

Differences between *The Mystery of Marie Roget* and *Five Little Pigs* Regarding Narrative Perspectives and Narrative Voices

Li Zhang^{1*}, Huijuan Li²

¹Professor of North China Electric Power University in China, studying American literature, literary and non-literary translation, North China Electric Power University, China

²Post-Graduate Student, Majoring in English of North China Electric Power University, China

*Corresponding author: Li Zhang

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Abstract

American writer Edgar Allan Poe and English writer Agatha Christie both are masters of detective novels. The former is the pioneer of detective stories and the latter is the “golden age” of detective novels. Both of them have achieved great successes and enjoyed a great reputation. *The Mystery of Marie Roget* and *Five Little Pigs* are representatives of the “armchair detective mode” novels written by Allan Poe and Agatha respectively. The former mainly uses the first person perspective and male narrative voice, and it realizes the transformation from “the first person external perspective” to “the first person internal perspective”, while the latter mainly uses the third person perspective and female narrative voice, and it changes from zero focalization into internal focalization. By analyzing the differences between two novels regarding narrative perspectives and narrative voices, it shows that Edgar Allan Poe strictly upholds the “unity of effect” theory in his creation and Agatha Christie adheres to her simple feminist consciousness in her novels.

Keywords: *The Mystery of Marie Roget*, *Five Little Pigs*, narrative perspectives, narrative voices.

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INTRODUCTION

The “armchair detective mode” novel is a type of novel that mainly relies on detective's personal reasoning. Detectives did not go to the scene to collect evidence, only rely on other people to report clues to crack the case. In such novels, it is not necessary for detectives to run around keeping track of cases. What they often do is lying in the armchair, tracing clues with the second hand information. For example, newspaper reports, reminiscences of client, testimony or related documents all can be the second hand information. Here “staying at home” mainly refers to the detective does not investigate crime scenes personally, so it is necessary for detective go out to visit related personnel under the particular circumstances.

The core of this kind of detective novel is reasoning, which could produce strong reading pleasure. At the same time, because all the clues are the second hand information and the truth of the case depends on the logical reasoning of the detective, thus it is easy for readers to doubt detectives' supposition and may get aesthetic fatigue. Due to the limitations of this kind of novel, it often produces short stories, such as Edgar Allan Poe's *The Mystery of Marie Roget*. However, there is no lack of wonderful full-length novel, like Agatha Christie *Five Little Pigs*.

The American novelist, Edgar Allan Poe's *The Mystery of Marie Roget*, centering on detective Dupin's reasoning, tells the story of a salesgirl in a cigarette shop killed by a naval officer. The whole story is based on a news report (an unsettled case that happened in New York), reflecting Poe's concern for reality and calls for social justice. With his meticulous logical reasoning ability, Dupin examines criminal mentality and various news commentaries collected by his assistant, and he eventually locked the suspect on the army officer who had eloped with Mary Roger two years ago. Although *The Mystery of Marie Roget* is called an exciting continuation to *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, it has been always attributed to Allen Poe's subclass of detective novels. “The Queen of Crime”, Agatha Christie *Five Little Pigs*'s tells detective Hercule Poirot solved an unsettled law case of 16 years ago and prove a lady, Caroline Crale's innocence, revealing the change of love and hatred in human nature. Poirot finds out the real murderer, Amyas's lover Elsa Greer with his outstanding reasoning skills and psychoanalysis. It discusses the influence of memory on life through a murder case. In general, Detective stories reflect the most acute, fiercest and the most complicated contradictions or struggles in society, so they have a remarkably strong appeal for readers.

Recently, researches on Poe's works in China are mainly divided into four parts: themes, writing styles, literary critical theory and comparative studies. At first there are many themes in Poe's fiction, like love, death, beauty or complex humanity. For example, Jia Linlin, "An Aesthetic Interpretation of the Ugly World Described by Allan Poe." talks about the evil nature of human being in Poe's fiction, indicating the complicity of human nature and Poe's pursuit for light. Then, as for Allan Poe's writing skills, which centers on symbolism, gothic styles, detective reasoning and narrative perspectives. For instance, Liu Qin, "Study on the Narration of Allan Poe's Short Novels" explores narrative art in Poe's fiction, including narrative structure, narrative time, narrative perspective and fiction space. Next, Poe's work can be interpreted from literary critical theory, such as archetypal criticism, psychoanalysis, deconstruction or modernism. Finally, it is the comparative study between Allan Poe and Chinese writers. Cao Man, "A Comparison of the Psychological Tendencies Between Allan Poe and Meng Jiao in Creation", compares Allan Poe with Meng Jiao, a Chinese poet, revealing similarities between them. Although Agatha Christie has a large number of readers in China, the researches on her and her works are relatively scarce. These researches can be divided into biography, femininity, creative mode and comparative study. Wang Anyi, "Deluxe Family: Agatha Christie's World", systematically studies Agatha's works and comments on them in an essay. Cui Di, "Mirage—On the Charm of Christie Agatha's fiction", analyzes plots, writing techniques as well as characters in Agatha's works. He also studies three kinds of detective modes, distinguishing the two opposite women of "red rose" and "white snowflake". As for comparative studies, scholars mainly compare Agatha with Japanese Keigo Higashino or the British writer Arthur Conan Doyle.

