

Historicity of Categories of Fiction: Virginia Woolf's Concept "Modern Fiction"

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Abstract—This article attempts to construct Woolf's concept of "modern fiction" in modern context within the two dimensions: fiction's category and historicity. Firstly, based on the essay "Modern Fiction", the article aims to construct the connotation of "modern fiction", which takes "historical consciousness", "the duration of life", "man's subjectivity", "the complexity of psychological structures" and "the relativity and pluralism of reality" as its contents. Then, this article mainly demonstrates the categories of "modern fiction", which is employed to reveal the properties and attributes of fiction and regulates its fundamental mode of existence. Woolf's "modern fiction" serves as a substance, around which the categories revolve. They are composed of "look within", "impression", "memory" and "feeling", "the moment of importance", "the psychological time" and "the flow of consciousness". Thirdly, this article attempts to discuss the historicity of categories of "modern fiction", namely the finiteness and openness of categories. For Woolf's part, the categories of traditional fiction in the historical vision must be replaced by new ones due to its finiteness. In the discontinuity of the historical process, Woolf proceeds with the openness of categories of fiction, reflects the mental disorder of people, instills order in literary works and dissolves the dichotomy of man and self, man and the other, man and nature. Finally, the article concludes that in Woolf's literary criticism, the categories of fiction are an open system. Woolf's concept of "modern fiction" and its categories in modern condition guarantee the openness of fiction.

Index Terms—Virginia Woolf, modern fiction, concept, Aristotle, category theory

I. INTRODUCTION

Having evolved from the alarming crisis of the Western world, Virginia Woolf's concept of "modern fiction" is one of the most significant concepts in literary criticism in the 20th century. When the long-dominated "rational mechanism" in Western civilization is thrown into confusion, fiction strives to seize and mirror the mental state of modern people. Under the impact of monopoly capital, the disintegration of social order and the chaos of modern mind, "modern fiction" not only involves itself within the present cultural context, but also explores the existence of its proper form in order to undertake the task of interrogating human nature and the external world. Based on the current modern condition, Woolf endeavors to construct the significance of fiction through constant experiment. She gets rid of the portrait of the external verisimilitude, turns to the internalized truth and redefines her concept of "modern fiction", which is deemed to be a mirror reflecting and presenting faithfully the modern heart of human beings, a vehicle delivering modern experience and also an access to the achievement of spiritual identity.

II. VIRGINIA WOOLF'S CONCEPT "MODERN FICTION"

The essay of "Modern Fiction" by Woolf is widely considered the declaration on the theory of "modern fiction" and a focal point revolving around which her whole system of the literary criticism is centralized. From the year of 1922 on, Woolf gradually writes and publishes a series of literary criticism such as "On Re-reading Novels", "Modern Fiction", "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown", "The art of Fiction", etc. to break away from the dilemma of modern literary creation and formulates her literary ideas and creative thoughts. Her reflection on "modern fiction" manifests itself in her thinking on philosophy, aesthetics and psychology and in the way she combines these elements into her literary creation. For Woolf's part, realists advocate to portray the external world as precisely as possible for the reason that art is regarded as a mirror to reflect the true color of life and represent the so-called objective truth. However, "the modern practice of art is an improvement upon the old" (Woolf, 2002, p. 83), and "life is far from being like this" (p. 85). In order to accurately seize the modern plight and present the distorted mental condition in the aftermath of the Great Wars and the collapse of the western world, Woolf puts forward a new connotation for "modern fiction".

Historical consciousness presupposes and guarantees the inheritance, introspection and innovation of fiction in the historical dimension of the literary development. On the basis of Virginia Woolf's literary criticism, historical consciousness is the capability for understanding of the past, grasping the current and planning the future of fiction by situating itself in the present context. Woolf argues that under the influence of history and tradition, the entity of spirit

exhibits inherent distinction to some extent, in spite of the fact that it even exists in the same world, but the way the spirit perceives it has changed, to be more specific, the vision has been changed. In terms of fiction, history and tradition are two dominant elements that exert great impact on it and regulate its formation. Any given literary forms can impossibly be permanent through the changing of times, since they are inevitably conditional and limited by the historical and cultural context in which they have been produced. Therefore, it turns out to be out of the question attempting to establish a literary form that can withstand the test of times and be universally applicable. In this sense, Woolf insists that “modern fiction” should be employed as a vehicle to probe into the “immortal future” rather than sticking to the pursuit of a permanent form of fiction.

