

《阳羨书生》的奇异叙事空间和独特叙事结构

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内容摘要: 中国六朝（三国至隋朝的 6 个朝代，【229 年至 589 年】）小说《阳羨书生》在叙事空间和叙事结构上呈现出诸多独特性，这些特征在经典叙事理论中尚未得到充分讨论。本文对这一文本的叙事空间和结构进行了比较详细的分析，指出其独特之所在，并认为，对这种独特性的研究，在某种程度上丰富了对叙事范畴和叙事模式的研究。

关键词: 叙事空间 叙事结构 绞心结构

On the Weird Narrative Space and Unique Narrative Structure of

The Scholar of Yangxian

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Abstract “The Scholar of Yangxian”, a story of the Chinese Six Dynasties period, is an exemplary text that presents weird narrative space and unique narrative structure which are not within the scope of study in the contemporary narrative theories yet. This paper demonstrates, after detailed analyses, how the narrative space in this story is different from normal space presentation in fiction, and how the narrative structure is unique. The paper maintains that the space building and the structure of the narration are not within the scope of discussion. Being such, this story contributes to and enriches the narrative explorations in literary studies.

Key words: narrative space narrative structure mis en abyme

The story of “Yangxian Goose-Cage” (also entitled Yangxian Scholar) written in the Chinese 6 dynasties period, is a most weird and unique one, whose space and structure are rarely seen in literature. A study of it can certainly enrich the understanding of narrative fiction. This paper attempts to investigate into the narrative space and structure of the story.

The story goes like this.

There was once a merchant named Xu Yan, who lived in Yangxian, a place in the now Zhengjiang, China. One day when travelling on his way in Sui An, he met with a young scholar about the age of 17-18. The scholar complained to him that his feet hurt very much and he wanted to be carried in the goose-cage. Thinking that he was kidding, he allowed him to do as he wished. To his surprise, the scholar went into the cage, sitting together with two geese, who felt quite at ease with the stranger. In addition, the cage did not change the shape, and the merchant did not feel any heavier with him inside.

A little later they stopped to a rest under a tree. The scholar then came out of the cage. He said to the Yan the Merchant: “I want to give a dinner in your honour for your kindness”. Yan replied: “Thank you.” Then the scholar brought out from his mouth cooking utensils, and all the delicate food. It was an amazing feast indeed, as was not seen in the world. After several drinks, the Scholar said to Yan: “A lady has been following me all along the way, can I invite her to join us?” Yan replied: “Sure.” Then the scholar brought out from his mouth a pretty lady of 16 years of age, beautifully dressed, together with them at table.

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Soon the scholar felt drunk and went to sleep. The lady out of his mouth said the Yan: "Though he and I are a couple, I am not happy with him. I too have a boyfriend following me all the way. Now that the scholar is asleep, can we invite my boyfriend? Would you please keep it secret?" Yan replied: "OK." Then out from her mouth came a young man of around 24 years of age, very handsome, who chatted casually with Yan. Then the Scholar was about to awake, the lady then brought out from her mouth an embroidered curtain, which hid the young man from the scholar's view, and the scholar and the lady went to rest together.

Then the young man said to Yan, "It is true that this lady has some affection for me, but we are not on very good terms. I secretly have a girlfriend with me all the while. I want to date her, and I hope you'll keep the secret." Yan replied: "OK." So the young man brought out a lady from his mouth, who was about 20 years old. The three drank together, and they had a good time. At hearing the Scholar's getting up, the young man said to Yan: "they two are now awake." And he swallowed back the woman he brought out from mouth.

At this time the lady came out of the curtain, and said to Yan: "the scholar is getting up." At that she swallowed back the young man she brought out from her mouth. The scholar was now up. Sorry to have kept you waiting during my sleep. You must have been lonely being alone when I was snapping. Now that it is late, we have to say good-bye. After that he swallowed back the lady he brought out of his mouth and the cooking things too, leaving as a gift the bronze plate, saying "I leave this to you as a reminder of our pleasant meeting."

