

# Marginalized People and the Big World: on the Multiple Narrative Modes of Microhistory

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This semester, I have read five representative books about new cultural history and microhistory, including *What is Cultural History*, *The Great Cat Massacre*, *The Cheese and the Worms*, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, and *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images As Historical Evidence*. Based on the top of the reading of these masterpieces, the author added the reading of *Di Wang's Violence and Order on the Chengdu Plain: The Story of a Secret Brotherhood in Rural China* and Jonathan D. Spence's *The Death of Woman Wang*. Among these microhistorical readings, there are objects as narrated or depicted, such as the apprentice Contat, the pre-Enlightenment intellectuals, the Menocchio, Martin Guerre and his wife Bertrande de Rols, Stalin, the reactionary gang Lei Mingyuan, and the woman Wang. There are also the ideological policemen, Judge Jean de Coras, Shen Baoyuan, and Fyodor Shurpin as the second narrator, and even a third narrator like Natalie Zemon Davis, Robert Darnton, and Di Wang. Multiple narrative structures have become a significant feature of microhistory writing, and this paper will analyze how the fates of different minor characters reflect the development trend of the times and what kind of writing motives of the second and third narrators are reflected in the construction of these minor characters by the "others."

## 2. THE PROTAGONIST AS STORYTELLER: THE NARRATED OBJECTS AND THEIR WORLDS

In every work of microhistory, a protagonist is written as a person who participates in history as a party to historical events through their subjective motives and who, if categorized according to the type of character, can be divided into three groups. These are the lower classes of society, those with a certain level of property and knowledge, and those who led social trends through their knowledge or political maneuvers.

### 2.1 The Lower Classes of Society

The protagonists of this type are characterized by people with a low level of knowledge, more brutal and coarse behavior, and passive political and cultural influences. Included in this category are the apprentices Leveille and Jerome, who slaughter cats, and Wang, a woman from Tancheng, Shandong. The former, motivated by a life of bourgeois pampering, give vent to their humiliation and pent-up anger by imitating judgment and abuse [1]. Moreover, through the slaughter of the cat, which symbolizes "violence" and "sex," the apprentices are indirectly attacking their masters and his wife, annoying the bourgeoisie's table with what they see as a "farce." [2] The latter is Wang, a peasant woman from Tancheng, Shandong Province, who lived in the Qing Dynasty. Wang was strangled alive by her husband, Ren, One night after she returned home, she was murdered by her husband with a rope and abandoned in the freezing cold because she had run away with someone. Wang lived during the heyday of the Kangxi period, and her death became a silhouette of the lives of ordinary people during the heyday.

### 2.2 Characters with a Certain Property Base or Level of Knowledge

This category of characters have a certain level of property or knowledge and have the ability to send a weak response to the changes of the times and the injustice of fate; the representatives of this category of people are Martin Guerre, the miller Menocchio, the reactionary gang Lei Mingyuan. Martin Guerre is a 16th-century "impostor" and "fraudulent father" case; throughout the book, his life was very turbulent, traveling from Artigat in the French countryside to Spain, where he worked as a chaplain under Cardinal Francisco de Mendoza. Martin Guerre then joins the Spanish army under the command of the Cardinal's brother, Pedro de Mendoza, who loses his leg in the war [3]. He then stays in a convent until he returns to his hometown to face the "upheaval" of his life and his long-married wife. In the court of law, Martin had the opportunity to fight for his rights, to have his impostors punished under the auspices of the law, and to have his voice heard in later accounts, such as the *Historia*

Admirable by Guillaume Le Sueur and the Arrest Memorable by Jean de Coras—the voice of another figure whom the Inquisition tried.

Another figure is Menochio, the miller whom the Inquisition tried. A former mayor of the town and administrator of the parish church [4], Menocchio rented two fields from his landlord [5]; his Latin studies consisted of a few Credo and Pater Noster phrases learned while looking at Mass [6]. His knowledge was derived from the *il Fioretto della Bibbia* bought at an obscure Venetian bookstall and other borrowed books, and through the circulation of books within the community [7]. Coupled with Menocchio's rebellion against existing religious privileges, an ideology combined religious radicalism, scientifically inclined naturalism, utopian ideas of social reform, and ideas held by milliners [8]. Because of the intellectual acceptance and Menocchio's religious skepticism, he was allowed to defend himself in the Inquisition court. The reasons for forming this ideology come from Menocchio's own identity specificity and social background. First of all, in terms of identity, he is a particular class in the urban-rural dichotomy, in which the culture of the urban elite and the culture of the peasants are intertwined in a way that makes it difficult to distinguish them from one another; moreover, Menocchio's living environment and spiritual society are in the middle of the gap between Roman Catholicism and the rural areas of northern Italy, and therefore his words and deeds are tainted with the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church and the traditional morality of the countryside. Therefore, his words and actions were tainted with Roman Catholic dogma and traditional rural morality. From the perspective of social background, fifteen years before Menocchio's birth, the Reformation movement broke out on the continent of Europe, and the conflict between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutherans centered on doctrines. Thus, Menocchio's trial also involved a fierce encounter between two doctrines, the poor miller was also a victim of the clash of two different religious doctrines.