Historical consciousness integrates the literary form with the present situation. Virginia Woolf purposefully places “modern fiction” in the historical dimension and instills this historical consciousness into her experiment and creation of literary form. Standing in the present context, originating from the past and projecting on the future, Woolf’s “modern fiction” probes into and represents the widespread experiences of alienation and the sense of homelessness of “modern heart” by virtue of the corruption of the tradition of rationalism. By means of dating back to the track of literature development and carrying out a rationally clear recognition, Woolf identifies “modern fiction” as the vehicle of human spirit which explores the complexity of soul and perception in the chaotic world and in the individual’s existence. “Modern fiction” as a form of art, aims to record and give an outlet to the natural emotions under the severe crisis in the Western world. Historical consciousness sets forth the starting point to innovate, releases fiction from the constraint of the portrait of eternal reality and elevates it to the level contemplating upon human, life and the world. Historical consciousness is embedded in the literary experiments and implied as a preceding condition to help construct the concept of “modern fiction” in order to correlate historical and cultural traditions with the modern context and represent the mental state of human.

The duration of life in “Modern Fiction” refers to the representation of continuous free flow of self-consciousness in the individual. It seems to Woolf that fiction serves as a product of the duration of life which is fixed and externalized in the form of art. “Modern fiction” is regarded as an effective manner to realize the reconstruction of reality and the representation of the modern heart. Woolf, along with other modernist writers such as Joyce, Proust and Faulkner, turns from the depiction of the outside world to that of human consciousness. Consciousness plays a significant role in Woolf’s criticism because it is the “varying, unknown and uncircumscribed spirit” (Woolf, 2002, p. 85), which is disturbed and manipulated by the trivial and irrelevant ideas full of miscellaneous information. It is the accumulation of psychological experiences and impressions, which cannot be arranged in the measurable linear space-time unit, but recorded “tracing the pattern that each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness” (Wang, 2007, p.98), namely the unordered, extensible and crossed real or psychological time. The objects perceived in the consciousness penetrate into the impression of the past, present and future and exist as an inseparable integrity. The real or psychological time constitutes and ensures the duration of consciousness. Meanwhile, Woolf begins with the record of the intuition in mind aroused and accompanied by these objects that are perceived where after.

In Woolf’s opinion, each living individual is the effective carrier of consciousness. They are the medium in which the duration of consciousness eventually is produced and works. She appeals to the modernist writers to write for everyone and the common people. Woolf brings her “modern fiction” from the external and objective world to the inner ones, which constitute the raw material for the creation of literary works. Human nature ascends to the major concern of modern heart. The exploration at the psychological level requires fiction to get rid of the trivial and unessential appearance, and dig out the unconsciousness or “the dark places of psychology” (Woolf, 2000, p.11). This shift of focus will inevitably be projected into the representation of literature and this duration of life will be externalized by the form of fiction. In addition, Woolf figures out that creativity is attached to consciousness provoked by the outside world and records everything aroused inside. The mechanism of consciousness is not to recall or present what is in store, but to produce meanings and reconstruct its own reality in mind. Woolf indicates that no completely objective fact ever exists, since it is always explained or interpreted. It is the feelings, emotional elements and even the unconsciousness that touches the essence of the world and entails the facts that make up the reality (Faulkner, 1989, p.55). “Modern fiction” thus undertakes the task of exploring the inner world, revolving around the effective form of unconsciousness, namely, the representation of the duration of life.

Man’s subjectivity achieves the rediscovery of the role and importance of man, which emphasizes the portrait of modern heart and typifies the personal characterization. In Woolf’s view, “all the novels depict characters” (Dowling, 1983, p.290). “Modern fiction” concentrates on the heart or inner world rather than the external one. Objects exist in the space-time continuum, but an active awareness of a subject is required to make it intelligible, which means that an object attains meaning only as it is perceived in someone’s consciousness. By means of tracing and representing the modern heart, “modern fiction” fulfills the rediscovery of human being. Furthermore, Woolf argues that the depiction of character serves as a stimulus for the creation of a novelist, who endeavors to faithfully and completely record the life of any individual (Woolf, 2001). In order to portray the character, Woolf proposes fiction to depict “modern heart” that contains and embodies intrinsic human spirit, unearthing the varying, vague and uncircumscribed inner world. It seems that the representation of human nature in “modern fiction” means bringing into literature the life of real, multi-dimensional individual. It is the essence possessed by a character. Henry James suggests that the value of

literature lies in presenting the direct impression on life, based on which, Woolf moves a step further and argues that the impressions from the external and objectified world are complex and manifold.

