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The Construction of Luzhen Space in New Year's Sacrifice from the Perspective of Lefebvre's Spatial Triad

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Abstract. Lu Xun's New Year's Sacrifice is an important work that writes about the space of Luzhen. From the view of Lefebvre's Spatial Triad, we can analyze it from three aspects: the spatial practice of Luzhen rebuilds the feudal order through geographical layout and living habits, the representation of space trains people's ideological beliefs by using Neo-Confucianism words and feudal clan rules, and the representational spaces only exist weakly when individuals fight against the feudal order. So Luzhen becomes a social space system made up of boundaries and strict rules. When we look at New Year's Sacrifice from the perspective of spatial theory, the work shows new value and vitality for reading and understanding.

Keywords: New Year's Sacrifice, Luzhen, Lefebvre, Spatial Theory

1. Introduction

In the past, studies on Lu Xun's New Year's Sacrifice mostly started with character images, thematic ideas or narrative methods, and the research on narrative space is relatively little. Luzhen is a fictional geographical space created by Lu Xun based on his hometown Shaoxing, and it is valued by the academic circle because it carries the literary symbols and images of feudal rural social culture. Luzhen is mentioned in many of Lu Xun's novels such as Kong Yiji, The Village Opera and Tomorrow, and in New Year's Sacrifice, the space of Luzhen is shown in the most broad and concentrated way, so it is very suitable to analyze the space of Luzhen by taking New Year's Sacrifice as the starting point.

For the theoretical explanation of geographical space and symbolic space, the most important one is Henri Lefebvre's Spatial Triad. He looks at space as the result of human social production and practice from the materialist perspective, and puts forward the spatial dialectics of the trinity which includes spatial practices, representation of space and representational spaces [1]. At present, literary studies starting with spatial analysis usually divide space into several sub-spaces from a physical perspective, and extend from analyzing environmental characteristics to analyzing symbolic connotations. However, the space of Luzhen is not a simple superposition of scenes, but a combination of physical environment, social order and individual experience. From the perspective of the Spatial Triad, we can take apart the grand symbolic space of Luzhen and explore the internal operation mechanism of the space which is the epitome of the four power forces in rural China.

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2. Research on Lu Xun's New Year's Sacrifice

Lu Xun's New Year's Sacrifice was first published on March 25, 1924. For a hundred years, this novel with less than ten thousand words has been studied and discussed repeatedly by the academic circle, and new meanings can always be explored from it. Li Guohua uses the concept of "topic cluster" to summarize the four groups of core propositions in the text interpretation of New Year's Sacrifice [2], which shows that the existing research mainly focuses on the protagonist Xianglin's Wife or the climax of the novel "the death of Xianglin's Wife" to explore the main idea and cultural implication of the article. However, when scholars keep asking about the cause of Xianglin's Wife's death and the reason why "I" return to and leave my hometown, a more basic question is put aside: what kind of space is Luzhen, which "creates a strong and constant sense of the people of Luzhen" [3], actually produced as?

The spatial turn is one of the most important events in the ideological and academic circles in the 20th century [4], and since then, studies on the interpretation of Luzhen space in New Year's Sacrifice have appeared one after another. Scholars either deconstruct Luzhen into several architectural units, such as the study, kitchen and main hall of Master Lu Si's home, as well as the streets, riversides and earth temples of Luzhen [5,6]; or divide Luzhen into physical and spiritual two-dimensional spaces, the analysis of physical space is similar to the previous path, while the analysis of spiritual space holds that Luzhen symbolizes "prison", "iron house" and so on, revealing its spiritual control and devouring of people [7,8]. The existing research has shown many problems, but they are more like simply splitting and superimposing the space of Luzhen, and seldom ask how this space is constructed, that is, they pay insufficient attention to the formation process of Luzhen. In fact, Luzhen does not exist naturally and remain unchanged, but is gradually formed under the intertwined influence of multiple factors such as history, culture and power.

Lefebvre's Spatial Triad breaks through the "reality-symbol" dual framework and well provides a starting point for the study of Luzhen in New Year's Sacrifice. He holds that space is a social process [1], social space is jointly composed of the practice and cognition of specific social groups, and its existence depends on the continuous production of social relations. "Spatial practices" include the production and reproduction of space, and the produced space has a concrete and perceptible physical form. "Representation of space" is the conceptualized space, that is, the space system conceived by scientists, planners, urbanologists and so on, which tends to be a system of linguistic symbols. In the process of experiencing the representation of space unconsciously, people form a unique feeling of spatial practices that is different from the representation of space, that is, "representational spaces". "Representational spaces" are spaces that are dominated and experienced passively, whose subjects are the residents, users, some artists, writers and philosophers in the space, and they have fluidity and vitality because of different personal feelings [1,9]. From the research perspective of spatial theory, scholars have elevated space from the background to the narrative subject [10,11], providing an operable path for interpreting New Year's Sacrifice.