The last character is Lei Mingyuan, a former chief of Paoge with a certain amount of power, who kills his daughter under the tendency to confine the ideology of women's chastity and morality and makes his own life worse because of the poor management of his opium shop. The Lei family's deep crisis has also caused the formidable "Lei Daye" to gradually lose his status as a powerful and influential reactionary gang [9]. According to Wang Di's conjecture, there were two ways for Lei Mingyuan to end up: the first one was to join a riot organization to fight against the new regime; the second one was that Lei had lost everything because of his opium addiction, and it was also possible that opium had utterly destroyed his body [10].

### **2.3 Characters with a High Level of Knowledge or Political Power**

This category of people either held a high level of intellectual or political power and were able to lead the wave of the times. For example, in *The Great Cat Massacre*, Denis Diderot, mentioned by Darton and Jean le Rond D'Alembert in their compilation *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, Diderot in the process of compiling it, to spread Enlightenment ideas, it sought to erase the Christian influence of the religion. Although pressure was exerted by the Government and the Church on publishing the first volume, resulting in several volumes being issued underground, it had already become an essential source of ideas that led to the Enlightenment.

Another example is Jean-Jacques Rousseau; Darton points out that When the philosophes set out to conquer the world by mapping it, they knew that their success would depend on their ability to imprint their worldview on the minds of their readers [11]. Therefore, Darton uses the letters of the capitalist Ransom as a starting point for a more visual exploration of Rousseau's influence on the bourgeoisie of Enlightenment France [12]. Darton not only selects readers as a group but also talks about Rousseau himself and his cultural achievements. One of the most talked about literary achievements of Rousseau in *The Great Cat Massacre* is *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, one of the bestsellers of the eighteenth century, which created a wave of the Enlightenment's search for love and Rousseau's "rebellion" as a writer against the encyclopedists. Darton writes about Ransom and his list of books in the first half of Chapter 6 and Rousseau in the second half, and then discusses the two together, fully revealing the "wave" that Rousseau and Rousseau himself, and these group of people behind the fad who were encouraged by Rousseau's ideas and slowly completed the metamorphosis of their thinking.

The last of these protagonists categorized as leading the wave of the times is Stalin in the painting *The Morning of Our Native Land*. The head of state stands in the off-center of the painting, looking hopefully into the distance, with the symbol of modernity behind Stalin in the form of a steel frame, as if admiring the thriving Soviet landscape. As a generally effective modernization model for backward countries to catch up with developed countries in the West, the Stalinist model enabled the Soviet Union to achieve economic modernization, industrialization, and become the first industrial power in Europe. Therefore, in the historical context of the Soviet

Union, the people generally had high expectations of Stalin, and Stalin tried to emphasize his authority within the party through his monopoly of military and political power, the assignment of cadres to superiors, and the elimination of dissenters in the process of “modernization.”

As the story’s protagonists, the main characters are in their world, directly connected to the times and historical events. However, because they hold different possessions, knowledge, and power, their influence on politics and culture also differs in size. The subjects selected for microhistory, from the ordinary people to the painted leaders, are mapping the influence of society in different historical situations and their promotion of society and culture, and they are the essential pivots of the web of culture, without which the narrative belonging to the culture cannot be unfolded. As narrators and objects of depiction, they aim to reflect the social and cultural changes reflected in their ever-changing material level and transmuted thoughts.