Researches on Poe's work abroad is relatively mature, and it started from Poe's first poem published in the middle of 19th century, which can fall into 3 stages. The first stage emphasizes relationship between text and society. Meanwhile, some scholars speculate Poe's character and living environments from his writing style. Bonaparte Marie, "The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe: A Psycho-analytic Interpretation" talks about Allan Poe's personal life, discovering Poe's mother fixation and surrender to patriarchy. It laid a foundation for study Poe's fiction with psychological criticism. The second stage centers on the text itself, which may be influenced by New Criticism. Quinn Arther Hobson is one of the most important scholars, who tries to reduce the impact of Poe's social background, and helps people turn studies into the fiction itself. The third stage focuses on some literary criticisms as deconstruction or structuralism. In 21st century, Yu Lei believes that there are three trends in Poe's researches today: "return to ethics, return to creation and return to the mainland"[1]. As for

researches aboard about Agatha Christie, it can be divided into the study on works, the research on writers, the general comments, the cultural research and writing style. In "Agatha Christie Investigating Femininity", Meria Makinen indicates the "feminization" phenomenon in British society in terms of Agatha's novels. In addition, in "Murder by the book? Feminism & the Crime Novel", Sally. R. Munt discusses the female creation in detective novels under the patriarchal society.

From the above-mentioned, few scholars compare Allen Poe's novels with the Agatha's novels to interpret differences in their creations. Therefore, based on the two "armchair detective mode" novels, *The Mystery of Marie Roget* and *Five Little Pigs*, this paper indicates two detective novelists have different literary creations and writing styles in terms of narrative perspective and narrative voice. That is, The former mainly uses the first person perspective and male narrative voice, and it realizes the transformation from "the first person external perspective" to "the first person internal perspective", while the latter mainly uses the third person perspective and female narrative voice, and it changes from zero focalization to internal focalization. Therefore, this paper shows that Edgar Allan Poe strictly upholds the "unity of effect" theory in his creation and Agatha Christie adheres to her simple feminist consciousness in the novel.

Narrative Perspectives

The French literary theorist, Genette divides narrative perspective into "zero focalization", "internal focalization" and "external focalization". Among them, internal focalization has three aspects: the fixed internal focalization, transformational internal focalization and multiple internal focalizations. Later, Shen Dan [2] further divides three divisions of Genette into zero perspective, internal perspective, the first person external perspective and the third person internal perspective. At the same time, internal perspective includes the first person internal perspective and the third person internal perspective. In Kearns's view, the narrator produces a great effect on the construction of a novel's meaning [3]. That indicates narrative perspectives produce a great effect on the novels. Generally speaking, in order to reduce the monotonicity of storytelling, some writers will intersperse different narrative perspectives in their works, like Poe and Agatha. Poe's *The Mystery of Marie Roget* embodies the transformation of the first person perspective, changing from the first person external perspective to the first person internal perspective, which realizes the objectivity and authenticity of the story. Agatha's *Five Little Pigs* also realize the conversion of narrative perspective, changing from zero focalization into multiple internal focalizations or zero perspective into the first person internal perspective, which makes the story more objective and more convincing.

The First Person Narratives

The first person narrative has already been a marked feature in Poe's novels [4]. In *The Review of Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales*, Poe put forward his own principle of creation—"unity of effect." A successful fiction, in Poe's opinion, should first set up a single effect, then diverts the story around it to achieve a unified effect. Everything he does is to the greatest extent beneficial to his preconceived effect [5]. At the same time, a story should be brief, which could be read within one or two hours. To practice his literary theory, Allan Poe often uses the first person narrative in his creation.

