

**TRANSFORM THE NARRATOR AND POINT OF VIEW FROM THE SHORT STORY
“PEOPLE AT THE CHAU RIVER WHARF” TO THE FILM ADAPTATION “THE
RETURNEE”
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Abstract: *The term “narratology” is no longer strange to scientific researchers, especially in literary research and recently cinema. However, to use this method as an effective tool to analyze and “dissect” each cell of the film depends on the purpose, method, intention, and scope of the research. Like literature, cinema also belongs to the narrative genre, in which the narrator, point of view, and storytelling are always used for creative directors as well as researchers to analyze in depth the artistic world of artwork. In this article, we experiment with applying narratological theory to discuss the transformation of elements of narrative structure such as the narrator and point of view from the original literary work - the short story “People at the Chau River Wharf” to the film adaptation “The Returnee”, thereby emphasizing the position and role of this scientific subject in film studies.*

Keywords: *Narratology, cinematic narration, narrator, point of view, space-time.*

The concept of narratology began to be widely used after a series of innovative works by Roland Barthes, Claude Bremond, Tzvetan Todorov appeared, especially after the publication of Todorov's *Grammaire du Decameron* (1969), Although as a field of literary research, narratology has a very long history (in the Russian tradition, it is the works of A.N. Veselovski, V.Ja. Propp, B.V. Tomasevski, O.M. Freidenberg, M. Bakhtin, in the German area - O. Ludwig, K. Friedman, K. Hamburger, F.K. Stanzel, V. Kaiser, G. Müller, and the English area - P. Lubbock, N. Friedman, C. Brooks, R.P. Warren...). However, the object of this scientific discipline and, accordingly, its current intellectual status cannot be said to be completely affirmed (1).

So what is narration? Narration (English: narration) is the basic aspect of the narrative method, which is the introduction, generalization, explanation, and description of characters, events, situations, and things from a mortal's perspective. certain techniques (according to the *Dictionary of Literary Terms* co-edited by Han Ba Le, Su Dinh Tran, and Phi Khac Nguyen). Narration is not only narration but also includes describing objects, analyzing circumstances, narrating character biographies, comments, and notes from the author... [3]. Narrative language is a way to reveal the author's conscious use of language, explaining life from his perspective and creative personality. Narration is a typical artistic method of narrative work.

In this article, the author chooses to use the term “narration” because the definition and concept are consistent with the form, structural method, and operating mechanism of film based on the Genette concept of narration. All creative narrative actions (producing texts with narrative content) and even the real or imaginary situations in which the narrative action occurs are all narration (4, 10). Literary narration is expressed through written language, cinematic narration is expressed through the language of images and sounds.

Whether a story is captivating or not depends largely on the talent and characteristics of the storyteller, and of course behind it, the talent of the artist (6, 402). Unlike literature, films tell stories not by speaking but by arranging and organizing information from many different sources, including the scope of both written narrative texts and real narrations. For this reason, the first narration of a film is, for example, a “filmic structural element” or, more neutrally, a “filmic structural method” (5, 17). From literary works (short stories) to cinematic works, the form of storytelling has had many diverse inheritances and adaptations. Although they tell the same story, the organization of the two types has its differences and characteristics. For short stories, the story is usually told by a first-person, second-person, or third-person narrator. Based on that, the viewpoint will be flexibly directed according to the storyteller (internal or external viewpoint). Author Thuy Bich Tran has analyzed narrative points of view in literary narrations and cinematic narrations, and has generalized four types of points of view according to Greimas's opinion: all-knowing point of view; first-person participant point of view, third-person subjective point of view, and third-person objective point of view and use the term “focal point” to replace the term point of view, thereby divided into three types of narration as follows:

1. The first type is a “non-focal narration where the narrative character stands outside but plays the role of god, knowing all about life, the universe, the past, and the future”.

2. The second type is “internal focal narration: which refers to the narrator who is a character right in the story, but has three different forms: Fixed form refers to one character telling everything. The indeterminate form is the type of character that tells different stories. The multimodal form is many characters telling the same story together”.

3. The third type is the “out-of-focus” narration, almost like the first type, the character tells the story outside the story, but only recounts the story's details objectively, without going deep into the character's psychology”.

By choosing different storytelling formats, the narrator gives readers a multi-dimensional view of life, expanding the realistic overview of the work. In the work, the point of view and the narrator become two inseparable aspects. In the framework of the article, we analyze the similarities and transformations of narrative methods, narrative roles, and points of view between the short story *The Person at the Pearl River Wharf* by writer Suong Nguyet Minh and the film *The Returner* by director Dang Thai Huyen to see this influence, as well as the creative changes of the target work - the film, compared to the source work - the short story.

