

Montage novel theory

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There are novels in which separate narratives progress simultaneously, novels in which the order of events is rearranged, novels that let the reader retrace the source of a quotation, and novels in which interpreting the disposition and relationship between text segments are made part of the reader's experience. These narrative texts can be associated with the concept of "montage."

A montage was originally a concept used for artwork ("photomontage") and films that were "assembled" through the mechanics of cameras. Novelists of the 20th century applied this technique to create what we could call "literary montage."

Literary montages are often understood to refer to two separate approaches. There are montages relying on the cutting and pasting of quotations ("quotation montage") and montages that show multiple events simultaneously ("spatio-temporal montage"). In the first chapter of this book, we will trace the origins of these two aspects of literary montage back to photo and film montage. Since literary montage is derived from photomontage, it can be pointed out that quotation montage is characterized by its multitude and diversity of references and sources, and their "plagiaristic" nature. In relation to movies, we will examine the connection between literary montage and Eisenstein's montage theory, and reveal the literary montage as a child of D.W. Griffith.

The second chapter of this book will endeavor to define literary montage as an integration of two aspects. Jean-Pierre Morel's narrative definition is an attempt at a unified understanding of the concept. However, it is difficult to define literary montage merely by focusing on the composition and structure of the text. Although Morel's approach is interesting in that it points out "cuts" in literary works, it neither gives a clear definition of a "cut" nor sufficiently addresses multilinearity, alternating dispositions, or the difficulty in detecting quotations. These characteristics have higher or lower relevance depending on the reader, and may vary in their presence or absence. A "cut," rather than what is "presented" as is, refers to what the reader "reads

into” it. Moreover, multilinearity can vary in the number of lines depending on the reader’s attention. Alternating dispositions cause the reader to reorder them. In some cases, alternating dispositions are a result of the reader’s involvement. A quotation’s presence or absence is also determined by the reader, since a reference may not necessarily be recognized as such due to its “plagiaristic” nature.

In short, literary montage can be defined only by associating the characteristics of the text with the act of reading it. There are three ways in which text and reader are connected; these can be formulated with the help of the terms “stripe pattern” and “linkage.” The first type is the “recombination” of “stripe patterns” that are “linked” together in accordance with the content of the story. The second is “incorporation,” by which “striped patterns” are created while pursuing the “link.” The third is “quotation generation,” by which one text is being “linked” to another, and “striped patterns,” which are created through the combination of narrative text with references.

Based on this newly gained definition, Chapter 3 attempts to categorize montage novels by differentiating between their formal and thematic aspects.

In terms of the formal, novels are classified according to the number of “colors” in the “striped pattern,” and the stripe’s form.

Two-color striped patterns are used most frequently. They are an easily understood form of montage due to their crossings’ mechanical nature. Contrast and suspense are easy to grasp.

Three-color striped patterns tend to be used in works with experimental aspects. Three-color patterns can often be divided into one two-color and one one-color pattern.

Multicolor striped patterns (four colors or more) are often applied to a novel in its entirety. They are often utilized to portray one state of affairs, or a society, from multiple angles. Due to the large number of stripes, their disposition is rarely regular.

The splitting and merging of stripes describes the change in the number of stripes in accordance with the parting and coming together of a plurality of characters. By utilizing these elements of change, story pacing and the relationships between the characters can be realized.

The striped pattern generated is created through “quotation generation” or “incorporation.” This form requires the active involvement of the reader.

In addition to this categorization, we will examine the three themes of “collective housing”, “inside-vehicle daydream”, and “deathbed reminiscence”.

Collective housing in this context means novels in which a large number of people appear, whose stories are followed in each of their rooms through alternating dispositions. Multicolor striped patterns are used to express simultaneity.

For the inside-vehicle daydream, a person who rides public transportation intermittently indulges in recollections and fantasies. This is a novel format in which the scene inside the vehicle intersects with fantasy.

The deathbed reminiscence is a novel format in which present happenings around a character in his or her final hours intersect with memory (it is also possible that a single character may alternate between the present time and recollections of the past).

Through these discussions, we attempted a new definition of literary montage, and a categorization of literary montage works.