
**THE ABSENCE OF THE AUTHOR--ON THE NARRATIVE STRATEGY
IN *ENEMIES* BY ANTON CHEKHOV**

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ABSTRACT

Chekhov's *Enemies* displayed the problem of humanity in love and death. In this short story, Chekhov made his influence disappeared but explored the problems perfectly. The perfect narrative strategy, that is the perfect combination of narrator's voice and characters' voice, and the emotional manipulation to readers and the vivid description to characters, highlights this story and helps readers to realize the problems of humanity objectively.

Keywords: narrative strategy, perfect combination, emotional manipulation, vivid description

1. INTRODUCTION

Kirilov, the doctor, suffering from his son's death, was invited by Aboguin to examine his "dying" wife. While it turned out that his "dying" wife just runs away with another man when Abguin was asking for doctor. The suffering of losing son and the suffering of losing love make the two nearly strangers become the enemies of each other. By *Enemies*, Chekhov explored the problem of humanity in everybody, which everyone has to face up to. Chekhov is famous for his objectivity in his stories. He ever wrote that subjectivity was a dangerous thing (Greene 9). "In his works, he just put forward the problems instead of presenting the solution to them." (Ma 146) "And he just led readers to think about these problems." (Ma 149) Even Chekhov himself said, "When I'm writing, I trust my readers fully that they can fill the needed elements in the subjective blank" (Ru 38-39). In this short story, he also made himself disappeared but explored the problems perfectly. How did he succeed in doing this? Ross Chambers said in his book *Story and Situation Narrative Seduction and the Power of Fiction* that "the significance of the story is determined less by its actual content than by the point of its being told, that is, the relationships mediated by the act of narration" (3). The story in *Enemies* is very simple, but the point of its being told is complex to some extent, which finally successfully helps to express the theme of the

story. The perfect narrative strategy, that is the perfect combination of narrator's voice and characters' voice, and the emotional manipulation to readers and the vivid description to characters, highlights this story and helps readers to realize the problems of humanity objectively. Narrator's voice detaches readers from the character and let them stand in an objective position to observe characters. Characters' voice involves readers in their thought and makes them feel what they are thinking.

2. THE PERFECT COMBINATION OF NARRATOR'S VOICE AND CHARACTERS' VOICE

The emergence of sympathy and the control on it are realized by characters' inside voice and the adjustment on the distance between readers and characters (Currie 26). These two sides embody in characters' voice and narrator's voice. The mutual counterbalance of narrator's voice and characters' voice let readers observe the characters from outside and inside at the same time. The author did not let any side of them take the dominant position but made both in comparatively equal position (Ma 138). In Chekhov's story, the narrator's "setting explanations weaken the effect of the characters' voice instead of strengthening it" (Ma 139). The purpose of narrator's voice and characters' voice separate totally in the description to the characters for the second time. In the former part, it displays the Kirilov's great suffering in his son's death and Abguin's in his wife's sickness by both voices. While in the latter part, what narrator said make the readers estimate the characters from a different perspective.

3. THE EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION TO READERS

Narrator told readers that Kirilov's only son died of diphtheria. His unbuttoned waistcoat, without wiping wet face and the dark hall set the tone of sadness. Then Aboguin came in, no matter how eagerly he begged for his going with him, Kirilov just showed his indifference. He always kept silent. He even probably had forgotten that there was a stranger standing in his hall. His uncertain, machine-like movement, the description to his room and to his wife combines with his very few words show his great sadness. The readers thus feel deep sympathetic for his son's death and Kirilov's suffering. The narrator's summary "the subtle and elusive beauty of human grief" actually makes the readers feel the beauty of the grief that Kirilov and his wife endured in their son's death.

Compared with Kirilov, Aboguin talked much more: his declaration about his wife's sickness, his begging, and his sympathy for Kirilov's son. His talking is off and on, which shows his "agitation" that narrator told the readers again and again. And from the explanation, the readers could easily agree with narrator about Aboguin's "real sincerity" and the "childish fright". He asked Kirilov to go with him for humanity. While Kirilov said "humanity cut both ways".

Aboguin even cursed the law but care Kirilov's feelings. Again narrator made a conclusion for his talking. "Aboguin's voice trembled with agitation....Aboguin was sincere." From the narrator's summary that "however deep and beautiful the words the affect only the unconcerned", Aboguin's agitation and Kirilov's indifference show up again. While their emotion can be understood. Love's dying could make somebody agitating and only son's death could make someone indifferent to everything.

However, when Kirilov finally came into Aboguin's house, the characters were totally in the bright illumination house, their looks are showed clearly. "Now the doctor and Aboguin who had been in darking up till now could examine each other." Not only could they examine each other, but also the readers could. From Aboguin's point of view, Kirilov was checked clearly, so did in Kirilov's point of view to Aboguin or as a bystander to both of them. From the narrator's description, the impression that Kirilov and Aboguin show to the readers could be changed.

Here is the narrator's description to Kirilov:

"The doctor was fall, with a stoop, slovenly dressed, and his face was plain. There was something unpleasantly sharp, ungracious, and severe in his thick negro lips, his aquiline nose and his faded, indifferent look. His tangled hair, his sunken temples, the early grey in his long thin beard. That showed his shining chin, his pale grey complexion and the slipshod awkwardness of his manners..."

The narrator even show what Kirilov's looks like. "To look at the hard figure of the man, you could not believe that he had a wife and could sweep over his child." Up till now, is it still concluded that Kirilov's indifference came from his son's death? What happened later gave the answer to the doubt. He blamed Aboguin for asking him to come and he believed that Aboguin was laughing his suffering. On his way to home, he thought not of "his wife or his son, but only of Aboguin and those who lived in the house he just left. His thoughts were unjust, inhuman, and cruel." At the end of the story, the readers again stand with the narrator and believe that "Time will pass and Kirilov's sorrow, but this conviction, unjust and unworthy of the human heart, will not pass." Till now, it can be concluded that Kirilov's difference rooted in his blood, which is the weakness of his humanity.

4. THE VIVID DESCRIPTION TO CHARACTERS

Then in the bright illumination, Aboguin looks like robust, solid and fair-haired, soft, features, exquisitely dressed, tight-buttoned coat, his mane of hair you felt something noble and leonine, walking with his head straight, prominent chest, speaking in pleasant baritone, his manner of removing his scarf or arranging his hair there appeared a subtle, almost famine, elegance ...

.After he knew that his wife sent him for doctor just for having a chance to run away with another man, he even lost himself. He lost his control and told everything to doctor, nearly a stranger. What he said did show his great love to his wife and great self-mockery for his wife's eloping. The narrator didn't use "agitation" to describe him any more, but "tears gushed from his eyes", "Aboguin spoke with tears in his voice", "with tears in his eyes", "he said passionately", "he spoke passionately, pressing both hands to his heart". It is impressed by his great love to his wife and his despair when he lost her from what he said and did and what the narrator told.

5. CONCLUSION

As the above stated, in the whole story, the readers stand with Kirilov sometimes, with Aboguin or even just as a bystander with the narrator sometimes. Kirilov assumed that Aboguin was laughing at his suffering and Aboguin assumed that Kirilov couldn't share his agony. At last, these two unfortunate men abuse each other. Facing up to the test of humanity, both Aboguin and Kirilov didn't pass it. On this matter, the paralyzed morality in a world without faith, sympathy and love was demonstrated. Chekhov eventually realized his purpose by combining narrator's voice and characters' voice perfectly, manipulating the readers emotionally and describing the characters vividly to succeed in presenting the problem of humanity.

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