A Comparative Study of Dictionary of the Khazars, Maqiao Dictionary and Qinghai Tibet Dictionary

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Abstract: The three novels are all written in the form of dictionary style, and the entries become the basic unit of synchronic narration. The entries in the Dictionary of the Khazars and Maqiao Dictionary form a certain narrative series by connecting the entries of characters and events. Therefore, the entries in the two works are essentially temporal causality. However, there is no plot chain between the entries of the Qinghai Tibet Dictionary, only some fragments with centripetal force, so it is a synchronic space juxtaposition relationship. Among the three works, the Qinghai Tibet Dictionary is more experimental and completely anti-plot and anti-character. it is a Book of wisdom about the history, geography, religion, culture, customs and legends of the Qinghai Tibet Plateau.

1. Introduction

The *Qinghai Tibet Dictionary*, a novel of Ge Rong Zhui Mei, adopts the unique form of "dictionary style" novels. A dictionary is a reference book for people to consult and a collection of knowledge, while the novel is a literary genre, a fictional and imaginary narrative text. The dictionary and the novel are two different styles. The dictionary novel is a style between the dictionary and the novel. It not only has the form characteristics of the dictionary, but also has the diachronic narrative function of spreading the plot of the novel. Dictionary novels break the situation that novels have been dominated by diachronic narration for a long time and provide the possibility of synchronic narration.

Ge Rong Zhui Mei's aesthetic pursuit of synchronic narrative or spatial narrative is reflected in all his novels, which can be seen from his early works *The Village Without Time*, to the novel the *Hidden Face* and the collection of short and medium stories the *Qinghai Tibet Sky* recently published. In order to get rid of the shackles of the diachronic narrative and achieve his artistic pursuit, he disrupted the coherence and integrity of the plot, cut the narrative into pieces and recombined it. The *Qinghai Tibet Dictionary* is the most audacious experiment of this aesthetic pursuit.

2. Entry: the Basic Unit of Synchronic Narration

Milorad Pavic's *Dictionary of the Khazars* and Han Shaogong's *Maqiao Dictionary* both borrow the form of a dictionary and adopt the synchronic structure, or as Zhao Xianzhang said, "these two novels are trying to imitate the synchronic structure of the dictionary text."[1]A dictionary is made up of entries. If a novel wants to imitate the dictionary text, it must imitate the form that the dictionary uses entries to express. Therefore, the basic unit of synchronic narrative or spatial structure of dictionary novels is the entry. Each entry carries the narrative of the novel, which is the foundation stone of each unit and block, supporting the narrative building of the novel text.

There are 67 entries in the *Dictionary of the Khazars*, which narrates the sudden disappearance of the hazar nation in the middle ages.The novel is composed of three parts: red book, green book and yellow book, which are the historical materials of Christianity, Islam and Ancient Judaism about the hazar nationality, each part is composed of several terms. In order to make the novel more like the dictionary text, the introduction to the beginning and end of the compilation of the

dictionary is explained in detail in the "Introduction to the volume" before the text, and the "version tracing"is carried out; the introduction also provides the reader with a use instruction, which explains all the examples, and claims that the novel can be used like a dictionary. The novel is followed by "supplement 1"and "Supplement 2", which further makes the novel look more like a "dictionary". In this way, the novel has the form of a dictionary, which lays the foundation for synchronic narration.

There are 115 entries in the *Maqiao Dictionary*.These 115 basic units do not constitute a coherent plot and do not have the integrity of the novel plot. They are presented in the form of entries. These entries are only the "introducers" by which the author narrates. Each entry is an independent meaning unit.In other words, each entry is an independent symbol-structure whole, maintaining its own structure boundary and meaning category, but all the structures are unified in the spatial scene of Maqiao. They interact with each other, influence each other, transform, generate and construct the synchronic narrative architecture of the *Maqiao Dictionary*.Lexicographic novel provides the greatest possibility for synchronic narrative, because its entry as the basic narrative unit is relatively independent, which causes the break of narrative or the gap between narrative units, thus greatly weakening the coherence and diachrony of plot in time dimension, and strengthening synchronicity in space dimension. If a narrative axis is divided according to the approach of structuralist linguistics, the plot chain of normal novels shows the horizontal combination relationship in time, while the dictionary novels show the vertical aggregation relationship in space.

