay of life, and he has gained eternal soul and spirit. Different geographical spaces show different mental states. The high mountains are the eternal life will, representing the brave pursuit of spirit, while the plains are the rotten flesh, representing the decadent spirit of enjoyment. The juxtaposition of two geographic spaces with different symbolic meanings highlights the spiritual realm that being-towards-death is better than living death.

III. SCENE DIALOGUES IN REAL SPACE

In real life, no one can manipulate time. But in novels, with all kinds of narrative ways, time can be omitted, spanned, extended or even frozen. In the process of creation, the author can change the natural sequence and break the linear time by "twisting time",

thus dissolving and fading time, thus creating the sense of space in the novel.

Scene is one of the main manifestations of narrative space in novels. "There are two main ways of scene description: one is static description, which mainly refers to the description of scenery features and portraits; the other is dynamic presentation, which mainly describes the occurrence and development of characters' language, behavior and time."² In "The Snows of Kilimanjaro", in addition to the description of the stream of consciousness of the protagonist Harry, there are a large number of dialogues between the hero and the heroine. In the novel, the dialogue between the two is recorded simultaneously, and the author presents their dialogue directly to the reader, avoiding adding subjective color. French narrative theorist Genette puts forward the concept of "time interval" by comparing the story time with the length of text time, and divides the novel's treatment of time into four forms: "scene", "summary", "omission" and "pause". Among them, "scene" refers to a narrative in which the time of the story is equal to the time of the text. Therefore, the "scene" here not only presents the dynamic description of the dialogue between the characters, but also means that the text time of the dialogue between two people is roughly equal to the story time. This kind of scene dialogue which is close to objective narration has quite the feeling of "recording".

The novel begins with a quarrel between the two, through which the reader learns little by little about their names, identities, the causes and consequences of the story, and the process of their getting together. It can be easily found from the conversation that Harry repeated several times that he is not hopeful about the arrival of the plane or truck that would save his life as he has a presentiment that his life is coming to an end. Although he is bad-tempered, he knew exactly what he was going to end up with, so he would have a stream of consciousness description of his recollection of his life. Helen, on the other hand, still has hopes or illusions, so she tries to stop Harry from drinking, quarrelling with him about whether the plane would come, and repeatedly urging him to have broth to keep fit. The two people's personalities, mental states and even feelings for each other can be glimpsed in the conversation. These are not narrated by the author or the narrator, but are "heard" by the reader in the dialogue between the two. This way of narration narrows the distance between readers and the stories and characters in the novel, making it more real. At the same time, all the factors that can represent time in the novel seem not to exist. Time seems to be in the process of natural flow, but in fact, readers have been introduced into the space

² Deng Yingling. *A study of the Spatial Poetics in the 20th Century British and American Novels* [M]. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2018: 162.

of dialogue, ignoring the sorting out of the process of time, thus highlighting the spatial characteristics of the novel text. When the conversation stops, the novel tends to depict Harry's inner consciousness. At this time, the scene dialogue between the two of them forms a realistic space and a psychological space in which Harry's consciousness flows. The real space and time where the scene dialogue is located and the memory fragments in the stream of consciousness are mixed and interwoven, which makes the narrative space of the novel expand continuously.

IV. THE RECOLLECTION AND FANTASY OF MENTAL SPACE

Recollection often enters the text by means of flashbacks and inverted pyramid style, which temporarily breaks the linear narration of the novel. By placing all kinds of events and experiences in different time and space in a single text, the novel will present a synchronic spatial picture, so the recollection and narration has become one of the ways to construct the spatial narration of the novel. The most striking part of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" is its description of Harry's stream of consciousness. Unable to move because of gangrene in his leg, Harry is confined to a cot and his mobility is restricted by the fact that his inner consciousness flows more frequently. The novel describes the story of the afternoon and evening hours before Harry's death. At this time, Harry has realized that he is going to die here, so his inner consciousness activity is mainly to recall his past.

First of all, Harry's memory is selective, and his first paragraph of stream of consciousness description is all around "snow". He thinks of the innocent girls who walked through the snow until they died when he left the battlefield at the railway station in Karagatch; on Christmas day in the Goethal Mountains, they helped a deserter chase a gendarme until the snow covered the deserter's tracks; he skied fast at Christmas in Hillenz; they played cards and gambled all week in the great snow storm; one Christmas they bombed and strafed Austrian officers, some of whom had just skied with them; and he also thinks of some great skiing experiences. From these memories, it can be seen that Harry had fought in wars and seen innocent lives lost in the snow. These deaths have a great impact on Harry. He finds inner peace through fast and exciting skiing, a lot of gambling and other more extreme indulgence, which also reflects Harry's past absurd wasted time. Not only does Harry think of snow, but he also recalled the deaths of many people, which was a way of implying that he was coming to terms with the grim reality of dying. There are also many memories of Harry in the novel, which are selective as well as fragmented. Each recalled story is in a different time and space. Various space-time images appear in a novel at the same time,

forming a synchronic psychological space and enhancing the sense of space in the novel.

Later in the novel, as Harry falls into a coma, he fantasizes that he's waiting for a plane that takes him higher and higher out of the decadent, deathly plain, until he sees ahead the unbelievably white Mountain of Kilimanjaro, his ultimate destination. Harry's goal of starting from scratch in Africa is finally realized in his mental space after his death through fantasy.

In Harry's narration of these memories, he first needs to get out of the existing space and time, return to the past space and time by association, and even realize his unfinished goals by means of fantasy. In recollection, the memory is probably no longer true, and the recalling subject will reconstruct the memory of the past based on the present. In the process of recalling his life, Harry selectively recalls some events, which makes him realize his boredom and loss of mind. All these require him to jump out of the limitation of time and space, and only when he has a certain distance can he find it. Therefore, this kind of reminiscence itself also has a double spatiotemporal nature. The fragments of Harry's memories of himself in different stages constitute the psychological space of Harry in the novel. In addition, the final fantasy of the novel is cleverly designed to make the reader realize that Harry is dead, which disrupts the real timing and enhances the sense of space.

V. CONCLUSION

The novel enriches the spatial features of the novel and enables readers to have a more comprehensive understanding of Harry's life journey through the juxtaposition of two geographic Spaces with comparative and symbolic significance, the juxtaposition of the realistic space with the objective narration of the scene dialogue and the psychological space described by the stream of consciousness, as well as the juxtaposition of the memory fragments in different space-time inside the psychological space. In the process of rediscovering the formalized space of the novel, it also highlights the theme of spiritual immortality in the novel, realizing the perfect unity of content and form.

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