

## Characters without Names: the Anonymous and the Crowds

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### Anonymous Characters, Function and Aesthetics: An Other Reading of *Death in Venice*

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#### **Abstract:**

Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* is an intensely lyrical and aesthetic stream-of-consciousness about Aschenbach who desperately loves a young and handsome boy in his trip to recuperate in Venice and ends up in death. In the novel, except for the characters with name, there are the anonymous and nameless characters, who are always neglected in the readers' expectation and researchers' consideration. Yet, all the characters in the novel are designed for some reason. So, this paper tries to decode the function and aesthetics construction of the anonymous and nameless characters in the novel to reveal Thomas Mann's writing techniques. It is found that there are mainly four catalogues of the anonymous and nameless characters in the novel and they are important and necessary for the fiction. They help develop the plot of the story smoothly and reasonably, outstand the protagonist in comparison, fulfil the introduction of the protagonist and construct a moving setting for the story, so as to beautify the story plot, enrich the depiction of the protagonist, purify the theme of the story and enhance the comprehension of the story. It is hoped that more attention and research be paid to the anonymous or nameless characters in fiction.

**Keywords:** *Death in Venice*; the Anonymous and Nameless Characters; Stream-of-consciousness; the Function and Aesthetics of Character Construction

## 1. Introduction

According to Wikipedia, fiction is any creative work, chiefly any narrative work, portraying individuals, events, or places in ways that are imaginary or inconsistent with history, fact, or plausibility (Harmon & Holman, 1990, p. 212; Oxford University Press, 2019; Sageng & Fossheim, 2012, pp. 186-187). So, individuals, events, and places are three basic constituent elements of the fiction, among which individuals mean the construction of the characters. Character is a person or other being in a narrative (Baldick, 2001, p. 37; Childs & Fowler, 2006, p. 23; DiBattista, 2011, pp. 14-20; Freeman, 2016, pp. 31-34), and Childs and Fowler (2006, 23). See also "character, 10b" in Trumble and Stevenson (2003, 381): "A person portrayed in a novel, a drama, etc; a part played by an actor") which may be entirely fictional or based on a real-life person or a combination of several persons (DiBattista, 2011, pp. 14-20).

The construction of character image is regarded as the core of fiction art, the event plot is the skeleton, and the description of <sup>typical</sup> place is the setting.

Traditionally, to study a character in a fiction requires an analysis of the relations of the character with all the other characters in the work and the individual status of a character is defined through his or her social network in the fiction (Aston & Savona, 1991, p. 41; Elam, 2002, p. 133). The construction of characters in fiction refers to the construction of typical characters, mainly through the description of characters' appearance, action, language, psychology, expression and so on, vividly shaping characters' images with words on paper. This typical character image is often based on the author's real life or his or her own creation for the model. He/she is different from living characters in real life, but often the one created by the author according to the literary creation's need and extracting from hundreds. Such typical characters fully meet the needs of the author's creation, concentrating on the theme of the work, with typical representative significance.

It is generally believed that the methods of character image creation in fiction can be summarized as follows: 1. Direct description, refers to the description of the appearance, language, action, demeanor and psychology of the characters in the fiction, providing an overview of the characters; 2. Indirect description, refers to the form of contrast, through the fictional characters and others in actions such as dialogue to reflect the character's image; 3. Side description, refers to the introduction, comments of the author about the characters from the perspective of omniscience. Throughout the current literature study at home and abroad, most focus on the study of the main characters in fictions, or at least the study of characters with name, little attention to the construction of anonymous or nameless characters in fictions.

Therefore, this paper tries to shift the research focus to the anonymous or nameless characters in fictions, taking *Death in Venice* published in 1912 by German Nobel Prize-winner Thomas Mann as a case, to explore the construction of the anonymous characters, its function and aesthetics.

## 2. The anonymous characters in *Death in Venice*

*Death in Venice* is a short story written by Thomas Mann (1875-1955), the greatest German novelist of the twentieth century, and the winner of Nobel Prize for Literature in 1929 and the Goethe Prize in 1949. Based on Mann's personal experience, it tells the story of the hero Aschenbach, a fifty-year-old noble, crazy loves a beautiful little young boy and refuses leaving the resort of Venice, regardless of the prevailing fatal epidemic and finally ends in death. Since its publication, the fiction has been highly appreciated and enjoying great popularity, especially after it was shot as a film with the same name.

