

Chapter 13

Fact, Narrative, Visualization as Fiction, and Love: Analysis of the Japanese Film *The Land of Hope*

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ABSTRACT

This chapter's subject matter is "The Land of Hope", a Japanese film inspired by facts. The primary aim is to apply structural analysis of narrative, a method commonly used for natural language text, to film, which is an audiovisual text. This research will adopt methods for decomposing the film into component units and rules for linking them that are appropriate to the physical/representational characteristics of the medium, and propose a procedure for visualizing the narrative structure using a single diagram. The second aim is to sketch the aspects of narrative content that structural analyses – which only regard its formal aspects – overlook, supporting the argument with knowledge from film cognition research and by focusing on particular themes. This chapter's research deals with a practical simulation that analyzes a film's form and content with an integrated approach, and advocates the methodology that is applicable to any film in principle.

INTRODUCTION

What cognitive effect do a film's story and rhetorical devices have on the viewer? The key interest and mission of film cognition research – this author's field – are to elucidate the particular nature of the cognition that they trigger in a viewer, and the strength of their effects. This research requires that a preliminary analysis be conducted for each film that is to be studied in order to understand the essential substance of its form and content. The reason is that without analytically ascertaining the various particular qualities of a film's style of expression, one cannot even hypothesize about what cognitive effects require experiment. This is where a specific methodology for film analysis is called for, which can be carried out in advance to support the film cognition research. In principle, one can describe the

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formal narrative structure of any narrative text, regardless of medium; however, most of the texts that have been treated thus far have been natural language text, and texts which are essentially audiovisual have been neglected.

So the primary objective of this chapter is to carry out structural analysis of narrative of a particular Japanese film, and describe its narrative structure, which is part of the film's formal aspects. How should one divide a long text like a film, which is composed of many symbol elements? And how should one link them together systematically, in order to create a comprehensive visual diagram of its structure? A simulation analysis method will be proposed that will extend the frontiers of methodology for analyzing an audiovisual text, which is unpopular material for structural analysis of narrative. *The Land of Hope* (2012), directed by Sion Sono is used as material of this simulation analysis. This is a fictional film which is however based on an actual event, the Great East Japan Earthquake, which will go down in history as a major disaster of the early twenty-first century. The film is a fictional depiction of various issues arising from the disaster, interwoven with the universal human theme of love.

A narrative with a meaning is a comprehensive theme, i.e. it has a semantic massive structure, consisting of components where localized smaller themes are embedded to hierarchical sub-episodes. On the point that a narrative is a coherence of physically decomposable parts, and since an audiovisual material is the same as a written material, the same analytical methodology of natural language text can be appropriately applied to films. However needless to mention the difficulty of such a research, to exhaustively extract all symbols that constitute the film expressions after mechanically decomposing it, the fact that it is fundamentally impossible to systematically express the narrative content is the point which must be challenged. In case of a film, analysts can introduce some perspectives, the significance of local symbols constituting the massive structure, namely, besides discussing on the predictive analysis of cognitive effects, it is thought that no other method to narrow the content exists. Therefore, in this chapter as a secondary method, while incorporating the knowledge already obtained in film cognition research by the author, two of the expressive creativity in *The Land of Hope* – fusion of fact and fiction, form of love and its sublimation – the author extract the essence of the content through the predictive analysis of cognitive effects.

BACKGROUND

Academic Circumstances over Structural Analysis of Narrative

In this section, after having followed the origin of structural analysis of the narrative and its academic process, related research in cognitive science affected by narratology or narratological approach were applied to give the outline.

The Origin of Structural Analysis of Narrative

First of all, as the methodology to analyze the narrative structure which serves as the formal aspects of a film, the academic process and outline of structural analysis of narrative will be introduced in the following. This methodology is a linguistic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) proposed in early 20th century that fundamentally overturned the classic sign theory. Affected by his theory, several Russian formalists left behind some predominant poetic and philosophical studies (e.g., Shk-

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