In *The Mystery of Marie Roget*, Edgar Allan Poe mainly employs the first person narrative. The fiction begins with the first person external perspective "I", then it followed by the first person internal perspective to track the whole case. With the first person external perspective, "I" provide readers the whole background of storytelling and descriptions of objective scenes, which paves the way for the development of later stories. It happened about two years after the massacre in the rue Morgue. Marie, the beautiful cigar girl, disappeared two times in a short period of time and came back a week after her first disappearance, but this time was her corpse in the Seine. The policeman reached the end of their tether after the murder happened, so they sought help for Dupin. Dupin is widely known in Paris after solving the murder case in the rue Morgue and he undertakes the unsolved case. Then, the story changes into the first person internal perspective, which means that "I" begin to recall details of the whole case. "I" am Dupin's close friend and assistant, so "I" witnessed the whole process of detection of this murder case.

When the angle of view converts to the first person internal perspective, the narrator is personally on the scene, gradually showing what he sees and thinks. Meanwhile, readers follow the narrator closely but often fall into a state of confusion because of the limitation of this angle or the misleading of the narrator. However, by using the "blind area" of the first person external perspective, writers add some tensions in the contents of stories. As an assistant, "I" collect details and information for Dupin from the police station, newspaper and testimony. But "I" am always confused about clues of the case as an ordinary spectator. However, Dupin, who has clear minds and close reasoning, is completely different. He overthrows the previous police's erroneous judgments one by one. Firstly it is the identification of the corpse; he confirms the body in the Seine is Marie. Then he rules Marie's pursuer out as suspects. Next Dupin frees people's mind of the version that Marie was killed by rogues and vagabonds. At last, it is navy officer who is the murderer. At the end of this novel, it returns the first person external perspective, jumping out of the memories, to make a conclusion and comments.

Multiple Narrative Perspectives

Agatha's *Five Little Pigs* mainly adopts the third person narrative perspective or zero focalization, but it also intersperses multiple inner focalization. The zero focalization makes writers more free in their creation, but it is difficult for writers to portray the inner activities of characters in the novel. Multiple inner focalizations make up for this defect, because it could present different sides of one person. Moreover, in literary creation, writers need not to make a clear breast, because literature has a characteristic of "hiding secrets, never revealing them" [6]. The artistic charm of literature is letting the readers have their own understanding and judgments. The narrator knows everything that happened, but he will never reveal everything he knows. In order to make the story attractive, the narrator often hides or adds something to keep suspense. This kind of narration leaves the novel more room for readers to thinking. While reading, readers are willing to participate in it, adding the liveliness of the story.

Five Little Pigs revolves around a murder case of 16 years ago. The story begins with zero focalization, which is the omniscient perspective. It was believed that the wife Caroline Crale poisoned her husband, the painter Amyas. Carla Lemarchant, the daughter, seeks help for the Belgian detective Hercule Poirot to find the truth of the murder case about her parents because she does not believe her mother killed her father. She also received a letter left by her mother, saying that Caroline, her mother is innocent. Under such circumstances, narrator places himself above the whole story, displaying all aspects of the background. Therefore, readers could grasp the whole picture of story development and reduce their dependence on detective personal reasoning. Because of the long history, what Poirot can rely on is case documents in the police office, reminiscence of the participants and private letters without access to the scene of the crime. What Poirot needs to analyze is not a person's statement, but views of at least ten people, like four lawyers related to the case, officers in charge of the murder and five parties at the scene of the case. Then Poirot visited the relevant witnesses one by one to know some details about the murder case. Poirot's final reasoning depends on the written recollections of five parties, and the biggest difficulty is that they are talking about five different cases. At that time, the narrative perspective changes into multiple inner focalizations. It is interesting that five parties stand in their own position and give different understandings, recollections and evaluations to the same person in the same case. Firstly, the stockbroker Phillip Blake relates to that Caroline has the traits of coldness and selfishness and it was Caroline who poisoned her husband. Secondly, Meredith Blake, a British gentleman, believes that Caroline is a kind and generous wife, but Amyas did not care about his wife. This gentleman even suspects that Amyas commits suicide. Thirdly, Elsa Greer,

Amyas's lover, is disgusted with Caroline because she also thought Caroline killed Amyas. Then, as for the Cecilia Williams, the devoted governess is on Caroline's side, but also believes Caroline is the murderer. Finally, Angela Warren holds that her sister Caroline is innocent and she takes out a personal letter left by her elder sister to support her standing. All these statements make the murder case more mysterious. With those different focuses of the five statements, Poirot finally locked the real murderer with the psychological analysis, and cleared up what happened. In the recollection, people express their emotional connection with the dead woman and her influence on their life, showing different paths of life. The multiple inner focalizations, similar to the Cubist painting, can make readers observe the same event from different angles, adding the ambiguity and richness of story.