In the fiction, the major character is the protagonist Gustav von Aschenbach, the supporting character is the little young boy Tazio, the rest are the minor characters which are those nameless

or anonymous. Studies of characters on it are all about the main characters as Aschenbach or Tadzio. The anonymous or nameless characters are neglected. However, all those appearing in the fiction have their own reasons.

Mann employed the stream of consciousness in his fictional writing, which easily substitutes the readers into the protagonist's position and focuses the readers' attention to Aschenbach's passion over Tadzio. He also depicted a lot of anonymous characters in the fiction with careful design and arrangement, which are worthy of research and attention as well. They are the man, the people, the crowds, the young, the seaman, oarsman, etc. appearing at the special time and place for special reason in the fiction. According to their ways of appearance, they can be divided into four catalogues.

Catalogue one, appearing singly and with interaction with the protagonist through direct description, such as "...the man was in fact staring at him so aggressively, so straight in the eye, with so evident an intention to make an issue of the matter and outstare him, that Aschenbach turned away in disagreeable embarrassment..." (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 133), and "Aschenbach was no sooner aboard than a grubby hunchbacked seaman, grinning obsequiously, conducted him to an artificially lit cave like cabin in the ship's interior" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 139).

Catalogue two, appearing in crowds and under the gaze of the protagonist through direct or indirect description, such as "Resting one elbow on the handrail, he watched the idle crowd hanging about the quayside to see the ship's departure, and watched the passengers who had come aboard" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 139), and

Those with second-class tickets were squatting, men and women together, on the forward deck, using boxes and bundles as seats. The company on the upper deck consisted of a group of young men, probably shop or office workers from Pola, a high-spirited party about to set off on an excursion to Italy (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 139).

Catalogue three, appearing in the dream of the protagonist through direct description, such as Women, stumbling on the hide

garments that fell too far about them from the waist, held up tambourines and moaned as they shook them above their thrown-back heads; they swung blazing torches, scattering the sparks, and brandished naked daggers; they carried snakes with flickering tongues which they had seized in the middle of the body, or they bore up their own breasts in both hands, shrieking as they did so. Men with horns over their brows, hairy-skinned and girdled with pelts, bowed their necks and threw up their arms and thighs, clanging brazen cymbals and beating a furious tattoo on drums, while smooth-skinned boys prodded goats with leafy staves, clinging to their horns and yelling with delight as the leaping beasts dragged them along (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 168).

Catalogue four, appearing in the omniscient author's introduction through indirect description, such as "... a shrewd commentator... 'an intellectual and boyish manly virtue, that of a youth who clenches his teeth in proud shame and stands calmly on as the swords and spears pass through his body'" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 136), "Then, when the great doors were opened and the crowd streamed out into the shining Piazza swarming with pigeons, the beguiled lover would hide in the ante basilica, he would lurk and lie in wait" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 161), and

When in his thirty fifth year he fell ill in Vienna, a subtle observer remarked of him on a social occasion: "You see, Aschenbach has always only lived like this" – and the speaker closed the fingers of his left hand tightly into a fist – "and never like this" – and he let his open hand hang comfortably down along the back of the chair (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135).

### **3. Function of the anonymous or nameless characters**

All things exist for reason in the world, so do the four catalogues of anonymous or nameless characters in the fiction. Since the stream of consciousness is employed in the fiction, it is quite natural that readers' focuses are on the protagonist, while the anonymous or

nameless characters are always neglected. After close reading, however, it is found that Mann has employed careful skill and art design in the construction of the anonymous or nameless characters, which are designed for special functions as follows.

The first function is to develop the plot of the story smoothly and reasonably.

In the fiction, it is introduced in details that the protagonist Aschenbach is well self-disciplined and a workaholic writer. Working hard and “‘stay the course’...was his favorite motto” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135). From the beginning of the story, he is in the situation of hard working. But “The morning’s writing had overstimulated him” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 132). “And so, soon after taking tea, he had left the house hoping that fresh air and movement would set him to rights and enable him to spend a profitable evening” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 132). At this point, the fiction needs a chance to push the story forward and something happens to change the routine life style of Aschenbach. An anonymous character is arranged to appear in the way he walks, very suddenly and naturally.