### **3. STORYTELLERS: SECOND NARRATORS AND THE CREATION OF STORIES**

The second narrator's selection of events and objects to write about is often based on their ethnic, cultural, and political backgrounds. The “second narrators” records discussed in this section are often the sources of contemporary microhistorians. Still, they contain the second narrator's “gaze” on the object of narration. Their account of an event carries a clear value orientation, but the process of recounting it reveals, often unintentionally, the cultural characteristics of the period. The secondary narrators discussed in this section include Contat, the apprentice who documented the massacre of the cats; the French ideological police who recorded the movements of Enlightenment thinkers; Fyodor Shurpin, the Soviet painter who depicted Stalin; Jean de Coras, the judge who documented the case of Martin Guerre; Huang Lihong and Pu Songling, who are closely associated with the narrative of Wang's death; and Shen Baoyuan, a female student of sociology at Yanjing University who conducted field research about reactionary gang and his families. This part of the writing aims to expose the process of “reconstruction” of events by the second narrator and the historical information behind this process.

The first is Contat, who recorded the time of the apprentices’ brutal slaughter of the cats. The only version of the cat massacre that is currently available to scholars as a source of information is that which was written down by the apprentice Contat many years after the case, filtering the details of the time and the context of the story and recreating it subjectively to fit with his surroundings to shape the atmosphere in which the events took place and create a “social situational theatre.” When we look at the event recording process, we will find that the plot and characters are intensely subjective. Contat, as a member of the working class, has a natural contradiction with the bourgeoisie; as a printer's apprentice, they not only face a substantial daily workload but also have to put up with the insults and teasing of their masters and regular employees, and before they go to sleep every night, they also have to put up with the sound of cats howling and scuffling outside the door, in their eyes, cats, as the pets of the bourgeoisie, have a better life than they do, and therefore cats are a symbol of a life that is antagonistic to theirs, and a symbol of the bourgeoisie's luxurious life. In Contat’s eyes, this cat-slaughtering orgy is an elaborate revenge and revolt in the face of the bourgeoisie, who turn their butcher's knives on the cat, symbolically insulting the master's wife, and a group of men who kill the cat is tantamount to taking away the most intimate treasures of the bourgeois family. As one of the men who carried out the massacre, Contat sifts and shapes the plot to refer to a culture of rebellion - a working-class revolt against the bourgeoisie - by rendering the “violence”, and thus the narrative of the cat massacre is an event in which the workers confront the bourgeoisie. In this action, the workers “win” against the bourgeoisie, and's trial of the cat is a “popular theater” created by Contat based on his own cultural background and social motives.

The second is D'Hemery, the ideological policeman who recounted the actions of French Enlightenment thinkers. D'Hemery's reports provide the earliest documentation on the community of Enlightenment writers [13], His reasons for writing them were, first and foremost, motivated by his profession. It was the job of the ideological police to track down the authors of pamphlets while suppressing libelous texts. D'Hemery's job consisted of suppressing any speech that might jeopardize the king's authority to protect the empire [14]. Secondly, D'Hemery's investigations also reflect the gaze of the state officials of the time on what they saw as “socially marginalized” Enlightenment writers. As a middle-class bibliographer and state official, he refers to these writers as “boys” and files individual writers separately in his report writing. The filing process is systematic, reflecting the modern bureaucratic drive for standardization, specification, and categorization. At the same time, the details of his investigations of these writers also reflect the period. At the same time, his detailed investigation of these writers also reflects the tension and uneasiness of the ruling class over the spread of Enlightenment ideas during this period, reflecting the critical nature of this period in the development of literary history.

The third is Fyodor Shurpin, the author of *The Morning of Our Native Land*, mentioned in Peter Burke's *Eyewitness: The Uses of Images As Historical Evidence*, which shows Stalin at the center of a painting from the mid-20th century, when the "cult of the head of state" in the USSR was at its height. The off-center position of Stalin in this painting and the background behind him, which symbolizes the development of modern agriculture and industry in the USSR, illustrate the artist's reverence for the Great Leader. Initially, he made a name for himself by creating works celebrating the Soviet way of life and depicting the significant figures of the Soviet leadership. However, after a few years, the events that followed the revelation of Stalin's admiration ended his artistic career. His transition from following the tide of the times to falling in with it became the lament of the "political painter."