Based on this, this paper attempts to reinterpret New Year's Sacrifice under the framework of Lefebvre's Spatial Triad, to explore how the Luzhen space in it is produced and reproduced, how it is used as a tool to discipline people, and the individual experiences in this space. In this way, it can not only make up for the deficiencies of the existing research on Luzhen space, but also explore the multi-dimensional factors for the successful construction of this space more deeply.

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3. Analysis of Luzhen space in New Year's Sacrifice

3.1 Spatial practices: the physical environment and reproduced boundaries of Luzhen

"Every society produces its own space [1]." Lefebvre's assertion accurately explains the interdependent relationship between space and social power. A specific social form must have matching spatial practices, and spatial practices in turn produce a social space that meets the norms. Luzhen in New Year's Sacrifice is a typical product of such spatial practices. Its clear physical layout and time-honored living habits engrave the social order required by the feudal patriarchal system into the structural system of the town and the subconscious of the residents, forming the most basic and stable spatial reproduction.

As a town built along the river, rivers are the main boundary connecting and separating Luzhen from the outside world. The path that Xianglin's mother-in-law and Mrs. Wei came by boat from Weijiashan, seized Xianglin's Wife by the river and forced her to marry into Hejia'ao clearly marks the existence of this boundary. Inside the town, Luzhen is roughly divided into four spatial units: Master Lu Si's home, the Earth Temple in the west, the streets, and the riverbank in the east [6]. "The space of material nature is disappearing [1]." These four spaces are not defined naturally; human activities occupy the natural space and endow it with social functions. Master Lu Si's home is a symbol of the intellectual authority of the gentry, where Master Lu Si criticized Xianglin's Wife as a "bad seed"; the Earth Temple, as a public belief center, deals with the crimes of the soul; the streets and alleys are places for information dissemination and interpersonal communication, where people take Xianglin's Wife's pain of losing her son as a topic for casual chat; the riverbank, as a marginal area, where Xianglin's Wife was seized and "I" met Xianglin's Wife, it can be seen that it is also a zone for marginal people. These spatial blocks present different social functions and set the positions and activity boundaries that different social roles can occupy.

However, this set of spatial order that seems to be natural is also created by human activities. It is a legacy left by the "absent" disciplinarians in history through long-term practice, and is unconsciously inherited and solidified by modern people. Master Lu Si's study is a micro space reflecting this discipline: the character "Longevity" written by Chen Tuan, half a couplet of "Understanding principles and keeping peace of mind", and Neo-Confucian classics such as *Annotated Collected Reflections on Things Near* and *Annotations on the Four Books* together construct a visual field of Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism [12]. Master Lu Si is not the creator of authority, but an adherent and user of this set of handed-down disciplinary system, and his authority comes from the occupation and display of these spatial symbols. Similarly, the reason why the Earth Temple can become a sacred place to judge Xianglin's Wife's soul also stems from the "doctrine" endowed by predecessors. Aunt Liu earnestly persuaded Xianglin's Wife to "donate a threshold", not out of malice, but because she fully accepted and believed in the feudal ethical code that "the soul will be cut in two" from the bottom of her heart. Her persuasion itself is the re-expression and dissemination of this set of discipline through her body. It is through such daily physical practices that the people of Luzhen follow the living rhythm of their predecessors, repeatedly confirm the boundaries of these spaces, and thus complete the cycle from spatial production to spatial reproduction.

The spatial practices of Luzhen transform the internal logic of a complete set of feudal ethics into perceptible spatial layout and followable physical rhythms, and finally internalize them into people's living habits. On this basis, the reproduced social order is successfully disguised as natural and unconscious rules—the ultimate product of Luzhen's spatial practices is this imperceptible "reproduced boundary". This is exactly in line with Lefebvre's judgment that "spatial practices

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ensure continuity and a certain degree of cohesion [1]". Spatial practices are not scattered, chaotic and isolated behaviors, but an organized and interrelated whole formed around specific goals, rules or meanings. The spatial practices of Luzhen provide a solid foundation for the ruling class to manipulate and utilize the established order at the level of "representation of space".