No absolute objectivity exists, for reality manifests itself in the impression of an individual. Modernists argue that an object carries a meaning the specific subject perceives in it, rather than an inherent one. The objective reality appeals to the human senses, and then arouses the corresponding impression inside. Woolf sets forth new requirement for “modern fiction” and proposes the “impersonal characterization” (Woolf, 2000, p.158). In “modern fiction”, the character should play the major role and assume the narrative function, by which the author’s presence is dissolved. Therefore, the impressionalization of characterization is achieved. She opposes the adoption of author’s consciousness to destroy the self-disciplined and inherent logic of fiction. Instead, Woolf gives priority to the voice of the character, especially reveals the dark places of psychology, myriad impressions as well as innumerable atoms at the bottom of heart as they fall upon the mind disorderly. The experiment helps fiction break away from the limitation of the fiction at that time, display the personal joys and sorrows and the major concerns of survival. On the whole, Woolf’s “modern fiction” replaces the objectified world by the center of consciousness and transcends the impersonal narration in traditional novel. This is not only an exhibition of individual’s consciousness, but also a depiction and presentation of the general mental state of human being under the modern historical context.

A subject’s internal psychological structure is composed of three intricate components that operate in different layers of psyche, the normal consciousness, the intermediate preconsciousness and the abnormal state of subconsciousness. These three elements formulate a cross-linked system which contributes to a rich and sophisticated psychological structure. For Woolf’s part, “modern fiction” regards personal mind as the center of consciousness and rejects the fictions skimming over the appearance rather than touching the bottom of modern heart. It attempts to capture the multi-layered complexity of human psyche. Consciousness lays the foundation of the spiritual world. Freud pioneers the technique of psychoanalysis and concerns it with the nature of the unconscious mind. The exploration of human psyche is thus advanced to the area of unconsciousness, the deepest, predominantly passionate, irrational and unknown part. It is born with the power of pleasure-seeking and remained in turmoil and chaos. The preconsciousness is the area for the activities of consciousness, following the norms and principles regulating relations within the outside world, and constantly mediates between the often competing demands of the unconsciousness and the world (Zhang, 2005, p.73). In “modern fiction”, Woolf argues that the focal point of fiction has been shifted to the inner world of characters, which is not always multi-dimensional or involves the subconscious, so the major concern of “modern fiction” is to seek the “dark places of psychology” (Woolf, 2002, P.86), the excavation of subconsciousness and the disclosure of psychological perception.

As a direct and fleeting perception, consciousness is a psychological phenomenon that concerns itself to the external world and obeys the principles in reality. Henry James points out that fiction refers to the personal and direct impressions toward life, while Woolf argues that it should not stop at the level, for its purpose is not to find out a visual equivalence for the operation of heart, but to figure out the unusual sensations possessed by human beings (Faulkner, 1989). Besides the normal and intuitional consciousness aroused in real life, “modern fiction” searches for the hidden, abnormal and exquisite spiritual characteristics, the irrational and illogic activities of subconsciousness. Only through the awakening of passed and stored memories do all these elements emerge. Woolf believes that “modern fiction” enjoys more liberty in extending through the traditional concept of time by sticking to the psychological time in mind. People can control memories with the manipulation of subjective purposes. They evoke the dead memory that fails to trigger an emotional sympathy, when “modern fiction” needs to capture the free associations of memory and the interrupted experiences of mind. As the mediator, preconsciousness bridges the subconsciousness and consciousness, balances the liberation and self-gratification. Some of the unacceptable desires are repressed into the unconsciousness, which will surface and mask in symbolic form. The free flow of consciousness doesn’t head for one direction. Consciousness passes through different layers, sudden interruption or diversions that possibly happen.

The internalized reality is what “modern fiction” endeavors to seek, rather than the external and objective ones. In “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown”, Woolf puts forward her definition of reality, which regards human being as the subject and centers on the mental experiences. For traditional novels, reality is the faithful and lifelike imitation of the absolute real world. However, as the mechanism of rationalism in western world has been shattered, Kundera suggests that the single divine truth is decomposed into myriad relative truths parceled out by man (Kundera, 1988). Woolf also argues that reality is objective (Qu, 1989). She addresses to such issues as what reality is, and who the judges of reality are. A character may be real to Mr. Bennett and quite unreal to Woolf. There is nothing that people differ about more than the reality (Woolf, 2000). She denies the existence of universally acknowledged reality and makes it internalized. Reality undertakes the task of delivering the personal subjective recognition, which contributes to the pluralism of reality. Woolf disapproves of the accurate observation and imitation of the real world or the reality hold by the empirical theorists and determinists (Damian, 1989). “Modern fiction” sees through the appearance of life and emphasizes the representation of the inner images. For Woolf, reality is equated with the hidden, complex and inmost subjective experiences aroused by the material and objective world.