The third is Jean de Coras, the judge who chronicled the case of Martin Guerre. As a law professor, his motivation for documenting this case was the particularity of the case, which was typical of the period in terms of its complexity, scope, and ethical and moral entanglement. Moreover, his brilliant writing style attracted the attention of law students, and the different editions of Jean de Coras's writings reflect two interesting facets of his approach. Firstly, a willingness to self-improve, reflect, and reinterpret; and secondly, a keen sense of how to move his career forward [15]. So, documenting the case for his students or himself to think and learn from was the primary motivation for the case to be circulated from him to future generations. Secondly, his incredulity at something in the impostor, a sentiment that stemmed from his own conflicting emotions and his class situation, and thus the combination of Arnaud du Tilh and Bertrande de Rols seemed to him to be plausible. So, the recording and contemplation of the story in the context of the writer's psyche and experience constituted the reason for recounting the case. This is the reason for writing about this case. Turning to *Arrest Memorable*, researchers have found, firstly, that it makes use of a complex juridical organization and, secondly, that to develop his argument, Jean de Coras makes factual exaggerations and conditional omissions, which serve to reinforce the character of the unforgettable judgment as a didactic tale [16]. The book seen the book is strongly moralistic and contains reflections on the morality of the human person and the character of the elites in sixteenth-century French society.

The fourth is the two narrators mentioned in Jonathan Spence's *The Death of Wang, Huang Liuhong and Pu Songling*. When Huang Liuhong arrived in Tancheng as governor in 1670, he was confronted with a world almost "disintegrating." The people were faced with a world of disasters, for example, earthquakes, locusts, plagues, floods, artificial calamities, like the White Lotus Rebellion, massacres by the Qing soldiers, and government tyranny, and the extraordinary superstitiousness of the inhabitants mentioned in the *Local History* [17]. Received constant scrutiny from their superiors for the implementation and interpretation of the laws, and at the same time, they were held accountable for any faults within their jurisdiction. As a result, Huang Liuhong was burdened with the pressure of his work during his tenure. Under this high demand for the magistrate's work, he formed the habit of conducting meticulous investigations into the realities of the situation. He adopted a detailed descriptive approach to record these sufferings when making notes. These records reveal Huang Liuhong's willingness to change the miserable conditions around him. However, the series of crises into which the locals were plunged made life meaningless. So, in his writing, there is another point of compassion for the miserable people. Another chronicler is Pu Songling. He was born in Zichuan County, where the Qing army, through the looting, banditry, and people living in misery, Tancheng and Zichuan are both experiencing joint suffering. When Pu Songling was working as a book and teacher for the local squire family, he combined his early collection and imagination to write the book *Strange Stories in Oriental Society*, in which he reflected severe social problems in many of the stories, not only the miserable world of the people at that time, but also the situation of the women under the bondage of rites and customs: those drowned female babies, the women engulfed by feudalism. The drowned baby girls and the women devoured by feudalism epitomize the tragic life of most women in this era and the material of Pu Songling's writing. In his literary works, readers can capture the imaginative, sexual, and reflective content of human insecurity, which allows one to delve deep into human nature in search of the world that Pu Songling constructed [18].

The last person to be used as a second narrator is Shen Baoyuan, a female student of the Department of Sociology at Yanjing University who conducted social research on the family of the robber Lei Mingyuan in the 1840s. In her undergraduate years, Shen Baoyuan was influenced in three ways. The first was the open-mindedness of the sociology department at Yanjing University. Her advisor was Xu Yongshun, and her thesis reviewers were Lin Yaohua, the head of the Sociology Department, and Zheng Linzhuang, the Law School dean, both prominent figures in anthropology and sociology. In addition, the influence of the left-wing and the Communist Party in this period also pushed Shen to investigate rural society. In the investigation process, Shen positioned herself as a "rural worker," enabling her to enter the field passionately and sincerely. Shen was an open-minded young woman; thirdly, the focus of Chinese intellectuals on rural issues since the 1920s promoted the development of the

disciplines of sociology and anthropology in China, which enabled Shen to receive professional and systematic training [19]. These are the essential reasons why Shen Baoyuan chose the robe family for her investigation and thus explored the social structure of western Sichuan. For these reasons, the robe family and western Sichuan society in Shen Bowen's writing reveal the world-viewing gaze of a young scholar.

As the second narrator, the characters mentioned above have “reconstructed” the images of some historical figures due to the influence of the times, politics, and culture. Therefore, when scholars examine the mode of writing of the second narrators, they will find that the writing process has, to a certain extent, been engraved with the imprints of the times: the main characters and their times, the authors and their times, and cultures.