Five Little Pigs is based on the narration and recollection of five parties. It is clear that the narration is not entirely correct and has great subjectivity. Because narrative works convey to the reader some evaluation of the writer through the unreliable judgments of the narrator. If the whole story is based on unreliable narration, then the value of the narrator is not credible. It seems that almost all information that readers obtained are from the narrator. Thus the writer controls reader's sympathy for the narrators through different narrative perspectives [7]. However, sympathy is not equal to agree. The former is a friendly feeling, while the latter abandons readers' subjectivity completely. Indeed, here it indicates the differences of views between readers and narrators. Readers need to be rational to judge the correctness of the narrator, producing a narrative tension and reading enjoyment.

Concealment and Enlargement

Concealment and enlargement are the effects of the conversion of narrative perspective. The former is hiding some information to create suspense, and the latter provides more information than the reader needed. Both will cause some confusion and arouse more interests to the reader.

It is noteworthy that two novels have seen the variation of perspective, which not only make the story more vivid, but presents the arrangement of narration. The conversion of narrative perspectives of Poe's in *The Mystery of Marie Roget* has created a narrative effect, the narrator's concealment of the story. At the beginning of the novel, "I" know the development of the whole story. But I'm just a medium to bring out the story, so the narrator will purposely withhold information. When "I" really enter the memory layer, "I" obtained a limited point of view, only recounting what "I" have seen and thought. Meaning in novels should be an undercurrent just beneath the surface, so the narrator should not reveal everything of a story. If a novel with the obvious meaning, then it ceases to be an art. At the same time, Agatha's *Five Little Pigs* changes

from zero focalization to multiple internal focalizations, creating a narrative effect, enlargement of the story. That means it provides more information than the reader needed. For example, there are great differences in the description of Caroline's character. Some believe that she is gentle and kind-hearted, but others hold that she is selfish and calculating. Different memories of the same character have produced the effect of enlargement, which often makes readers blurred and increase the mystery and suspense of the murder case.

Narrative Voices

Narrative voice is a manifestation of the narrative perspective. It is not the same as the writer's voice, but it is closely related to it. Narrative voice is limited by narrative perspective, and the latter specifies what the former should know and what should be told. Readers observe the story background or personalities in novels, mainly through narrative voice. In addition, when describing different characters, narrative voice usually chooses different words and styles. Also there are many differences between female narrative voices and male narrative voices in terms of words, emotions and focuses.

Male Voice in The Mystery of Marie Roget

Poe's *The Mystery of Marie Roget* has the male narrative voice. Although "I" in narration is an aptitude spectator, it does convey a male voice. First of all, it is reflected in the description of the crime scene and story setting. The narrator never avoids describing the bloodshed and cruelty of crime scene. Such scene is full of cruelty and suffering, with a strong sense of impact and shock. At the same time, story in Poe's pen is full of twists and turns, so it is like a complex puzzle, a challenging intellectual gam. The writer tends to pay too much attention to logical reasoning and extraordinary imagination, therefore neglects the literary narration and description.

Secondly, it is presented in the traditional ideas to women and men. In traditional novels, women are usually the vassals of men. In detective stories, women are usually passive, and in most cases, they are victims, like Marie in *The Mystery of Marie Roget*. Even if women are criminals, they are often small roles such as thieves or blackmailers who are often irritated and lose their senses. Poe describes Marie as a beautiful cigarette girl, as if all beautiful women would be immoral and lack of wisdom. At the same time, the murder is a navy officer who the police did not catch him. The whole case not only shows the superb skill of the murderer, but a triumph of masculinity.

Thirdly, it is the characterization of detective. Dupin is a French aristocrat, suffering many a setback during his life but still remains nobility. As a whole, he is knowledgeable, eccentric and proud, full of heroism. Dupin is just like a mathematician, regarding a crime as a calculation as well as a chess game. Such a detective

gives people a sense of distance and mystery, with unpredictable qualities. Moreover, the detective in Poe's pen seems to be more inclined to dislike the police and holds a negative attitude towards them. In Dupin's view, Paris police cannot hold an objective standpoint when investigating because they are prone to be distracted by some other facts related the murder case. Thus, the policeman always seems to be incapable of action in solving cases, and they are always stale for exhibiting unoriginal methods of analysis.

All in all, Allen Poe is the forerunner of detective novels, who lays the groundwork for future detectives in literature. This means that there are many immaturities in his works. As a male writer, the characters in Poe's pen are full of masculinity, like Dupin. Although the narrator is not equal to the author, the narrator's voice contains the voice of the author to a certain extent.