The internalization of reality indicates that fiction records the projection of world upon human consciousness. Woolf reestablishes the relationship of human mind and the external world and associates the two through the internalized reality, because man always consciously or unconsciously react to the physical world and produces the relevant

sensations. She achieves the relativity of reality by means of redefining its concept and setting forth new standards to judge it. Moreover, the concept of reality is characterized by such features as uncertainty, diversity and subjectivity. It stems from the one-fold individual consciousness, especially from the subconsciousness and subjective mental activities. Within the unique individual's psychological structure, the traditional concept of space-time continuum is rearranged mentally and the consciousness stretches through the three layers, on the basis of which the world is supposed to provoke and extend to the sensitive and subtle area in mind (Gao, 2006). They, in turn, either form the reflection over the human conditions, or produce associative fragments through the impressions on the trivial things. Woolf's definition of reality dissolves the certainty of the former one, instead she bestows uncertainty, richness and subjective element to the relativity and pluralism of reality.

III. CATEGORIES OF "MODERN FICTION" AS SUBSTANCE

Virginia Woolf's concept of "modern fiction" makes a scrutiny on the connotation of fiction. When confronted with the new historical context, Woolf realizes the contradiction of the pursuit of verisimilitude in traditional literary works and attempts to explore the artistic innovations through experiments. Meanwhile, these elements that revolve around "modern fiction" are figured out to implement and modify its attributes. Woolf indicates that every novelist writes for his times, revealing the fact that each era has its own corresponding literary style. As to fiction, how it guarantees the inheritance and openness in its dynamic system. Aristotle's theory of category provides a philosophical basis for this issue. It makes a better understanding of Woolf's "modern fiction", explores the finiteness and openness of literary form and reveals that how "modern fiction" represents the modern mental crisis.

From the perspective of Aristotelian theory of categories, Woolf's "modern fiction" can be taken as substance. Through the etymological study, category originally refers to the basic form and pattern of predicates, divided by Aristotle into substances and non-substances (Wong, 1984). The former is further classified into the ones used as predicates and the ones not, while the ones that cannot modify existence refer to the specific one. It is similar to the non-substances, which can also be subdivided into words modifying the existence and the ones can't. On the classification of the words used as non-substances, Aristotle puts forward "ten categories": substance, quantity, qualification, a relative, where, when, being-in-a-position, having, doing or being-affected, which are used to tell the mode of existence or nature of the specific thing itself (Aristotle, 2011). According to the relationship between ten categories, they can be simplified into two major ones: primary substance and the secondary substance. The former indicates the real and specific thing, which can stand on its own, but doesn't constitute a category, while the secondary substance enjoys a broader meaning contributing to the first of the ten categories.

The ten categories don't stand in parallel for the first category of substance is the center around which the other nine categories revolve. Therefore, the ten categories fall into two categories: the categories of substance and the categories of species. The categories of species are employed to exhibit one of the attributes of the specific existence, to be more specific, the regulative ones. They attempt to give an account of the category of substance, which is the carrier of all the properties and the object that is recognized and stated. It is thus only used as a subject. In general, the categories of species rely on and exist in the subject, which signifies the category of substance (Chen, 1985). Aristotle's theory of categories provides a philosophical access to the construction of "modern fiction" and its establishment of categories.

According to Aristotle, the "modern fiction" can be seen as a specific and concrete existence standing on its own. It is the primary substance, the holder of the attributes with a narrow meaning. On the one hand, fiction as the secondary substance can be adopted to recognize and describe the primary substance; on the other hand, it can be modified by the categories of species. In *Categories*, Aristotle notes that the secondary substance can be used to predicate the primary substance by both its function and its definition. Similarly, the categories of fiction are used to depict the substance and are supposed to be the categories of species. Therefore, the categories of "modern fiction" can be interpreted as a predication on "modern fiction" under the modern context. The substance enjoys the priority in time and existence. Fiction or modern fiction comes into being as a unity even if the categories describing their attributes are unknown. The concept of Woolf's "modern fiction" as an entity is prior to its categories, which evolves and modifies the specific substance. Woolf's "modern fiction" as substance is modified by such categories of species as "look within"; "impression", "the moment of importance", "the psychological time"; "feeling and memory" and "flow of consciousness", which all together predicate the fundamental mode of existence of fiction.