#### **4. HISTORIANS FACING STORIES AND HISTORY: THE THIRD NARRATOR AND THE REINVENTION OF "STORIES"**

Historians, as the last narrators, have written classic microhistory/cultural history works based on the use of historical materials and the analysis of protagonists by the second narrators. Under the perspective of microhistory, the “marginal characters” remaining in mainstream historiography and the world behind them have been enlarged and become an essential vehicle for viewing the cultural network of a certain period and a particular class. They are regarded as an essential part of the composition of the “cultural kingdom” and are given great attention. This section will discuss micro-historians' efforts to explore the cultural kingdom. Historians use the life experiences of these figures to analyze changes in thought and culture and in the times so that “past” historical situations and lost historical figures can be regenerated in the world created by microhistorians.

##### **4.1 Historians Who Use Individual Examples of People to Analyze the Development of Ideas and Culture**

The first example I would like to explore in this paper is the historical writing techniques of Robert Darnton, author of *The Great Cat Massacre*. Robert chooses the apprentice who massacred the cat, the ideological police, and the Enlightenment literati as his subjects of study. He selects fairy tales, the apprentice's memoirs of the ritual of the cat massacre, bourgeois reading lists, the police detective's archive of investigations of Enlightenment intellectuals, the table of contents and the chapter structure of the *Encyclopédie*, and the letters on Rousseau as his research materials, to detect the concepts and to experiment with the different directions of cultural interpretations and to capture the undercurrents of change in French culture on the eve of and during the Enlightenment by exploring the dark places in the text [20]. In his preface, Darnton mentions that the meaning of an aphorism, a joke, a ritual, or a poem, if deciphered, may unravel unheard-of systems of meaning, which is why he chooses to use different forms of textual material from authors of different political, economic, and cultural backgrounds as his primary historical sources. At the same time, Darnton also attaches great importance to borrowing anthropological methods and affirms the role of anthropology in the study of new cultural history. Because the individual engages in self-expression through the prevailing grammar, we learn to categorize feelings through reflection within the network provided by our culture and to understand the meaning of things after categorization [21]. Thus, even a cat-slaughtering spree brewed by apprentices or a letter from an Enlightenment thinker becomes a clue for Darnton to sort out the “cultural network” to which a social stratum belongs, and historians follow the clues to find the social landscape that shaped this multifaceted culture.

The historian Carlo Ginzburg, who also seeks to explore ideological and cultural changes, chose as his subject Menocchio, a miller who was brought before the Inquisition in the mid-16th century, a choice motivated first and foremost by Ginzburg's research orientation. “Jew and atheist,” as Ginzburg defines himself, was the ideological basis for the book, which was born out of a wave of left-wing thinking that spread widely in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s, combined with Ginzburg's interest in the populace of the “peripheral” regions of Italy. Under the influence of this wave and Ginzburg's longstanding interest in the popular classes of Italy's “peripheral” regions, he views the witchcraft-related trials of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a significant document of class struggle in early modern Europe. By reading these documents, he seeks to investigate the psychological activities of the inquisitors and the reasons for the emergence of heretical ideas by mining the archives of these religious trials [22]. Secondly, as an “atypical marginalized social figure,” the protagonist's deviation from Catholic orthodoxy is even more paradoxical and dramatic. As mentioned earlier, Menocchio was caught between the peasants and the city, the Papacy and the Lutherans. Through his study, we can get closer to the infiltration of Reformation ideology into the grassroots of society and the process of receiving and transforming knowledge through personal reading. Otherwise, Ginzburg's writing style is noteworthy, *The Cheese and the Worm* does not adhere to the stereotypical paradigm of historical writing, but rather resembles a historical novel. This writing style was heavily influenced by his novelist father. The book is written in a lively style, and Ginzburg takes the reader into the Inquisition

courtroom, where Menocchio argues with the judge in a way that makes him even more impressed with his devotion to his faith.

Whether it is the apprentice who demonstrates against the capitalist or the miller who stands before the Inquisition and wrestles with his ideas, they all contribute samples to the interpretation of the relationship between culture and society. Behind the former, who discusses the "rebel culture" born out of class conflict, and the latter, who frees himself from the confines of dogmatism through self-education, there are hints of the undercurrents of cultural change.

#### **4.2 A Historian Who Uses the Life Experiences of Minor Characters to Explore the Changing Times**

What's more, some historians use the life experiences of minor characters to explore the changes of the times. Microhistorians not only use the life experiences of minor characters to explore the development of social thought and culture but also seek to explore these individual cases to get a glimpse of society in the past.