This is a most weird story. There are other stories weird as this one. The Monkey in *Journey to the West* can go as far as 180,000 li at one sumerset. He is able to have numerous transformations, he can go up to the sky and deep down into the earth, and he can go even inside the buffalo. Jia Baoyu in *Dream of Red Mansions* was born out of a huge stone; the 108 heroes in *Water Margin* were incarnations of Heavenly Spirits and Earthly Fiends. In *Gargantua and Pantagru*, the former could make a terrible flood at one urinating.

All great works demonstrate the author's extraordinary imagination. But there are some uniqueness in this story. Jia Baoyu, the Monkey, the heroes in water Margin all have their origin. But where was the Scholar in the story from? We have no answer. We only know that he was lying on the roadside. He was surely not an ordinary person, for he could sneak into the cage without disturbing the peace of the geese, and he did not to add weight to the cage when he was inside. And he could do miracles, bringing out of his mouth utensils and even a lady, who in her turn could do the same. The identity of such a scholar is an enigma to the readers.

If we take this story as a type, what's the value of this story? What narratological contributions does it make to narrative fiction? There are surely many things for us to consider. But let's focus on two most important aspects: narrative space and narrative structure.

Kant pointed out that time and space are two indispensable forms for human beings to understand the universe, and the way for people to construct their life experiences. Narrative is the discourse for human experience, and can never be without time and space. Space can be divided into literal space and metaphorical space. The former include the physical space in which fictional characters have their activities, such as houses, squares, theaters. The latter include ideological space, social space. (Marie Laure Ryan: "Space" in *Handbook of Narratology*, Walter de Gruyter, 2009, p.420) (Marie Laure Ryan: "Space" in *Handbook of Narratology*, Walter de Gruyter, 2009, p.420). Narratologists have done a lot about narrative space. Joseph Frank(1954)made a study of

the constructing of overlapping space in *Madame Bovary*; Gilles Fauconnier's mental space studies the brain operation and language cognition. Susan Stanford Friedman (1993) studies spatial reading of narrative. Bachelard (1964) studied how space affects and shape human thinking and cognition. Others like Lakoff, Johnson, Turner, Lotman did profound research on space. Bahktin thought that space is always mixed time, and it is always to be viewed ideologically.

According to the above summary of the categorization of space, we can roughly categorize the space of the story under discussion into literal space. But here are some problems to consider. The first is the representation of literal space. Usually the literal space in fiction is presented as the space in the real world, which gives a lifelike sense. We can have an example from the description of a scene in *Dream of the Red Mansions*. The following is taken from Chapter 5 where the author describes what Baoyu sees in Qin Keqin's room.

In the course of this exchange the party had made its way to Qin-shi's bedroom. As Bao-yu entered, a subtle whiff of the most delicious perfume assailed his nostrils, making a sweet stickiness inside his drooping eyelids and causing all the joints in his body to dissolve.

'What a lovely smell!'

He repeated the words several times over.

Inside the room there was a painting by Tang Yin entitled 'Spring Slumber' depicting a beautiful woman asleep under a crab-apple tree, whose buds had not yet opened. The painting was flanked on either side by a pair of calligraphic scrolls inscribed with a couplet from the brush of the Song poet Qin Guan:

(on one side)

The coldness of spring has imprisoned the soft buds in a wintry dream;

(on the other side)

The fragrance of wine has intoxicated the beholder with imagined flower-scents.

On a table stood an antique mirror that had once graced the tiring-room of the lascivious empress Wu Ze-tian. Beside it stood the golden platter on which Flying Swallow once danced for her emperor's delight. And on the platter was that very quince which the villainous An Lu-shan threw at beautiful Yang Gui-fei, bruising her plump white breast. At the far end of the room stood the priceless bed on which Princess Shou-yang was sleeping out of doors under the eaves of the Han-zhang Palace when the plum-flower lighted on her forehead and set a new fashion for coloured patches. Over it hung a canopy commissioned by Princess Tong-chang entirely fashioned out of ropes of pearls.