...when he noticed something that brought him back to reality: in the portico of the chapel, above the two apocalyptic beasts that guard the steps leading up to it, a man was standing, a man whose slightly unusual appearance gave his thoughts an altogether different turn (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 132).

Where this man appears is not clearly introduced, but he is under the gaze of Aschenbach carefully and in details with fully direct description. His look, his dress, his size, his behavior...all lead to arouse Aschenbach “a youthful craving for far-off places” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 133), “a desire to travel” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 133). And then such a desire becomes a plan. “Very well then—he would travel. Not all that far, not quite to where the tigers were. A night in the wagon-lit and a siesta of three or four weeks at some popular holiday resort in the charming south...” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 134). At last, it becomes an action. “...then, one day between the middle and end of May, he took the night train to Trieste, where he stayed

only twenty-four hours, embarking on the following morning for Pola.” (139) By then, the story plot takes its first step.

The stay at Pola, an Adriatic Island, makes Aschenbach upset. He doubts his decision. “He at once gave notice of departure from his present, mischosen stopping place” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 139). Then where is the correct chosen stopping place? As the plot goes forwards, the second nameless man appears. He is a grubby hunchbacked seaman taking passengers’ particulars and issuing their tickets. “To Venice!’ he exclaimed, echoing Aschenbach’s request.” “One first class to Venice. Certainly, sir!’ He scribbled elaborately, ...” “A very happily chosen destination!’ he chattered as he did so. ‘Ah, Venice! A splendid city! A city irresistibly attractive to the man of culture, by its history no less than by its present charms!’” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 139). His words direct the story plot to its designed place Venice and cement Aschenbach’s decision to go to Venice. At last Aschenbach takes the ship to Venice and settles at the Hotel des Bains where he meets the entirely beautiful little boy. This is the second step of the story, which decides the setting of the plot.

At Venice, the story does not go smoothly as those traditional one that they fall in love at the first sight and be happy couple forever. “Once before, years ago, after fine spring weeks, this same weather had come on him here like a visitation, and so adversely affected his health that his departure from Venice had been like a precipitate escape” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 146). Venice makes him vexed, “The thought of leaving occurred to him then and there” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 146). But the boy’s beauty makes him feel “Well, I shall stay, thought Aschenbach. What better place could I find?” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 148). His witness of the little boy makes him happy. “He was at one and the same time entertained and moved, that is to say he was filled with happiness” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 148). At last, reason overcomes passion. “To stay on willfully would be contrary to good sense, ... He must make up his mind at once. To return straight home was out of the question” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 150). So, “he notified the office that unforeseen circumstances obliged him to leave on the following morning” (Mann,

1912/1988, p. 151). Though hesitations appear again and again, Aschenbach must leave. “Good-bye, Tadzio! thought Aschenbach” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 151). At the station, “Aschenbach’s distress and sense of helplessness increased to the point of distraction. In his torment he felt it to be impossible to leave and no less impossible to turn back” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 152). At this point, the third anonymous man (the hotel company’s employee) “appeared and informed him that his large trunk had been sent off as registered baggage” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 152). The mis-departed baggage is a mistake of the man but a joy to the protagonist. “A wild joy, an unbelievable feeling of hilarity, shook him almost convulsively from the depths of his heart” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 152). Then, they return Venice. Such a small climax is the third step of the plot.

The stay at Venice again satisfies Aschenbach’s meeting of the little boy and forwards the plot. But an accelerant is needed. Here is it. One day during the fourth week of his stay at Lido, Aschenbach visits the hotel barber without a name, who chatters in flattering manner, “But you are staying on, signore; you are not afraid of the sickness” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 160). This fourth anonymous man briefs the signal of sickness to Aschenbach, which leads to the climax of the plot. Venice becomes a dangerous and fatal place. Normal people should take a leave. Aschenbach should leave and tell the family of the boy to leave. However, “he realized with a kind of horror that he would not be able to go on living if that were to happen (Tadzio might leave)” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 161). So, he keeps the secret to himself. “‘They want it kept quiet!’ he whispered vehemently. And: ‘I shall say nothing!’” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 168) even though once at a moment, he has an idea that

Tonight, after dinner, he might approach the lady in the pearls and address her with words which he now mentally rehearsed: “Madam, allow me as a complete stranger to do you a service, to warn you of something which is being concealed from you for reasons of self-interest. Leave here at once with Tadzio and your daughters! Venice is plague-stricken (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 168).