For example, Natalie Zemon Davis, who chose the Martin Guerre case as her subject of study, was a historian influenced by socialist ideas and became interested in the content of "people" and "class struggle" during her doctoral studies. During her doctoral studies, Natalie became interested in "the people" and "class struggle." After learning about the struggles of two groups of people in 16th-century France, she turned her research attention to the struggles of those at the bottom of the socialist ladder. In addition, a shift in Natalie's interest in studying women's history can be detected after teaching at the University of Toronto. With the integration of anthropology into her research process, elements such as ordinary people and women have become more and more clearly defined in her writings. Taking the case of Martin Guerre, a famous case in 16th century France, a famous case in 16th-century France, as a research object originated from the fact that in the 1980s, Natalie served as a historical consultant for the French historical film *The Return of Martin Guerre*, which, because of her participation, fully and truthfully reflected the living conditions in the rural areas of the South of France, and became a masterpiece of the history of cinema. Despite the success of the film, Natalie was deeply concerned that the cultural, religious, social, economic, and mental factors of 16th century France buried behind the film were difficult to fully express, and thus she buried herself in countless archives and did her best to restore the accurate historical picture by microhistory writing. As the subject of her research, Natalie's work not only reflects the cruel fate of Martin Guerre as a soldier but also tells the story of Bertrande de Rols, an ordinary countrywoman who repeatedly struggled between love and morality, and includes the trial of the impostor under the social atmosphere of the time, all of which aim at exploring the social and cultural background of the 16th century, and the role of women in the development of the countryside. These are intended to explore the edges of 16th-century French society. These all illustrate Natalie's shift from pure social history to social and cultural history in her research interests, her further reflection on anthropological methods in her methodology, and her attention to "marginalized people" in her research perspectives.

Concerning the study of Chinese microhistory, this paper here concentrates on Jonathan Dermot Spence and Professor Wang Di. Jonathan Dermot Spence's book *The Death of Woman Wang* will be discussed first, and the paper would like to talk about Jonathan Dermot Spence's history writing based on two aspects.

The first one is the selection of the subject. He chose the death of Woman Wang in Tancheng, Shandong Province, as the subject of his writing in order to understand the living conditions of the ordinary people in China, which were covered by the official narrative. In the book, he not only depicts Wang's tragic death with vivid strokes but also creates a beautiful dream for Wang, which is Jonathan Dermot Spence's sympathy for this tragic woman and his condemnation of cannibalistic feudalism. The choice of Wang as the subject of writing is also a pioneering form of Chinese micro-history writing. Even though, to a certain extent, it does not strictly follow the paradigm of micro-history writing, the author captures the fate of such an ordinary woman in the grand history of the Qing Dynasty, leading Chinese historians to look downwards and focus on the destiny of the ordinary people.

Secondly, Jonathan Dermot Spence's primary historical sources are the *Local History* edited by Feng Kegan, the *Fuhui Quanshu* compiled from the memoirs and notes of Huang Lihong, the successor of the governor, and the legendary stories written by the novelist Pu Songling. Regarding the selection of historical materials, there are official histories, records of officials, and folktales with strong fabricated content. Although there are three sources for *The Death of Woman Wang*, the author does not depict the complicated historical events in depth but re-screens them according to his intention and reorganizes them, arranging the events in a special order and giving them different characters. A particular order and give them different status and discursive power. Through the study of county records and the records of officials, a rural society in Shandong, where natural and artificial

disasters were frequent and people's lives were miserable, is constructed through the screening of the contents of Pu Songling's folklore based on stories passed down by word of mouth, the relationship between gender and power in ancient Chinese society is analyzed, and a traditional moral society is constructed with these clues.

Another example is Wang Di's study of reactionary gangs. In *Violence and Order on the Chengdu Plain: The Story of a Secret Brotherhood in Rural China*, he defines his work as a narrative of three people. First, the protagonists of history are the activities of Lei Mingyuan and his family; second, the activities of the secret society more than seventy years ago are seen by scholars through the eyes of a university student trained in Western sociology. Finally, the author of the book, as a historical researcher, combines Lei Mingyuan's story with the context of Shen Baoyuan's life, observing how intellectuals of the time recognized and viewed the secret social group of the gangs, and in doing so, they discover the general pattern of recognizing the social and political ecology of rural China [23]. In the book, readers can also find that Wang Di cross-utilizes narratives of his living environment in the process of writing. For example, the author's recollections of life in old Sichuan appear many times in the book; whether it is the plants around Chengdu or the obsolete means of transportation, all constitute an essential element in depicting Lei Mingyuan's living conditions in this work. From this point of view, some of the contents are also the author's reminiscences of his lost years and his memories of old Chengdu.