The *Qinghai Tibet Dictionary* is more like a dictionary text. The whole book consists of about 1065 entries, that is to say, the whole text is broken down into more than 1000 pieces by entries. Each fragment is a symbol-structure whole, which maintains its relative independence and integrity. These terms, long or short, do not form a complete plot chain, they are not vertically aggregated in the time dimension, but horizontally combined in the space dimension.Readers get real freedom when reading, just like turning over a dictionary, they can read from the beginning to the end, read from the back to the front, or start reading from the middle, without feeling the confusion of the plot content. Compared with the *Dictionary of the Khazars* and the *Maqiao Dictionary*, the *Qinghai Tibet Dictionary* has the strongest destruction on the diachrony and coherence of narration. Its entries can not find any connection in the sense of plot, but only dominated by the background of Qinghai Tibet. These terms are not related to other terms vertically, but they generate different categories with other terms horizontally, presenting the culture, religion, customs, myths and legends of the Qinghai Tibet Plateau, as well as the author's spiritual feelings.

3. Logical Association between Entries

All the entries in the dictionary novels are in a vertical aggregate relationship in the spatial dimension, but this is only a logical connection in the form. As a matter of fact, dictionary novels only put on the guise of dictionaries, which are still narrative in nature; in other words, dictionary novels bring its narrative text into the form of dictionaries. Therefore, the external form is only a cover up for the narrative nature, and the logical connection between entries is actually more complex.

The *Dictionary of the Khazars* is composed of the historical materials of Christianity, Islam and Ancient Judaism. It is called red book, green book and yellow book respectively. There are 67 entries in the book. In terms of external form, these 67 entries are just like the entries in the dictionary text, which is an aggregate spatial juxtaposition, but it is only a disguise of form. In fact, under the cover of the form of the dictionary, the entries in the *Dictionary of the Khazars* establish a relatively complete narrative series through the relations of characters, events and semantics. In other words, by borrowing the external form of the entry, the novel text presents a spatial structure, but still tells the story and weaves the plot through the association between the entries.The content of the novel is a historical record of the mystery of the disappearance of the hazare nation in the middle ages. Although it is recorded in the form of entries, it will be found after reading that the content of the novel is not really as fragmented as the entries in the dictionary, but as a whole narrative. At least three narrative series have been set up in the text, namely, Christian, Islamic and

Ancient Judaism records on the hazar issue. There are different views and even conflicts among the three series, but there are also mutual echoes of characters and events. In this way, the records of the three major religions on the hazar issue are essentially a multi angle narrative. Therefore, the logical relationship between the entries in the *Dictionary of the Khazars* presents such a complex situation: in the form, it presents an aggregate-spatial juxtaposition, in essence, the entries are connected with each other to form a narrative chain, showing a combined temporal-causal relationship.

The *Maqiao Dictionary* is also a space parallel relationship in form, but in essence, it also forms a narrative text with the help of a series of entries, which is only higher than the lexicalization of the *Dictionary of the Khazars.*In other words, the narrative chain established by it is relatively weak in the intensity of combination between events. It takes the form of dictionary style and weakens the coherence of narration, but it still has the characters, events and other narrative elements of traditional novels. The author lists the main characters and gives a brief description of their identity and occupation, such as Ma Benyi (secretary of the Party branch of Maqiao Village), Fucha (junior high school students of Maqiao, accountant), He Buzhang (cadres of the commune), etc.These characters are distributed in 115 dialect words, and the same character is repeated in different terms. Therefore, through the repeated appearance of the characters in different entries, or through the characters and events, the related entries are connected to establish a narrative chain. As a result, the entries in *Maqiao Dictionary* are in general spatial juxtaposition, and some of them form a narrative series which is a temporal-causal relationship.