However, passion overcomes reason at last. He tells nothing at all. He keeps the secret to himself and hopes that Tadzio would be with him forever. Staying means death at this point. The fifth anonymous character appears, who is the doorman who tells Aschenbach that the family of the boy will leave Venice after lunch. Such a message leads to the death of Aschenbach soon that afternoon. Thus, the plot comes to its end.

In all, all these five anonymous or nameless men construct a complete plot for the story, from the beginning to the climax and to the end finally. They direct or indicate the story to go as designed to witness the death of Aschenbach because of plague in surface but passion over a beautify young boy indeed.

The second function is to outstand the protagonist in comparison.

In the writing of stream of consciousness, Mann is careful in the construction of the protagonist. In addition to direct description, the use of the anonymous characters to outstand is one of the techniques. In the fiction, on his way to Venice, Aschenbach met an old man on the ship, “who wore a light-yellow summer suit of extravagant cut, a scarlet necktie and a rakishly tilted Panama hat, was the most conspicuous of them all in his shrill hilarity” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 140). Aschenbach looked closely and “realized with a kind of horror that the man’s youth was false” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 140). In careful observation,

His cheeks’ faint carmine was rouge, the brown hair under his straw hat with its colored ribbon was a wig, his neck was flaccid and scrawny, his small stuck-on moustache and the little imperial on his chin were dyed, his yellowish full complement of teeth, displayed when he laughed, were a cheap artificial set, and his hands, with signet rings on both index fingers, were those of an old man” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 140).

Aschenbach with a spasm of distaste felt that “he had no right to be wearing foppish and garish clothes like theirs, no right to be acting as if he were one of them” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 140). The dress color, the thick makeup, and the appearance of the old man

totally upset Aschenbach. However, in the later chapter, in order to make himself look younger, he himself wore thick makeup, dyed hair, scarlet necktie, broad-brimmed straw hat encircled with a many-colored ribbon when dogging Tadzio's footsteps. He becomes the person he dislikes before. Such a well-designed comparison outstands Aschenbach change from a lofty gentleman to a madman crazy only for love.

In addition to the old man, another nameless man is also set to compare with the protagonist. When Aschenbach got the information that Venice was under a kind of fatal plague, he was happy but still had conscience. Once a while, he wanted to tell the information to the family of the boy and urged them to leave Venice. He hesitated. The situation of the plague became more and more serious. The hotel manager appeared. He answered Aschenbach's question,

It is merely a police measure, sir, taken in good time, as a safeguard against various disagreeable public health problems that might otherwise arise from this sultry and exceptionally warm weather – a precautionary measure which it is their duty to take (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 163).

Aschenbach knew that the hotel manager was a trickster but he took his good excuse, and said, "Very praiseworthy of the police" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 163). This man helps Aschenbach take the police words as good excuse to keep the information from the family of the boy and feel at ease. Such comparison with the nameless man makes Aschenbach descending down to the normal ordinary people rather than a civil model anymore.

The third person designed to outstand Aschenbach is an oarsman under the instruction of Aschenbach to follow that gondola ahead of them that was just turning the corner, to follow it at a discreet distance, who noticed that Aschenbach followed the little boy and had unknown hobby and was eager to offer help. "The fellow, with the roguish compliance of a pander, would answer him in the same tone, assuring him that he was at his service, entirely at his service" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 161). This man's suggestion arou-

sed a shiver running down his spine and made him wake up from his craziness, which forms a comparison free him of the dirty desire, even though he himself has already been in the beginning action. Such a comparison appears to readers that Aschenbach's behavior is evident to the others rather than only a secret love.

In physical world, Aschenbach refused the oarsman's dirty suggestion, but the nameless men and women in his dream show another picture of his inner desire. In the dream, men and women were wild and promiscuous and Aschenbach joined them.