In the essay "Modern Fiction", Woolf notes the term "look within" for the first time, which emphasizes the faithful record and representation of human thoughts and psychology in order to reveal the real life. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf announces in the voice of Peter Walsh that besides ideology, we don't have any external thing. Woolf presumes the human consciousness as the only source for reality and thus focuses on the spirit, attempting to "reveal the flickering of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain" (Woolf, 2002, p.85). Woolf centers on the complexity and uncertainty of modern psychology and its ineffable part. In order to mirror the inner world, Woolf tends to combine the consciousness, feeling and memory, impression. By means of free associations, the human consciousness is provoked and lays bare the inner world and the direct human reaction to the living conditions. Woolf connects the world inside with the external one through the depiction of projection of world on human consciousness. She speaks highly of such writers as George Eliot, Meredith, Conrad and Hardy, etc. for the reason that they unconsciously record the inner world which opens a new page for English literature. She mirrors the objective world

from a subjective perspective. By looking within, the minor mental changes can be unearthed, which are the most important elements. This shift of focal point guarantees a unique artistic depth of “modern fiction”, which captures the chaotic, anxious and repressed state of modern people.

For Woolf, fiction should originate in the numerous impressions on a man, an object and an event in the daily life. She employs the concept “atom” as a metaphor to imply the impressions perceived by heart, which constantly scatter on the mind disorderly. The task of a writer is to faithfully record these “atoms” in line with the order they hit them and to display the changing, unknown and unrestricted spirit (Woolf, 2002). She thinks a person in an ordinary day will be hit by thousands of thoughts across mind, some of which disappear rapidly. These atoms are viewed as the life experiences of an ordinary one. However, Woolf mentions that these atomical impressions seem to be fragmented and incoherent. The seemingly irrelevant but interconnected impressions constitute the personal life experiences. Woolf argues that “at this moment the form of fiction most in vogue more often misses than secures the thing we seek, whether we call it life or spirit, truth or reality, this essential thing has moved off and refuses to be contained any longer in the ill-fitting vestments” (Woolf, 2002, p.84) By means of seizing the psychological elements such as impressions, the objective world becomes visible, audible, sensible and observable (Banfield, 2000). Therefore, she tries to dig out the deep consciousness and the psychology, relying on instincts, intuitions, illusions and impression and denying or even negating rationalism (Woolf, 1996).

Woolf considers that the numerous fragments of impressions constitute a “moment of importance”. Woolf mentions that “the innumerable atoms fall as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there” (Woolf, 2002, p.85). The occasionally fleeting moment of importance is named as the moment of existence.. Woolf emphasizes that “modern fiction” should dispense with the tedious plot and the accurate portrait of the external world, instead, concentrates on the erratic and fleeting thoughts and daydreams. In her works, the momentary impressions, feelings and meditations are more important than the matter of age, look, gender and occupation. Only the “moment of existence” can grasp the essence in life and reveal reality. “The moment of importance” is fleeting and shifting, but it is composed of much transient moments at which countless collisions of atoms trigger various complex impressions, feelings and associations. This moment of importance truly unfolds the sensitive activities of an individual in a specific time and space. Woolf appeals to writers that every atom has reached saturation and the useless, lifeless and redundant description should be eliminated to capture this moment (Woolf, 1997). The moment of importance is the highlighted spiritual experiences in the passage of time, which originates in the modern heart and elicits new interpretation of life.

Woolf’s “modern fiction” attempts to establish the psychological time as one of the categories, regardless of the traditional concept of linear time and space. In the late 19th and early 20th century, the development of modern philosophy and psychological analysis overshadow and even give a heavy blow to the prevailing rationalism. Woolf builds up her concept of time and space. The psychological time is of the subjective property which gets rid of the scientific and physical concept of time by emphasizing the mentally irrational time. It involves the past, present and future. In the depths of human consciousness, the external time is not applicable. Based on the new psychological findings, Woolf touches upon the soul and nature of human beings and breaks away from the traditional concept of time. Moreover, she follows the flow of consciousness, reverses the order of past, present and overlaps them, which creates the unusual structure of human consciousness and exhibits the complexity of human psyche. The psychological time is different from the physical one, which strictly follows the natural sequence and is irreversible. In her literary creation, Woolf realizes the infinite movement of time and depicts the emotional development of characters in the free flow of time. Human beings are spatially finite while infinite in time, due to the existence of psychological time. These repressed and ignored desires in the past or present steal into human consciousness and shift between the past and present.

Feeling and memory as a type of experience contribute to the categories of “modern fiction”. Memory considered as an individual way of living is empirical and experiential in nature. It is also a sensory material connecting the past and present and keeping it open to future as well. During the process of man’s growth, various experiences reside in perception and memory, accumulating as a whole in line with certain mode. Through these stored memories and some of the emotions provoked, life continues. By means of forming memory of former experiences, the human consciousness is better preserved and produces much more thoughts when it is combined with the presence. For Woolf, memory serves as the foundation and major sources for “modern fiction”. When stirred up by anything, it stretches into the past and breaks the limitation of traditional time and space. When recalling the past, every trace gradually emerges according to memory (See, 1984). Woolf captures the moments in life through the flow of memory and reshapes the internalized reality. The external things will gradually disappear with the passage of time, but when they are processed in mind and memorized, they can be maintained externally.