The lexicalization of the *Qinghai Tibet Dictionary* is the highest, and the entries are not only in form but also in essence spatial juxtaposition. Its 1060 entries are relatively independent, and there is no narrative text formed by the association of characters and events. It is a collection of fragment stories, mountain geography, local customs, religious customs and meditation. There is no denying that some entries form a series, but not a narrative Series in the sense of plot.For example, the term "Fu Zang" appears in Chapters 4, 14 and 16. In Chapter 4, the term "Fu Zang" describes the event that the living Buddha of karma found the Golden Buddha on the cliff. In Chapter 14, a master obtained scriptures from the mouth of the water monster in the river. In Chapter 16, the term "Fu Zang"is the explanation and understanding of Fu Zang itself. So it can be seen that the three entries do not form a plot. The first two entries narrate and the second one explains. They belong to the same category.The entries in the *Qinghai Tibet Dictionary* can be divided into many such categories, such as "rivers", including the Yarlung Zangbo River, the Yangtze River, the Yellow River, the Nujiang River, etc. the author gives a brief introduction to these rivers and expresses his feelings in life. These entries can be divided into two categories from the perspective of narrative or not, that is, narrative entries and non narrative entries, which cooperate with each other.The former is visual and narrative, while the latter is perceptive and abstract. The former is the visual explanation or proof of the latter. For example, the first two entries of "Fu Zang" in Chapters 4, 14 and 16 above are narrative, the second is non narrative, and the first two entries are factual evidence of the latter. Although these terms do not form a narrative chain, they still form a complete text. They are all unified under the theme of "Qinghai Tibet", and all meanings point to a common center.

4. The Text Experiment of Anti-Plot and Anti-Character in the Qinghai Tibet Dictionary

From the above discussion, it is found that the *Dictionary of the Khazars* and *Maqiao Dictionary* have strong pioneering experimental properties. With the help of dictionary style, the writers try to overcome the time-threadiness narrative mode of traditional novels. Under the cover of the dictionary form, the two novels form a certain narrative series with the help of the series of entries, showing the plot, telling the story and constructing the whole narrative text. But the *Qinghai Tibet Dictionary* goes further in text experiment.There is no plot or characters in the novel. Some entries narrate a small event in the way of fragments, but the main purpose is not to shape the characters, but to interpret some ideas or wisdom, or to bring out the feelings and thoughts of life by this event.For example, the term "bribery" in Chapter 4 tells such a small story: a man is devout in providing for Bodhisattva and praying for the safety of his family, of he become rich and meets a beautiful lover. Later, he told a living Buddha his idea. The living Buddha scolded him for being

full of greed. At the same time, he told him that the seeds of good should be cultivated slowly, and then the good will be rewarded. This is a story. The purpose is not to shape characters, but to lead to the criticism of greed and the promotion of good .Another example is the story of "gold bar" in Chapter 4: a man is starving in the wilderness, but he can't find food with gold bar in his arms. Later, he drinks highland barley porridge in a poor family's home, and quietly puts the gold bar beside the family's kitchen when he leaves. Many years later, the owner meets him in the street and returns the gold bar to him, for the reason that there is no tradition of letting guests eat and letting hin pay money.[2]This story explains the truth that gold bars can't compare with a grain at a certain time, and embodies the simple and kind spirit of the Highlanders. There are many such narrative entries in *Qinghai Tibet Dictionary*, but they don't connect a plot chain, and the characters don't appear repeatedly.

The entries of the *Qinghai Tibet Dictionary* form categories according to the way of vertical aggregation, and different categories cross combine in the text to construct the whole text. None of these categories form a plot chain. There are five types of entries in the *Qinghai Tibet Dictionary*: root words, story words, dream words, examination words and perception words.[3] The relations among these five kinds of entries are completely loose. Each entry is an island of meaning, but they are also petals of wisdom, blooming on the tree of "Qinghai Tibet". The *Qinghai Tibet Dictionary* is not a text constructed by plot and characters, but a collage of fragments with common centripetal force, with strong anti plot and anti character color.

To sum up, the three novels all try to get rid of the shackles of diachronic narration and write in the form of dictionary style.The entry becomes the basic unit of synchronic narration, and the logical relation between entries is a kind of space parallel relation in form.However, in fact, the entries of the *Dictionary of the Khazars* and *Maqiao Dictionary* form a certain narrative series by connecting the entries of characters and events, bringing the narration into the form of the dictionary, and narrating in the form of the dictionary, so in fact, the entries of the two works are time causality.However, there is no plot chain between the entries of the *Qinghai Tibet Dictionary*, only some fragments with centripetal force, so it is a synchronic space juxtaposition relationship. All of the three works are avant-garde text experiments, but the *Qinghai Tibet Dictionary* is more avant-garde, because it is completely anti-plot and anti-character.It is more like a dictionary. And it is a Book of wisdom about the history, geography, religion, culture, customs and legends of the Qinghai Tibet Plateau.

References

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