'I like it here,' said Bao-yu happily.

'My room,' said Qin-shi with a proud smile, 'is lit for an immortal to sleep in.' And she unfolded a quilted coverlet, whose silk had been laundered by the fabulous Xi Shi, and arranged the double head-rest that Hong-niang once carried for her amorous mistress,

The nurses now helped Bao-yu into bed and then tiptoed out, leaving him attended only by his four young maids: Aroma, Skybright, Musk, and Ripple. Qin-shi told them to go outside and stop the cats from lighting on the eaves.

Here what we sense is a lifelike physical space. There is a room, on the wall of which hangs a picture. On the tea-table, there are things we are familiar with; there is a bed. All the things are from our daily experience. The Characters' words and deeds do not bring any sense of alienation to us. However, such is not the case with Yangxian Scholar. The space is fantastic and arouses our curiosity: a young man in a cage for geese, how can he get in? How can he make do with the narrow space? But the story says he was sitting inside quite comfortably together with the geese, with the cage not becoming more spacious.

There are descriptions of other weird space. Take for example the space the Monkey experienced when encaged in the big symbols at Leiyin Temple by the yellow-robed demon. The space was narrow to the extreme, when the Monkey grew bigger, the space grew bigger too, just big enough to confine the Monkey. But when the monkey changed into a small shape, the space changed accordingly, just to be small enough to make the monkey uncomfortable.

There are similarities in the space of the present story and that in the Monkey's space in which he was imprisoned. But there are also differences. The space can expand or contract. One is to make the contained uncomfortable, the other is to just contain the contained. The second is the contained, once out of the container, will have a wonderful show of their power. No matter whether it is the Monkey or the scholar. The third is, the space provider has a double relationship with the contained. Are these true of other stories? We'll have more examinations to prove it.

Inside the cymbals Monkey found it pitch black and so hot that he was soon pouring with sweat. Push and shove though he might, there was no way he could get out, and when in desperation he hit out wildly all around with his iron cudgel he could not move the cymbals by even a fraction of an inch. Then he made a hand-spell that made him ten thousand feet tall; the cymbals grew with him. There was not a crack anywhere through which a chink of light could get in. He made another hand-spell to make himself smaller and shrank till he was as tiny as a mustard-seed. The cymbals shrank with him, and still there was no hole.

He blew a magic breath on the iron cudgel, said, "Change!" and made it into a flagpole with which to prop the cymbals up. Then he pulled two of the longer hairs from the back of his head, blew on them, said, "Change!" and turned them into a five-part drill with a plum-blossom shaped bit which he turned a thousand times or more. There was a rasping noise but the drill made no impression.

By now he was feeling desperate, so he made another handspell and recited the words, "*Om ram* peaceful dharma world; eternal keen purity of the heavenly unity."

The space is certainly an interesting aspect to investigate into. The structure is another interesting thing. Now let's examine the structure. We know there are different levels of narrative. The second level is built on the first level, and the third on the second etc. Each level has its dependence. The combination of all levels seem to be the ripples made by throwing a stone into the water. Examples can be found in *Wuthering Heights* where we have Lockwood's narrative, the nanny's narrative and other characters' narrative. Andre Gide's *Les*

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Faux-Monnaieurs is another. Such a technique is called “Chinese Box” by some, but the more literary term is “mise en abyme”. If we are to draw a diagram of the structure, it might be something like this:

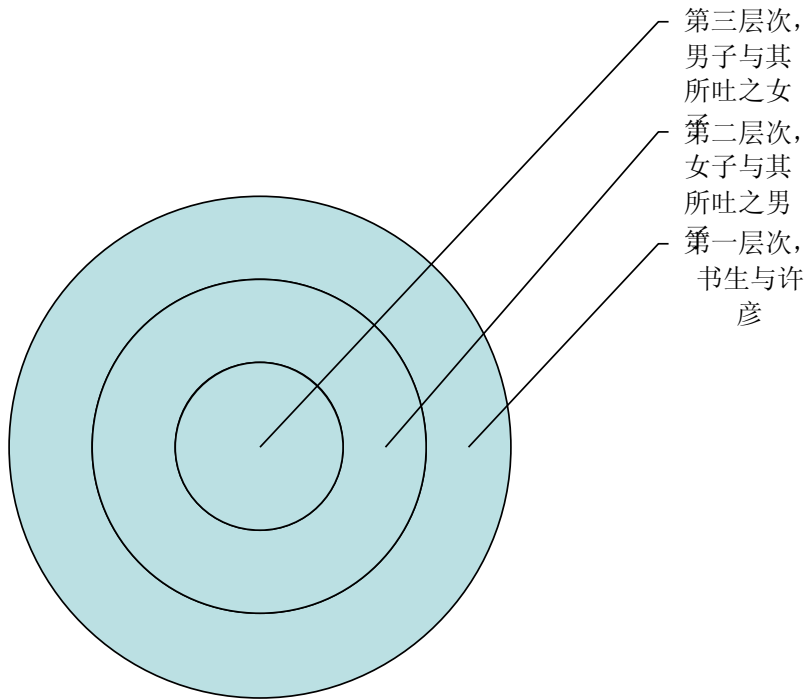


Diagram 1

However, considering the complex sharing, overlapping of the information and the independence of each story itself, the above clear-cut diagram is not appropriate and must be revised as the follows:

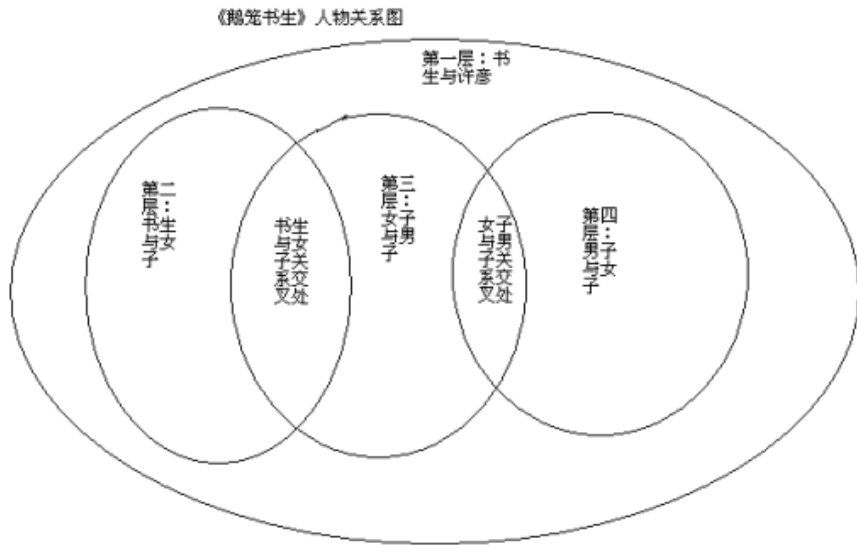


Diagram 2

In this diagram, we can see the different levels of the stories, and shared information and the hidden part of the information, the overlapping and the common ground. This kind of narrative structure is not discussed yet, for most of the narrative structures, if they are of different levels, would be like the first one.

Concluding remarks:

The value of the story is that it provides a sample text that shows a kind of space and structure not discussed yet in narrative studies. The examination of the present text contributes to a new sub-area of study.