“Modern fiction” probes into the psychological perception or the consciousness of man towards the material world. This field of consciousness shows no clear sense of direction or explicit boundaries. From the perspective of a totally personal reaction, it penetrates into the unconscious area and represents the free flow of multi-layered consciousness. In Woolf’s opinion, the representation of mental crisis is highly similar to the disordered flow of consciousness. The senses of depression, confusion, anxiety, isolation, madness, etc. derive from the mental crisis and are the embodiment of the human perception. When the consciousness is transformed into the characteristics of literary creation, such as the

state of ambiguity, vagueness and uncertainty, the new qualities of “modern fiction” emerge. In the fiction of consciousness, the characters, time, life and even human nature are set in motion. Life is composed of the fragments of consciousness, which is multi-focal or non-focal. Woolf abandons the traditional literary form and structure and takes the erratic flow of psychological time and consciousness as the major concern of fiction, aiming to presenting the incoherent fragments of human consciousness or even the unconsciousness (Xia, 2005, p.87). The meaningless and disordered consciousness is fixed in the life framework of an individual, which reveals the complex and various living conditions through a series of overlapped impressions and memories. By concentrating on the human consciousness, “modern fiction” reveals the inner world, combines the associations, memories, impressions and the human emotions and accurately imitates its free flow in order to follow the delicate and mysterious inner life (John, 2004).

IV. HISTORICITY OF CATEGORIES OF FICTION

In Woolf’s viewpoint, the literary form conforms itself to the demand of a specific historical period consciously. She emphasizes the inheritance from tradition, but pays more attention to explore the new literary genre that is most suitable for its changing historical context. In philosophical hermeneutics, the categories of fiction changing from the old to the new reflect the consciousness of historicity. Historicity manifests the finiteness and openness (Gadamer, 2004). When Aristotle studies the ontology dynamically, he uses the concept of potentiality and actuality, which means that the way of existence contains two forms, the potential existence and the actual existence. When exploring the concrete existence, he considers that material and form contribute to existence (Zhang, 1998, p.49). The former bears the potentiality, while the latter is the form under the impact of potentiality. Similarly, in terms of fiction and “modern fiction”, fiction serves as the material, which generates the new one pushed by the external forces, which is a type of critical inheritance. If the fiction as substance is changed, its categories are subject to variation. This lays bare the historicity of the categories of fiction, which on the one hand, reveals the finiteness, namely the applicability to the present situations; on the other hand, it reflects the openness to the new condition. Instead of being a closed system, the categories of fiction stand in dynamic balance. The historical and cultural context of fiction have been change, the existing tradition can no longer meets with the requirements of the times. Based on the modern condition, Woolf in the grand historical scene uncovers the meaning of existence, taking “modern fiction” as a tool to mirror the mental conditions of people and constructing the categories of fiction. The new categories of fiction guarantee its inheritance from the former one and openness in the modern context.

The traditional categories of fiction lay emphasis on the rational narrative style, the narrative principle of objective verisimilitude and the omniscient perspective of narration. Driven by the Western rationalism, the traditional literary form presents the rationally-oriented narrative characteristics. Engels once points out that modernism means the representation of typical characters in a typical environment, which is embedded in the real details (Lu, 2003). Realists intentionally describe the living environment and the performance of a typical character because the social and natural environment helps shape the personality. Life is often regarded as an objective existence and the spiritual elements need be represented through some material forms. Human emotions are brought into being by behaviors, actions, words and expressions. Although the traditional writers have successfully epitomized the distinctive character of their times, the accurate description of the details in looking and the arrangement of furniture fail to exhibit the pessimistic and alienated state of modern heart (Li, 1996). To some extent, these shackles lead literary creation to a bleak future.

Traditional fiction pays much attention to the logic of psychological description, regardless of the complexity of human consciousness. Their descriptions strictly follow the logical and rational pattern, revealing the clear flow of mental evolvement and the causal relationship. The focal point of the writers rests on the plot, event and the objective depiction of characters. Shrouded in despair and pessimism, modern writers realize that the exploration of the morbid and deformed self becomes an effective attempt to faithfully mirror the chaos and absurdity in the west world. Reason is no longer the core part of self, but instinct and unconsciousness are whimsical (Lu, 2003). Also, the categories of traditional works stress the integrity of plots, coherence in its development and the distinctiveness of characters. It leans on the objective, concrete and historical description of reality, emphasizing the relation of character. These works are of the strong humanitarian spirit and new reformist ideas, which consist of beginning, development, conflict, climax and ending with a complete plot. Writers delicately design and arrange the plot and details of life as well, which in turn makes the structure loose and the plot lengthy.