To sum up, historians, as the third narrator, look at society through the eyes of "others," Simultaneously, they combine their understanding of history and their own life experiences. While telling the stories, they use the research methods of history and anthropology to analyze the deep-seated causes of each historical event, to revive the dead and bring back the social scenes that have become the past, and in the process of "recreating" these events to serve their purposes. They resurrect dead people, revive social scenes that have already become the past, and, in the process of "revival," make these events serve their writing purposes. Regardless of whether the materials used by historians are official archives or private accounts, in the eyes of historians, they are all highly usable, and the motives for behavior buried behind the texts are potent weapons for historians to penetrate history.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Combined with the above analysis of the triple narrator, we can conclude that any microhistorical work results from the reconstruction of the triple narrative, and the readers of these books become the fourth narrator and reconstructor of the events. We add our experience and moral judgment of the events into the reading process at each work step. In the process, the most original historical events are gradually blurred and given more value judgments based on time and morality. As readers/fourth narrators, how do we analyze and dissect these texts? When analyzing and dissecting these texts, can we discard the values we have formed based on our political, cultural, and economic backgrounds? Based on the above questions and the previous analysis of "triple narratives," this paper will answer the above questions.

Firstly, the reader/fourth narrator must understand the author's core intention in creating the text. Regardless of the primary narrator, their accounts of historical events are based on their political and cultural intentions. As Tony Judtz criticizes Norman Davies' *Europe: A History*, he points out that not only does the book contain numerous errors of historical fact, but also, and most crucially, Davies' book is politically motivated, going so far as to equate the Nazi police brigades that massacred the Jews with the corrupt practices of minor criminals in the ghetto [24]. Not only that, but Davies's book sees the history of Russia since the seventeenth century as a history of aggression against Poland and argues that Russia has brought as much suffering to Poland as Germany has to Poland [25]. Some of this may be true to some extent, but it exposes his ideology as a populist. Therefore, if readers want to understand the objective and accurate European history from Davies' writing, they must understand the author and his populist background. Otherwise, they will read his words and have a distorted understanding of the "Jewish Holocaust" and become victims of "politicized historiography." When reading microhistorically works that include multiple narrators, such as *Violence and Order on the Chengdu Plain: The Story of a Secret Brotherhood in Rural China*, readers need to read Shen Baoyuan's undergraduate thesis, "A Rural Community Family," which is appended to the text. It is essential to read the works of historians, which are undoubtedly excellent writings, but one should always keep the thinking of others from one's perceptions of thinking.

In addition, readers also need to understand how narrative patterns are formed from different perspectives. A microhistory with multiple perspectives and detailed contents requires historians to continuously collect official and unofficial historical materials and analyze the identity background and writing motives of those who write these materials. After thoroughly analyzing the source of the materials and the writing motives, they need to be combined with the triple narrators' social status, political background, education, and experience to maximize the

understanding of the multiple faces of history and avoid tendentious value judgments.

As Wang Di mentions, there are five types of narratives about the history of the “Paoge”: the first is official archives collected by government agencies with the nature of intelligence and the secret reports of local so-called “gentry”; the second is based on sociological research, scholarly articles written by Shen Baoyuan, a female student in the Department of Sociology at Yanjing University, based on her field research on the robber families and combined with her own study experiences; and the third is the narrative of novels constructed by local Sichuan writers, which reveals that the robber families are the only ones who have ever lived in China, the fourth is the narrative of personal narratives composed of oral accounts of surviving Paoge families; and the narrative of literary and historical materials composed in the context of the post-liberation revolutionary discourse [26]. These five different narratives have different times, purposes, narrative methods, and political backgrounds, and thus their narratives of the robes differ significantly, showing the characteristics of the robes in four ways: first, many local elites joined the robes; second, the dramatic expansion of the robes in the first half of the 20th century was closely linked to the process of modern state formation and modernization in China; What's more, the robbers have infiltrated into the local power, especially the lower levels of power; fourthly, different texts have been involved in shaping the image of the robbers, from being regarded as good men who fought against the Government before 1949, to the solidification of the image of the Paoge under the influence of the modern revolutionary discourse after the founding of the People's Republic of China, which reflects the “differences” between the historical contexts and events in different narratives, but this significant difference itself is a vivid “history of the Paoge” [27].