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Quotes 引文

1. 《阳羨鵝籠》 故事：

本故事原文出《续齐谐记》，见《太平广记》卷二百八十四，幻术一。

阳羨许彦于绥安山行，遇一书生，年十七八，卧路侧，云脚痛，求寄鵝籠中。彦以为戏言。书生便入籠，籠亦不更广，书生亦不更小，宛然与双鵝并坐，鵝亦不惊。彦负籠而去，都不觉重。

前行息树下，书少乃出籠，谓彦曰：“欲为君薄设。”彦曰：“善。”乃口中吐出一铜奩子，奩子中具诸饰饌，珍馐方丈。其器皿皆铜物。气味香旨，世所罕见。酒数行，谓彦曰：“向将一妇人自随，今欲暂邀之。”彦曰：“善。”又于口中吐一女子，年可十五六，衣服绮丽，容貌殊绝，共坐宴。

俄而书生醉卧，此女谓彦曰：“虽与书生结妻，而实怀怨。向亦窃得一男子同行，书生既眠，暂唤之；愿君勿言。”彦曰：“善。”女子于口中吐出一男子，年可二十三四，亦颖悟可爱，仍与彦叙寒温。书生卧欲觉，女子口吐一锦行障遮书生，书生乃留女子共卧。

男子谓彦曰：“此女子虽有心，情亦不甚向，复窃得一女人同行。今欲暂见之，愿君勿泄。”彦曰：“善。”男子又于口中吐一妇人，年可二十许，共酌，戏谈甚久。闻书生动声，男子曰：“二人眠已觉。”因取所吐女人，还纳口中。

须臾，书生处女乃出，谓彦曰：“书生欲起。”乃吞向男子，独对彦坐。然后书生起，谓彦曰：“暂眠遂久，君独坐当悒悒邪？日又晚，当与君别。”遂吞其女子，诸器皿悉纳口中。留大铜盘，可二尺广，与彦别曰：“无以藉君，与君相忆也。”¹（出《续齐谐记》见《太平广记》卷二百八十四）

2. 《红楼梦》第五回中宝玉在秦可卿闺房的所见：

说着大家来至秦氏房中。刚至房门，便有一股细细的甜香袭人而来。宝玉觉得眼饧骨软，连说“好香！”入房向壁上观时，有唐伯虎画的《海棠春睡图》，两边有宋学士秦太虚写的一副

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对联，其联云：

嫩寒锁梦因春冷，芳气笼人是酒香。

案上设着武则天当日镜室中设的宝镜，一边摆着飞燕立着舞过的金盘，盘内盛着安禄山掷过伤了太真乳的木瓜。上面设着寿昌公主于含章殿下卧的榻。悬的是同昌公主制的联珠帐。宝玉含笑连说：“这里好！”秦氏笑道：“我这屋子大约神仙也可以住得了。”说着亲自展开了西子浣过的纱衾，移了红娘抱过的鸳枕。于是众奶母伏侍宝玉卧好。款款散了，只留袭人，媚人，晴雯，麝月四个丫鬟为伴。秦氏便分咐小丫鬟们，好生在廊檐下看着猫儿狗儿打架。

3. 《西游记》第六十五回“妖邪假设小雷音，四众皆遭大厄难”写的是唐僧师徒四人来到小雷音寺遭遇黄眉怪的故事。孙悟空见怪不拜，反倒举棒便打，这时，

只听得半空中“叮当”一声，撒下一付金铙，把行者连头带足合在金铙之内。

行者合在金铙里，黑洞洞的，躁得满身流汗，左拱右撞，不能得出；急使铁棒乱打，莫想得动分毫。他思想将身往外一挣，要挣破那金铙；遂念着一个诀，就长有千百丈高，那金铙也随他身长，全无一些瑕缝光明。却又把身子往下一小，小如芥菜子儿，那铙也就随身

小了，更没些孔窍。他又把铁棒吹口仙气，变作旛竿一样，撑住金铙；他却把脑后毫毛拔

下两根，变作梅花头五瓣钻儿，挨着棒下钻有千百下，只钻得苍苍响亮，再不钻动一些。

……就是铸成了囹圄的一般。那行者在里边东张张，西望望，爬过来，滚过去，莫想看见一些光亮。