We can see that, in the movie “*The Returner*”, Director Huyen Thai Dang added a lot of details, often using “flashback” and “time reversals” to construct war scenes involving the main female character May. This serves to introduce the relationship between May and Quan, a brave young soldier who later becomes a civil engineer. The fact that she saved him and was injured, as well as the boy's gratitude and silent love for her, contributed significantly to portraying the two characters' personalities, creating an “excuse” for the soldier, later a soldier. The bridge engineer went looking for Nurse May - his benefactor. Within the scope of a short story that requires high succinctness and conciseness, author Minh Nguyet Suong talks about the cruelty of war and May's courage with the image of her leg being robbed by enemy bombs. This detail also deepens the contrast on the return day: on one side is the happiness of San - her ex-lover who just got married, on the other hand, the female soldier seems to have lost everything - the physical defect and happiness happy couple. Besides, to “vindicate” the fact that San did not go to the battlefield like the majority of young men and women of the same age at that time, but instead went to study abroad, the director added a scene where a class of young people wrote a petition volunteered to go to the front, among them was San. He even wrote an application in blood, but still was not accepted, because his father and two brothers were already martyrs. Next was the details of the death notice sent back, making her family, neighbors, and San all believe that she was dead; The details of his decision to leave his newlywed wife to return to May all prove the pure, faithful love between them and that they are both worthy of that love, proving the brutality of the war that robbed them of their love. Go to that beautiful love. All of the above changes aim to promote the superiority of cinematic language, serving the director's artistic intentions. At the same time, those changes have led to the narrative method, narrator role, and point of view in the film also being changed compared to the short story, although the main plot and objective narrator remain the same.

It can be seen that the similarity in both short stories and film adaptations is that they both use objective narrative methods. This is a method that is often carried out by a “stranger” who is full of authority, knowledge, determination, and prediction of everything. This is also the implicit author - the hidden person, the person who lives in the work, speaking on behalf of the author (32, 55). Sometimes the author's language coincides with the narrator and sometimes it is a character in the work (Mai, May, and San). This narrative method is popular, accounting for a large proportion of narrative works of art, where the story is narrated objectively, without the author's direct participation in the thoughts and feelings of the viewer. figure.

However, in the short story, in addition to the hidden third-person narrator, the author also “added” a third-person strange narrator - the character Mai (May's niece), seemingly wanting to increase credibility. The story's reliability and objectivity follow the method “looking at life through the eyes of a child”. In her film, director Huyen Thai Dang adopted the form of a “hidden” third-person narrator but abandoned the third-person strange narrator - the character Mai, and instead increased the “hidden” third-person narrator from the camera's point of view.

In the short story, the character Mai's point of view is almost unique. In the movie, the point of view is more diverse, including the point of view of May (the main character) the point of view of San-May's ex-lover, and the point of view of the camera. This change, or in other words, a refresh, has brought a new perspective on events, characters, and viewers' emotions, while also demonstrating the creative intentions of the director and film crew. The character who plays the role of the observer with the internal perspective in “*People at The Chau River Wharf*” is Mai, the niece of the character May. In the short story, as the narrator - the character Mai simultaneously undertakes two tasks: introducing and describing the characters, evoking the story situation, and providing a way to evaluate other characters from the point of view of the story. mine. Because Mai is a young child, the third generation in the family, in the post-war society at that time, the character's perspective on the entire narrative event in the work is simple and gentle. , brightly. Readers can also easily penetrate the complex and mysterious inner world of the character through their own honest and sincere narration.

In the Film “*People at The Chau River Wharf*”, we have a complete view of the narrator, the narrative point of view, the role of the narrator, and the relationship between the narrator and the writer in the work. Suong Nguyet Minh explores the events and people involved in a concise, concise style, with harsh realism mixed with poetry, but does not stop at a downward, one-sided view. With the position of someone who has stepped back in time from “a bygone era”, Minh Nguyet Suong looks at war and those who come out of the war with a deep, multi-dimensional perspective. The request to recreate history is now only a part, the writer also explores the world of human psychology and human fate during and after the war.

Minh Nguyet Suong knows how to put the war about today's life, thereby making significant contributions to the topic of writing about war. The interweaving of inspiration in works about war creates diverse colors in his work.

In the film, interwoven with the third-person implicit narrator, there is the “concealed” storyteller who follows the story, the perspectives of May and San - two experienced people, a man and a woman who have been together tight, love each other dearly. Therefore, the point of view, perspective, and narrative process in the film are more diverse and interesting than in the short story. Try comparing a few specific examples to see the diverse changes in perspective between the two works as follows: In the scene where father and son May meet again, the point of view belongs to the third-person narrator. story - character Mai. The little girl saw: “The oar let go, and the boat floated downstream downstream. Grandpa and aunt, one old, one young, one healthy, one disabled, lean on each other. The silhouettes of aunt and grandfather were printed on the river surface and mixed in the red dusk. Startled, Mai ran along the riverbank, frantically calling for her grandfather and aunt. In the film, the third-person narrator's point of view is “hidden”: Father and daughter embrace, crying on the river. The boat floats on the river, right next to the father and daughter...