3.2 Representation of space: ideology and power discipline in Luzhen

Like all social practices, spatial practice is also an experienced and direct reality before it is conceptualized; but the order that speculative is superior to conceived, and conceived is superior to experienced experience leads to the disappearance of practice and life together [1]. In Luzhen, the representation of space is exactly such a "conceived order" that overrides spatial practice, and it is under the "double bondage of knowledge and power" [1]. Spatial practice is utilized and planned by the representation of space, and is endowed with ideological discipline. The representation of space in Luzhen is interrelated with the Neo-Confucian system, feudal ethical regulations and patriarchal ethics, forming a complete disciplinary sequence from external norms to inner fear.

Master Lu Si's study is an important entry point to peek into the "representation of space" in Luzhen, where power shows the commanding height of discourse. This field filled with Neo-Confucian classics and hung with the couplet of "Understanding principles and keeping peace of mind" produces not only knowledge, but also the authoritative standard for judging everything created by knowledge. As a symbol, the study represents the ruling logic of the entire Luzhen: an ideological system with Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism as the core, emphasizing hierarchical order and the concept of chastity. In this set of ruling logic, Master Lu Si is nothing but an indifferent follower and defender of orthodoxy, so Master Lu Si who walks out of the study will criticize Xianglin's Wife as a "bad seed". This system plans the social space of Luzhen, stipulating who can be in the center and who will be marginalized; what kind of behavior is reasonable and what kind of identity is unclean.

Furthermore, this set of discourse is spatially performed and strengthened in sacrificial rituals, and the superiors strengthen their concepts into codes of conduct. The year-end "New Year's Sacrifice" is the most important spatial production activity in Luzhen throughout the year, and it is also a ritualized scene controlled by power discourse. This space is required to be absolutely clean, and any factor that may defile it must be removed. Therefore, Xianglin's Wife, who is defined as "unclean" by discourse because of her remarriage, is forbidden to touch the sacrificial vessels. Fourth Aunt's stern shout of "Xianglin's Wife, leave it be! I'll set it out" [12] is the disciplinary transmission from her, who has accepted the discipline of power discourse, to Xianglin's Wife, a stranger in Luzhen. This defined spatial order not only acts on external behaviors, but also is deeply internalized in the consciousness of every resident of Luzhen, making Fourth Aunt's stop seem not at all surprising.

However, the discipline of power does not stop here. With the help of the "hell" narrative, it constructs a transcendent space that makes people uneasy. The story of "Yama cutting the body in two" told by Aunt Liu is not a simple superstition, but a representation of space isomorphic with the ethical order of the mortal world. This set of narrative cleverly extends the oppression of the mortal world to the afterlife, making the monitoring and punishment of power eternal and omnipresent, and becoming an inescapable fear in the individual's heart. Xianglin's Wife's questioning of the existence of souls is exactly the evidence that this transcendent representation of space has completed the deep colonization of her spiritual world. At the same time, Aunt Liu's exhortations and the existence of the phenomenon of "donating a threshold" at the Earth Temple reveal that Xianglin's Wife is only

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one of the many members disciplined by the power of Luzhen, not an isolated and accidental individual.

The representation of space in Luzhen is shaped by the "absent" ruling class, and is specifically manifested through the power discipline established by ideologies such as the Neo-Confucian system, feudal ethical regulations and patriarchal ethics. "They equate experienced experience (representational spaces) and perceived space (spatial practices) with conceived space (representation of space). The representation of space is the dominant space in any society [1]." Spatial practice, which should rely more on individual perception, is dominated by these power disciplines, operating in accordance with common ideology rather than personal will, thus constantly solidifying and strengthening the representation of space, and ultimately leading to the obscuration of life practice and representational spaces.

3.3 Representational spaces: individual efforts and oppressive endings in Luzhen

Different from the representation of space as a ruling blueprint, representational spaces are a "ruled space" and also a space chosen for struggle, freedom and liberation. This resistance is reflected in its reproduction of subordinate, peripheral and marginalized spaces and its attention to the social bottom of the spatial order [1,13]. In Luzhen, Xianglin's Wife, a marginal figure dominated by the representation of space, and the narrator "I" are not entirely passive recipients. Their struggles and doubts together form a weak resistance to the ruling space. Xianglin's Wife's act of "donating a threshold", her "question about souls" and her final death, as well as "I"'s departure, are the concrete manifestations of the representational spaces with rebellious attributes. However, under the strong suppression of the representation of space in Luzhen, these efforts all lead to an oppressive ending, revealing the common predicament of individuals in a rigid social structure.