Yes, they were himself as they flung themselves, tearing and slaying, on the animals and devoured steaming gobbets of flesh, they were himself as an orgy of limitless coupling, in homage to the god, began on the trampled, mossy ground. And his very soul savored the lascivious delirium of annihilation (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 169).

That is, in his dream, he wants to have the boy not only in way of love in spirit but also in way of love in body, which overpasses his pursuit of beauty in spiritual world.

In all, all these comparisons constructed by the anonymous characters are served to indicate the protagonist's change and his inner thought. The old man is designed to show the change of Aschenbach's personal likes and tastes, indicating the difference in behavior to another track, like crazy love of a beautiful boy, regardless of reason, ethic, honor and shame. The hotel manager is designed to show a good excuse for Aschenbach's selfishness in love, his keeping the plague information from the family of the boy, without any sense of guilt and shame. The oarsman is designed to show that Aschenbach's desire of the boy is obvious even to the oarsman and the suggestion of the oarsman is like a slap on Aschenbach's past glory. So, he can only hide it by refusal. The men and women in the dream are well designed to show Aschenbach's inner thought and instinct desire, who are totally free from all ethic and disciplines and behave by instinct desire and libido. Such designs are well served the functions to outstand the protagonist and give insight of his behavior.

The third function is to fulfil the introduction of the protagonist.

In the fiction, Mann applies the stream of consciousness in writing, which fully displays what the protagonist Aschenbach sees, thinks and interacts with others in the story as the plot goes on. But there is not yet enough. In order to fulfil the introduction of the protagonist, an omniscient perspective is designed, in which a lot of anonymous or nameless characters with no direct interaction with the protagonist appear. They are the noble family background of Aschenbach without a name, such as he is “the son of a highly-placed legal official” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135), “His ancestors had been military officers, judges, government administrators; men who had spent their disciplined, decently austere life in the service of the king and the state” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135). His mother is “the daughter of a director of music from Bohemia” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135). They are the maid and servant at Aschenbach’s service. “He dreaded spending the summer in the country, alone in that little house with the maid who prepared his meals and the servant who brought them to him...” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 134). They are “the public eye” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135), “a daily correspondence that bore postage-stamps from every part of the globe” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135), “the general public” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135), “the discriminating connoisseur” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135), “all sides” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135)...In addition to the above mentioned silent anonymous and nameless characters, there are some observer and commentator who remark on Aschenbach. For example, a subtle observer remarked of him on a social occasion:

“You see, Aschenbach has always only lived like this” – and the speaker closed the fingers of his left hand tightly into a fist – “and never like this” – and he let his open hand hang comfortably down along the back of the chair (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135).

This observer is quoted to prove that Aschenbach “had a native capacity both to inspire confidence in the general public and to win admiration and encouragement from the discriminating connoisseur” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 135). “a shrewd commentator ... an

intellectual and boyish manly virtue, that of a youth who clenches his teeth in proud shame and stands calmly on as the swords and spears pass through his body” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 136) is quoted to prove that

Aschenbach was the writer who spoke for all those who work on the brink of exhaustion, who labor and are heavy-laden, who are worn out already but still stand upright, all those moralists of achievement who are slight of stature and scanty of resources, but who yet, by some ecstasy of the will and by wise husbandry, manage at least for a time to force their work into a semblance of greatness. (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 137)

All these help for the full introduction of the protagonist, because the writing of stream of consciousness can only be the consciousness of the protagonist. So anonymous and nameless characters are arranged to make up. The anonymous characters can depict from a side description. Such side introduction cannot be depicted by the writing of stream of consciousness, but by the anonymous or nameless characters is a perfect design, which compensates for the omniscient rigid introduction of the author, thus enriches the construction of the protagonist.

The fourth function is to construct a moving setting for the story.

In addition to those single nameless men appearing in single with or without the protagonist, there are men or women appearing in crowd or group in the fiction, whose presence construct moving settings for the story, especially in the stages that Aschenbach meets the boy and follows the boy. For example, on his way to Venice, Aschenbach meets the passengers on the ship. To him, they are “those with second-class tickets” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 139) or “the company on the upper deck” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 139). Among these young men there is an old man in a false young appearance, which makes Aschenbach feel sick and feel instinctively “something not quite usual was beginning to happen...” (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 140). On the way, Aschenbach totally misfits the other passengers and the people he sees on the other ships as well as those boatmen.