In the story, we do not see the direct appearance of the first-person narrator, only the direct appearance of the third-person narrator, specifically by the proper name (Mai) with the actions (looking, running), perceptions (tears falling...), and emotions (startled, sighing...). Thus, Mai is an action character, the subject of the narrated action, belonging to the reality being talked about. Here, the narrator Mai is hidden, standing behind the characters and events, pushing the characters (Mr. Ba, Aunt May) out in front of the readers to tell the story. Therefore, in front of the readers' eyes, they do not see the speaker, they only see the presented reality.

In the film, we see Mr. Ba jumping from the boat into the water to embrace May. The father and daughter cried together, hugging each other standing in the river, surrounded by water on all sides, the boat spinning beside them. The camera angle is taken from above, but the height is just right, framing enough of both May and her Dad and the boat. In terms of scene, this is not a panorama or grand scene. This is a camera angle shot from high down, this camera angle shows two small characters standing in the middle of the water, like a lonely boat on the river. This is the God-eyes camera angle - showing the view of God, of the Almighty looking down from above. Therefore, God-eyes camera angle gives the audience the feeling of smallness, loneliness, and lostness of people in the post-war period, creating sympathy and sadness for the viewers.

In stories where the narrator does not appear directly - what is called by the term “third person narration” as mentioned above, there is a type in which the narrator has a different position from the focal person [13]. In this case, the hidden narrator “relies on the character's point of view to tell the story” - we call that the implicit narrator (which is the author-director). Therefore, when watching the movie, we have the feeling that there are many points of view of some other characters such as Thanh (San's wife), and May's brother-in-law, not simply just that of one character as the storytelling is limited. The film combines both limited and exhaustive storytelling to help the audience have a comprehensive view of the events being narrated. This is also the trend of diversifying storytelling methods in films that many directors have chosen to increase appeal, authenticity, and appeal to viewers. The film adaptation by director Huyen Thai Dang, although it has absorbed and inherited the narrative/narrative method from the short story, has the characteristics of the seventh art subject along with the creative intentions of the author and the crew. In movies, the form of storytelling when brought to the screen has been truly restructured and creatively brought about many emotions about the reality of the viewer.

The film is not only a story of May, but also the story of San and Lieu - post-war women with different circumstances and fates. “The Returnee” not only tells the stories of May and San's memories but is also told from an objective perspective as analyzed above. Compared to the literary version, the director focused more on May's point of view. Many angles and close-ups of May's face, especially her eyes, depict May's sadness, loneliness, and suffering when returning from the war. This is May's inner point of view. Through acting, especially the eyes, the audience can see the heart and feelings of the character, which is also the director's intention. Although it is a film about post-war topics, there are flashback scenes related to battlefields and bombs, but in the film, there are no big scenes, no majestic settings, but only wide camera angles, and panoramic scenes like the Cloud scene. Rowing the boat around and around on the river with a feeling of helplessness and extreme suffering May went into the river screaming, struggling, and crying. From these two camera angles, we show the small fate of a soldier in the post-war period, of a woman who has just emerged from the war and continues to face the harsh reality, overcoming fate to find happiness for yourself.

Literature or film is the arts of time, a way of realizing a story in a certain period. Time in the conception of narratologists is an important factor in creating narrative structure and method [6, 408]. Different from the static form of time in painting and sculpture, time in literary works as well as movies is a form of shifting and reversing time. It's easy to see in literary works and movies that authors can describe and show a long period in the blink of an eye or reverse between past, future, and present - we still call it “the endless blink of an eye”.

In “People at the Chau River Wharf”, “endless blinks” are expressed through literary language such as: “After a while, Aunt May's hair grew more, her skin became rosy again”; “In the eyes of two people, it is not the night under the grapefruit leaves that smells of pure scent, but the River Wharf. The Chau River Wharf that year was in the middle of the “burning cotton tree flower season”... “The Returnee” uses a lot of flashback scenes mixed with reality. Cinema can organize time in this way thanks to the role of technical devices in cinematic narrative. Director Dang Thai Huyen has woven continuous events based on the memories and perspectives of May and San. In particular, May's memories are told through eight

flashback scenes, mainly dreams about battlefields, bombs, and nightmares due to the pain from body to soul that she still suffers every night. contain:

- Flashback scene 01 (over 4 minutes): May remember his love vow to San when he wrote a letter volunteering for the war.
- Flashback scene 02 (almost 6 minutes): May remembers the fierce bombings in the forest, where her comrades were injured and sacrificed, making her realize that the line between life and death is too thin.
- Flashback scene 03 (almost 1 minute): May dreams about surgery with his colleagues to save a seriously injured soldier in a cave in the forest. There, May accidentally met an old friend, but before he could say much, that friend died in a bomb attack on the trenches.
- Flashback scene 04 (almost 1,5 minutes): Memories of May and the nurses in the surgical area on the battlefield; They sang a few lines about Hanoi after the soldier (in the capital Hanoi) said his last words on the operating bed.
- Flashback scene 05 (over 2 minutes): May sleeps and dreams about the medical station on the battlefield, bombs fall, bullets explode loudly while May still stubbornly tries to help the wounded soldiers into the shelter.
- Flashback scene 06 (over 40 seconds): May remember the time when the shelter was destroyed by continuous bombardment.
- Flashback scene 07 (almost 2.5 minutes): May recalls the scene where she was shot in the stomach while trying to dig up the ground to save her buried comrades.
- Flashback scene 08 (almost 2 minutes): May recalls the battlefield filled with the corpses of his comrades being carried away. May walked away muttering, "I'm no different from dying".
- Flashback scene 09 (28 seconds): May remember the fierce bombings on the battlefield.

The film has a length of 1 hour and 45 minutes, there are no eye-catching scenes or fierce scenes of war, and the explosion and battle scenes are filmed sparingly and suggestively. However, the director spent nearly 20 minutes of the film on May's flashback scenes, which are images of fierce battlefields, falling bombs, and stray bullets - a place where she, as a nurse, always used to Every day, every hour, we have to face the life and death of our comrades, teammates and even ourselves. Those flashbacks are painful, haunting, tormenting, pursuing her even in her sleep (out of the 07 flashback scenes, 03 are dreams) showing May's loneliness, unhappiness, and helplessness in front of reality. life. The rotating editing technique, alternating between past - present, dream - waking, makes the viewer feel the great struggles and obsessions of soldiers returning from the battlefield and of post-war women. Perhaps with the perspective of a woman but also a soldier, director Huyen Thai has deep sympathy for the character, approaches, raises problems, and explains them in a reasonable, reasonable, and profound way. sharp. Director Dang Thai Huyen said the biggest difficulty is the difference in language of expression between literature and cinema. To successfully adapt magical realistic details, cinematic effects on a non-linear editing table had to be used. Within the framework of a short story, the battlefield period is hardly recreated in "People at the Chau River Wharf". The image of May returning from the war, small and austere with an amputated leg, is enough to say a lot. On the contrary, battlefield memories are told through the image of a third-person narrator, accounting for 1/3 of the film "The Returnee". The time structure in the film has been changed compared to the time structure in the short story, leading to a change in the narrative structure. War is depicted through May's memories and internal perspective, appearing vividly and realistically. Against the background of the war, the image of May was deeply portrayed as the image of a soldier who sacrificed his life for his country, people, and comrades. This image contrasts with the image of a wounded female soldier returning from the front to her homeland. How will she have to live in the post-war situation, facing its difficulties? This is the "uncomfortable question" that the film poses by changing the structure of narrative time, alternating the point of view of the "hidden" narrator - know it all, and the "implicit" narrator - the author, the strange narrator - character. The combination of points of view makes the work flexible in its storytelling, the story appears diversely, from the inside out and vice versa, helping the personality and psychology of the female protagonist to be revealed and lively, therefore close to the viewer, finding sympathy and affection from them.

In many literary and cinematic works, there is a combination of perspectives between the narrator-author and the narrator-character. The blending of two points of view makes the work flexible in storytelling, the story appears diversely, from many sides, from inside to outside and vice versa. To tell a story about humanity, the fate of people after the war needs to be told in the language of a truly moved heart. And no matter how it is told, and how it is told, the story must make the person receiving it fascinated, feeling that this is not just a story on film or paper, this is a story close to reality. The story being told is a reality, not just a fantasy. That is the artistic effect of the work. From the literary works of Minh Nguyet Suong to the cinematic works of Huyen Thai Dang, there are many similarities in the artistic concept of the character of the soldier returning from the war to save the country, as well as in the narrative method. However, literature and cinema are two art forms with different characteristics. That's why in this film "inspired by the short story of writer Minh Nguyet Suong" (the words written in the opening scene of the film), in addition to the director's creativity, there is also help at the editing stage drama (Dung Thu Nguyen), to the stage of production, filming, editing, actors' performances, and the help of techniques, and technology... The literary work has fulfilled its mission, but the cinematic adaptation will give it a new life, in its way of cinematic language.

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