Xianglin's Wife's act of "donating a threshold" contains the intention of self-salvation beyond compromising with the rules. After hearing Aunt Liu's terrifying story about hell, Xianglin's Wife did not wait for death. She used up all her savings to donate a threshold at the Earth Temple as a substitute, "to be stepped on by thousands of people and crossed by ten thousands, redeeming the sins of this life" [12]. This disciplinary act of "donating a threshold" was internalized by Xianglin's Wife as a way of salvation leading to a hopeful "living space". She naively believed that through this symbolic act, she could erase the "unclean" mark on herself and regain the right to touch the sacrificial space. However, when she went to help set out the sacrificial vessels with a relieved mood after "atonement", Fourth Aunt's stern shout shattered the representational space she had carefully constructed in an instant. This threshold donated with her hard-earned money not only failed to become a bridge to salvation, but also highlighted her pitiful status of being forever under the domination of the representation of space.

After the failure of self-liberation, Xianglin's Wife's resistance escalated into a fundamental questioning of the ruling ideology. At the end of her life, she asked "I", a cultural person who had seen the outside world, a question about souls: "After a person dies, is there really a soul or not?" [1] This question is by no means a simple superstition, but a philosophical speculation earned by an oppressed person through life experience. She was doubting the set of representation of space that ruled her—if "there is no soul", then the terror of hell would cease to exist, and the fear of her whole life would lose its foundation. However, a question without an answer cannot save the questioner. As Lefebvre said, "Death is attributed to the infinite realm to liberate (or purify) finiteness" [12]. If Xianglin's Wife wanted to break away from the control of the representation of space, her final ending was inevitably death. Xianglin's Wife realized the final resistance to the representation of space through death. Although this act did not shake the spatial order of Luzhen, it is extremely far-

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reaching in its enlightening significance for readers outside the text. In addition, the narrator "I", as an intellectual who accepted new ideas and felt alienated and uncomfortable with everything in Luzhen, also could not shake the spatial order of Luzhen, and could only record all this as a bystander. By choosing to leave, "I" preserved my own independence and criticality, and avoided being controlled and assimilated by the powerful representation of space.

Xianglin's Wife and "I", these two unique individuals, were finally expelled by the representation of space in Luzhen in two ways that seemed active but were actually passive. Xianglin's Wife's process from constructing a road to salvation, to questioning ideas, and finally to physical death clearly shows how individual resistance is eliminated step by step by the powerful representation of space. And "I"'s departure means the helplessness of individuals against the spatial system dominated by the representation of space. Before the old logic of spatial production is fundamentally subverted, any individual resistance from within it will inevitably be suppressed by the representation of space.

4. Conclusion

Based on Lefebvre's Spatial Triad, this paper analyzes the construction process of Luzhen space in Lu Xun's New Year's Sacrifice from three aspects: spatial practices, representation of space and representational spaces. At the level of spatial practices, Luzhen builds tangible boundaries through the water-based transportation network and spatial units with distinct functions. These boundaries not only divide the geographical field, but also reproduce specific behavioral norms and social relations into unquestionable daily life through repeated physical practices. At the level of representation of space, the "absent" ruling class solidifies the boundaries produced by spatial practices into a social order with absolute authority through Neo-Confucian discourse, sacrificial rituals and hell narratives, realizing an all-round discipline of the thoughts and behaviors of Luzhen residents. At the level of representational spaces, although both Xianglin's Wife and "I" try to gain salvation and liberation in the gaps of the ruling space, these individual efforts are ultimately swallowed up or exiled by the powerful spatial order. This oppressive ending proves the solidity of the boundaries and the strictness of the discipline in Luzhen space, and the struggle of individuals in it is like a trapped animal fighting back. Thus, Luzhen space presents as a nearly perfect closed-loop system: spatial practices provide an operable and perceptible material foundation for the representation of space, and the representation of space endows practices with legitimacy and sacredness; the stifled representational spaces, as counter-evidence, in turn prove the unshakable authority of the former two. Boundaries and discipline are transformed from external compulsion into the internal logic of spatial production, becoming the default and imperceptible life rules of residents, and constructing an overall constant Luzhen space.

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