They are completely from different worlds. At this stage, the old man and the others act as a kind of setting for the story with some suspense for the readers.

And at the stage when Aschenbach meets the little boy, there are also an anonymous or nameless group. They are totally different from the previous groups, where Aschenbach feels at ease and has the sense of belonging. "A large horizon opened up before him, tolerantly embracing many elements" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 144). The boy also belongs to this group. "With astonishment Aschenbach noticed that the boy was entirely beautiful" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 145). The same is the arrangement of anonymous or nameless characters in group, but the description shows the difference, from which Aschenbach's love and taste can be easily depicted. This group are gentle, well educated, with aristocratic taste. Even their "luxuriant, treacherous bias in favor of the injustice" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 145) can be regarded as a kind of "Inborn artistic nature" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 145). Because injustice creates beauty, Aschenbach tends to "sympathize with aristocratic preference and pay it homage" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 145). So, at this stage, the boy and his group act as a kind of setting for the preference and taste of the protagonist.

At the stage when Aschenbach follows the little boy by a mad compulsion here and there, he meets "groups of people were standing about silently on bridges or in squares, and the stranger stood among them, brooding and scenting the truth (the news about the plague)" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 160). To him, "visitors of other nationalities evidently knew nothing, suspected nothing, still had no apprehensions" (Mann, 1912/1988, p. 160). On the one hand, some visitors there really are kept in dark about the plague as the little boy's family, on the other hand, there are people suffering from the plague to death. Aschenbach is at the crossroad of to be or not to be. The anonymous or nameless groups at this stage totally present Aschenbach's choice. There are people knowing and leaving. Yet there are people enjoying themselves there. The depiction of a small group of street singers from the city gave a performance

in the front garden of the hotel fully shows the deep desire of the protagonist. Carpe diem. The hotel staff, the lift boys, waiters, office employees, the Russian family, their aged serf...all are enjoying life to their heart content. Aschenbach and his boy are among them! So, at this stage, the anonymous or nameless groups act as a kind of setting for the deep desire of the protagonist.

All the settings constructed by the anonymous or nameless are not changeless, but moving forward with the story plot and the development of the characters, which appear when the protagonist's stream of consciousness cannot cover, functioning as a kind of supplement, so as to perfect the story in all aspects.

#### **4. Aesthetics of the construction of the anonymous characters**

The previous studies mostly focus on the main characters and the anonymous or nameless characters are always neglected. But the existence of the anonymous or nameless characters are not for no reason. There are different aesthetics for the construction of the anonymous characters in Mann's works, especially in *Death in Venice*. From the above functions cataloged, the aesthetics can be summarized as follows: Firstly, beautify the story plot. The appearance of them perfectly smooths the story's development and makes the story plot reasonable and fascinating. Secondly, enrich the depiction of the protagonist. The anonymous or nameless characters help improve the depiction of the main character and show the sharp contrast between them, which helps the readers better apprehend the protagonist. Thirdly, purify the love of Aschenbach over the little young boy. Through the comparison between the protagonist and the anonymous or nameless characters, the story draws the readers into the protagonist's shoes to feel his anxiety, entanglement, love, hidden desire and pain, and away from the moral thinking and moral trial. As a result, the story is regarded as a pure love story rather than an immorality or an indecency of an old man over a teenager. Last but not the least, enhance the comp-

rehension of the story. The plot, the character and the theme are all enhanced by the design of the anonymous or nameless characters, thus help the reader better understand of the story and make it enjoy great popularity around the world.

## 5. Conclusion

Minor characters in fiction are always anonymous or nameless, so are those in *Death in Venice*. From the analysis above, it is easy to conclude that they are designed for important reason and are necessary part for the fiction, especially for the fiction like *Death in Venice* written with the stream of consciousness of the protagonist. They are with various catalogues and help develop the plot of the story smoothly and reasonably, outstand the protagonist in comparison, fulfil the introduction of the protagonist and construct a moving setting for the story, so as to beautify the story plot, enrich the depiction of the protagonist, purify the theme of the story and enhance the comprehension of the story, and maybe even more. So, the anonymous or nameless characters are worthy of more attention and research.



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