The traditional works emphasize the authenticity of details through a lot of accurate descriptions of the external world. However, modernists challenge the depiction of life and regard the inner world as the main component of fiction. Since the end of 19th century, human’s perception of reality has been changed due to the discoveries of Bergson, William James, Freud and other philosophers and psychologists of the time. Reality includes not only the objective existence in the world, but the mental world as well. Woolf realizes that the activities of human consciousness and the inner experiences unquestionably exist. Then, the essence of the external reality never lies in itself, but in its effects on people’s life and mental world. Any unperceived external existence is meaningless. All these new understandings of reality stem from the development of modern psychology, which accelerate the shift from the objective world to the mental one. The modernists pay much attention to the internalized reality. Meanwhile, they also aim to represent the mental crisis in modern society (Xiao, 1998, p.81). In fact, the modernist literature itself is the product of social changes and disintegration of traditional values.

The omniscient narrative perspective is generally adopted in traditional works, privileging the narrator over the whole plot. The narrator possesses the insight into everything and comments on the behaviors and thoughts of characters at his discretion. This narrative perspective results in the excessive intervention and involvement of the narrator and thus brings in the distance between the work and the reader by reducing its authenticity and credibility. In addition, the omniscient perspective narrows down the vision of the work on account of the fact that the work is employed as a tool to reflect the narrator's personal taste. It also distracts the attention of the readers and leads to the phenomenon of double vision. The intervention of the narrator's personal consciousness destructs the self-discipline and integrity of fiction (Qu, 1989). Woolf argues that in order to follow the activities of consciousness and record the emotional inner life, "modern fiction" should not resort to the single perspective. Based on the center of consciousness, it needs to apply the shift of perspectives, which can exhibit the pattern of mental activities and also reveal the personalities of characters.

Confronted with the impact of world crisis, "modern fiction" doesn't mean to replace the traditional one; instead, to complete and implement it. Woolf approves of the ideas, techniques and way of living such as the writers Proust, Conrad, Defoe, Jane Austen and Stern. Due to the modern crisis, the finiteness of traditional categories of fiction emerges. The already known ration-oriented narrative style, the omniscient perspective and the objective representation cannot be employed as an effective way to mirror the modern crisis. The categories of "modern fiction" realize the representation of modern heart, whose rebellion against the traditional ones indicates not only the improvement of human cognitive ability, but the manifestation of the social crisis in capitalist society. The categories of "modern fiction" show the relationship between man and nature, man and destiny. They adopt the incongruous "mode of modern heart" to imply the contradictions, doubts and complexity in life. In order to display the senses of alienation, disorder, anxiety and confusion, "modern fiction" focuses on the morbid and deformed self. Everything that constitutes the whole life is not a trivial event. The categories of "modern fiction" describe the mode of modern heart by mirroring the human consciousness and fleeting perceptions, which are the real reactions for the fragmented world.

The categories of "modern fiction" undertake the task of delivering the modern experiences. Woolf takes the inherent human spirit and consciousness as the major content of "modern fiction" and abandons the plot and objective facts, concentrating on the free associations in a specific time, around which the related consciousness is provoked. The ages, looking, gender and occupations are not taken into account. She explores the inner world and reveals the subjective experiences and moral apprehension. Woolf mentions that only the capricious spiritual world can fully get the readers convinced. The categories of fiction emphasize the central status of human consciousness, ignoring the social relations, but appeal to life itself and the related subjective experiences and inner activities. The openness of categories of "modern fiction" realizes its integrating and restorative forces through artistic representation. "Modern fiction" is the product of capitalist society and inevitably gets involved in the modern crisis. The significant historical events, political movement and cultural and artistic trends exert direct or indirect influence on the formation of literary genre. Modernists like Woolf aim to reflect the awareness of crisis in modern civilization, which severely distorts the three basic relationships between man and self, man and the other, man and nature.