Another vivid example concerns the portrayal of Liu Wencai, a powerful landowner. During Liu Wencai's 27-year political career, he used violence to control social resources and manipulate and dominate the social order. The characterization of Liu Wencai was in the process of transmutation with the changes of the times and the political discourse. 1950-1960 was a period of escalating negative publicity for Liu Wencai, who became a “landlord, warlord, bureaucrat, and bully.” after the reform and opening up, some of the atrocities, such as the water dungeon, the dungeon, the torture chamber, and the execution chamber, were verified to be false. Some realist works based on Liu Wencai's imagination were considered to be the product of exaggeration and fiction. The most paradoxical phenomenon is that evaluations of Liu tend to be polarized, with some seeing him as a landed gentry and others as a good landlord who relieved the people and built up the region. The focus of these controversies lies mainly in the stage difference of the discussion object: the conclusions are directed at Liu Wencai in different periods. Most of Liu Wencai's atrocities occurred at the beginning of the Liu brothers' fortunes; his good deeds appeared mainly after he retired to his hometown. The different stages of life resulted in different needs and means, so there is no contradiction between the accounts of Liu Wencai's “atrocities” and his “philanthropic action” [28].

However, in the process of Liu's characterisation, scholars should discover the driving role of political propaganda behind it. Serving the needs of the class struggle, a group of landlords and squires were groomed to become counter-revolutionary archetypes, politicized and labeled. Under the effect of revolutionary discourse, the “landlords” became the opposing side of the “people.” People in later generations tended to form stereotypes of the landlords and squires based on these layers of political discourse. Readers without the ability to discern will take these transformed “histories” as their own, thus forming a memory with inertia that will be passed on from generation to generation.

As a history researcher, do you substitute your values for research? Moreover, how can this phenomenon be avoided? It is hard to deny that we will inevitably substitute our values when judging texts. Because of my nationalistic education, in my research on cholera prevention and treatment in Beijing during the Japanese colonial period, all the roles played by the Japanese in cholera in archives were defined by me as “serving aggression and colonization.” Therefore, I would explore the implementation of all the preventive measures from the perspective of colonial medicine. Such established values will shape my factual judgments. While it is difficult to discard values when reading a text, it is also necessary. The most important reason for this is the professional ethics of a scholar: it is the nature of the historian to serve the historical material to the greatest extent possible, and there is also an underlying reason for discarding values as much as possible in reading, so as not to be driven by ultra-nationalism and the political aims behind the text.

In terms of methodology, as a third narrator, I would analyze the archives' writing intentions and discursive composition based on their official attributes and then read them in depth about the context of the times. Based on reading these materials, I have come up with the following insights from different perspectives. Firstly, most of the files belong to official government documents, so they are official in content and format; the producers are the staff



of official organizations, and these files are usually circulated within government departments or other related departments. In this process, it is not easy to detect in the archives if the Government has done something against the people's will.

As in the case of the archives, the historical facts about the massacre of Jews by Nazi Germany can be found only in the Nazi Government's records of Jewish transports and the cashier's records of the concentration camps, which led to the "covering up" of some of the crimes. While researching the anti-epidemic work of the Peking pseudo-government, I found that not only did the terms "Friendship" and Great East Asia Co-Prosperity" appear in the archives, but I also discovered the work of the Japanese A 1855 Army in the archives. In the archives, this unit was called the "Nishimura Unit" and was mainly involved in quarantine, vaccine development, etc. On the surface, it seemed that there was nothing unusual about it. However, in 1943, this unit was responsible for conducting bacteriological experiments and spreading the cholera virus in the city of Beijing, which caused severe harm to the lives and health of the citizens. These crimes were related to the work of the special municipal Government in Beijing. These offenses are very different from the image of a "friendly country" in the Beijing Special Administrative Region archives that co-operated with the Chinese in the fight against the epidemic. Therefore, it is essential to study the contents of the archives in light of the historical background and make one's own judgment.

As the fourth reader, one should fully understand how a historical event is constructed through the threefold description, try to understand the motivation behind each layer of the narrative as much as possible, and go back to the event itself for reflection and value judgment, in order to honestly read and understand the micro-history, even if it is based on the reflection and judgment will inevitably be a certain degree of the historical realities of "misinterpretation." It is also a process of "rethinking" the event, which can lead to self-reflection on the incident. The ability to provoke readers' "rethinking" has already become a success for historians.

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