Female Voice in Five Little Pigs

Agatha's *Five Little Pigs* has the female narrative voice. As a female writer, Agatha's novels have plain feminine consciousness and characteristics. First of all, it is reflected in the description of the background of story and the setting of the ending. Agatha's story usually takes place in comfortable middle class villas, which have limitations in space. So does this murder case. These fixed places can easily present all clues of the case. Without any trouble, readers could observe social relationships and explore the whole case with detectives [8]. Indeed there are few scenes of bloody violence in the novel, embodying women's mild sensibility, as well as the warmth of women. For those who are suffering, Agatha usually gives them a happy ending, such as Carla's marriage in the case. People in that era must be in an appropriate manner, and they must not deviate from the conventional practice. That is also one of the reasons why Carla must find the truth of the murder case of 16 years ago.

Secondly, it is also reflected in the views towards men and women, especially women. In this case, Agatha portrays Elsa, a female criminal, a confident and proud woman, who dares to hate and pursue her own happiness, reflecting the initiative in love. She is famous for her fortitude and resolute courage. This rebellious woman was encouraged by a great sense of betrayal, walking on a different, more adventurous road. Agatha describes the man as the victim, and the woman as a thoughtful criminal, breaking the traditional female image in detective stories. In her novels, Men are not always sitting up high in a leading position with a heroic gesture, so they are as common as an old shoe.

Thirdly, it is the softness of the detective's appearance and temperament. Detective Poirot in *Five Little Pigs* is a lovely, humorous little Belgian old man.

He has green eyes just shining "like a cat" when he gets a clever idea. It seems to be difficult for us to connect him with a detective who has cracked an important case. He is respectful and compassionate full of human feelings. In fact, Poirot is a fairly conventional, clue-based and logical detective because his use of "the little grey cells" and "order and method". That means that he centers on the traditional trail of clues, and he is good at reasoning based on using literature, history and psychology. Therefore, in the course of reading, the reader will gradually obtain a sense of trust and familiarity with Poirot, which may even exceed the expectations of the heroes. As for the attitude to the police, Agatha's detective is always cooperative and no longer gives bitter sarcasm to the policemen. In *Five Little Pigs*, Poirot visit the related policemen, and those men are glad to recall details of the case. They are cooperative partners or ally rather than enemy.

In brief, Agatha is the representative of comfort reasoning, which benefiting from her growing environments and self-optimism. In her works, there is no excessive violence and sex. All the murder cases happen in closed environments, such as trains, the ship, the countryside, the small island and so on. People are usually economically powerful, well-educated, and have a typical aristocratic temperament. Although the case circumstances are always simple, it does not mean it has nothing to do with the whole social environment. Usually, Agatha's novel always shows the human nature and reflects the social problems with the closed small environment. As a whole, Agatha's novels have the characteristics of openness and closeness. The openness mainly refers to the divergent thinking of case reasoning. Another kind of "openness" comes from changes of perspective and location in certain works. At the same time, there are few lyrical descriptions or scenery descriptions in novels, which are often referred to as "closeness". Murder cases seem to become a game in Agatha's pen, and the whole investigation process is like a leisurely conversation, which is the embodiment of her unique style.

CONCLUSION

This article mainly analyzes the differences between *The Mystery of Marie Roget* and *Five Little Pigs* in terms of narrative perspectives and narrative voices. Poe mainly uses the first person narrative in his novels, changing from the first person external perspective into the first person internal perspective. Agatha mainly employs the third person narrative perspective in her story, from which it changes from zero focalization into multiple inner focalization. As for the narrative voices, the former is male narrative voice and the latter is female narrative voice. The differences about narrative voice are mainly reflected in the description of the crime scene, story setting, the views towards men and women, the portrayal of the detective and the attitude to the police.

All in all, Edgar Allan Poe, in his novels, strictly follows his theory of "unity of effect", and pays more attention to logical reasoning. Certainly, Poe also explores the inner world of human beings, and uncovers the evil and morbid state of human nature. Like *The Mystery of Marie Roget*, it is adapted from a real crime, indicating Poe's longing for justice and concern for humanity. Women writer comparatively are more sensuous, embodying tender feeling of woman. Agatha's novel is full of her simple feminist consciousness with substantial content. Her story describes the life of the middle and upper class, covering rich and colorful knowledge of customs, which is full of interest, literariness and creativity. Like *Five Little Pigs*, it is refreshing that Agatha used ballads to foil the atmosphere of the case. Indeed, the reading pleasure of Agatha's novel does not come from scenes such as the murder, but a triumph of wisdom, a triumph of justice over evil and a profound analysis of human nature. Because Agatha is a woman with unhappy and happy marriage, her works always show her yearning for the past years, which makes her works have traits of universality.

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