The categories of "modern fiction" proceed with the crisis of identity and fulfill the reconstruction of self. In "modern fiction", Woolf not only attempts to dig out the origin of mental crisis, but seeks to find out a solution to oppose against this crisis. The heavy blow of modern industrial civilization in the capitalist society leads to the physical and psychological harm and the deformity of human nature. The Great Wars also trigger the confusion, isolation and pessimism of modern people. The categories of "modern fiction" continue to explore the possible way out and help people to construct the complete personality. The reconstruction of self rediscovers the meaning of existence and the essence of life as well in this disordered world. In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf describes Mr. Ramsay as a man incapable of untruth, never tampered with a fact; never altered a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure of any mortal being. (Woolf, 2005), which makes the image of Mr. Ramsay stand on the paper. Woolf describes his changes before and after the voyage to the lighthouse from a rational, stubborn and stereotypical man to a new one, who is the product of self-reflection as well as reunderstanding and finally achieves a spiritual sublimation (Shen, 1999)

The categories of "modern fiction" lay emphasis on the spiritual associations. Woolf dissolves the alienation between man and the other and builds up the spiritual identity by means of breaking away from the traditional time and space, exploring the mental world at a deeper level. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf, by describing the memories and consciousness, details a day in the life of Clarissa Dalloway, a woman with high social status in post-World War I England. The fiction consists of two story lines revolving around two major characters, one is Clarissa Dalloway, who in the morning goes around London to prepare for the party hosted in that evening; the other is Septimus Warren Smith, a World War I veteran who suffers a lot from the deferred traumatic stress, spends the day with his Italian-born wife Lucrezia in the park and finally commits suicide due to frequent and indecipherable hallucinations concerning the death of his old dear friend Evans in the war. Woolf, on the one hand, records the regular striking of the Big Ben on the tower; on the other hand, reveals the particular psychological time that keep Clarissa and Septimus returning to the past in their minds. Although man's existence occupied in space is limited, that occupied in time can be extended infinitely and the stored memories of the past can be reproduced in the present. Woolf ingeniously blends the physical time with the psychological time and makes the characters' consciousness shuttle between the past and present. On this basis, Woolf attempts to establish the spacial associations between characters (Li, 2008).

The categories of “modern fiction” decompose the objectified nature and dissolve the dichotomy of man and nature by means of describing the projection of nature on human consciousness. The realists passivize and objectify the subjective world, neglect the organizing ability of modern heart and negate its initiative to neatening the sensory elements. The categories of “modern fiction” cease to consider man as the subject and nature as the object recognized by the subject. Instead, they aim to display the interaction between the two. By resort to the techniques of impressionism and symbolism, the integrity of man and nature is realized. In “Kew Gardens”, Woolf dispenses with the traditional plot and conflicts. She represents a fragmented description of four groups of visitors in the royal botanic garden named “Kew”, narrating their feelings, sentiments and the chaotic consciousness (Woolf, 1999). Woolf follows the fleeting consciousness, the subtle feelings and impressions provoked by nature. It is not only a prose poem full of rich emotions, but also a vivid and colorful picture of lights, sounds, colors and other images, which project themselves on the modern hearts and stir personal emotions. The beginning and the middle parts make an impressionistic depiction of the scenes around. “Kew Gardens” manifests the trivialness of ordinary life as well as the insurmountable obstacle in spiritual communications. This theme and the technique of impressionism complement each other harmoniously. The expressive technique combines the mankind with nature. The projections of nature are faithfully exhibited, which dissolves the dichotomy of man and the objectified nature. Everything in nature as the perceived materials, regardless of their size, shape, smell, taste, etc, elicits the flow of consciousness. In this sense, nature is not a objective existence, but nature in consciousness (Woolf, 1999).

V. CONCLUSION

The thesis aims to construct the concept of Virginia Woolf’s “modern fiction” and its categories on the basis of Aristotle’s theory of category. Under the modern circumstances, the thesis, depending on the essay “Modern Fiction”, constructs the concept of “modern fiction” with “historical consciousness”, “the duration of life”, “man’s subjectivity”, “the complexity of psychological structures” and “the relativity and pluralism of reality” as its connotations. Aristotle’s theory of categories provides a philosophical access to the construction of “modern fiction” and its establishment of categories. The categories of “modern fiction” can be interpreted as a predication on “modern fiction” under the modern context. Woolf’s “modern fiction” is modified by such categories of species as “look within”; “impression”, “feeling and memory”, “the moment of importance”, “the psychological time” and “flow of consciousness”, which all together predicate the fundamental mode of fiction’s existence. The thesis also points out that the categories of fiction constitute an open system. The traditional categories of fiction results in the finiteness of traditional categories of fiction, which cannot be employed as an effective way to mirror the modern crisis because of its belated form. Taking all these influences into account, Woolf constructs the categories of “modern fiction” and makes fiction open for future, which is the combination of inheritance and innovation.

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