

The Comparison of Spatial Images between Wang Xiaobo and Orwell's Novels

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Abstract: Among contemporary writers, Wang Xiaobo is undoubtedly a writer who is good at blending local and Western resources. Wang Xiaobo's unique narrative style and the selection of theme content are due to the absorption and transplantation of Western resources. From the perspective of Wang Xiaobo's creation work, there are signs of French British writer George Orwell, in space- image of the novel's setting and construction, but many innovations and mutations on this basis. Comparing the opposite space settings and the panopticism structure, we can explore the inheritance relationship between the two writers and new development of Wang Xiaobo's novels.

Keywords: Wang Xiaobo, Orwell, Spatial image, Comparison.

1. Introduction

Among contemporary writers, Wang Xiaobo is not only good at exploring the intersection of classical and modern between the folds of history and tradition, but also good at absorbing Western resources in his creation. Widely read, he was influenced and inspired by many Western writers. He mentioned in his essays that dozens of Western writers influenced him, among which Orwell had a profound influence on him. Some scholars once counted the number of Orwell mentions in Wang Xiaobo's works as many as 13 times, second only to George Bernard Shaw (14 times). Wang Xiaobo read the Western dystopian trilogy when he was in college and was shocked. "In 1980, I read George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in college. It was an unforgettable experience," Wang said. "This book is called the dystopian trilogy along with Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and *We* by Samuel Zamitin. [1] He was influenced by Orwell in his writing ideas and techniques. Wang Xiaobo has sustains and rebels to utopia. He appeals to the social collective memory shared by the public. After arousing the reader's memory for a moment, he then takes it as an act of resignation, and even finally dispels the memory itself, which is a basic structure of text strategy. There seem to be two opposing spatial structures in Wang Xiaobo's novels and Orwell's dystopian novels, that is, one is a free place to fly oneself, while the other is a place to feel oppressed and enslaved. The spatial image setting in Wang Xiaobo's novels is similar to that in British novelist George Orwell's classic dystopian novels *Nineteen Eighty-four* and *Animal Farm*. The spatial images in Wang Xiaobo's novels show the discipline and domination of people (or animals), which not only shows Wang Xiaobo's absorption of Orwell's writing thoughts, but also reflects his unique personality's promotion and development of utopian narrative.

2. Juxtaposition of Opposing Spaces

In George Orwell's novels, it is not difficult to see that the author is often committed to the creation of two diametrically opposed Spaces. This can also be seen in Wang Xiaobo's novels. Wang Xiaobo benefited from Orwell's inspiration in the setting of the opposition space between freedom and repression in his novels, and at the same time made new

development in the construction of the opposition space with his own uniqueness.

In *Animal Farm*, an animal fable, Orwell tried to establish an equal and harmonious society without oppression and bullying, relying on the revolution of animals enslaved by farmers. However, after the old capitalist masters were driven out, the free kingdom that the animals had worked so hard to build was soon replaced by a dictatorship representing totalitarianism, coercion and terror, which led to a collective abyss from which there was no return. In the novel, Napoleon Pig, Snowball, boxer, donkey, they try to establish their own kingdom on the farm, after the success of the animal gate revolution drives Master Jones out of the farm. The farm and the outside world form two separate Spaces. Farm fragrant grass delicious, all the animals are filled with the hero masters of the pride, they live in harmony, common guard home. Later, Napoleon Pig uses intrigue and force to force out the former leader Snowball, who represents the spirit of idealism and freedom, to control the power, the hierarchy of the farm spread a horrible atmosphere. The contrasting tones of warmth and terror, freedom and tyranny, poetry and pathos, home and cage are all displayed in the unique space of the farm. In 1894, Oceania, which tries its best to create a happy scene by tampering with news and historical records, appears harmonious, prosperous and united, but the middle and high level personnel are constantly monitored by telescreen, while the lower level people are deceived and bound by alcohol, women and ideology. These two extreme scenes are placed in the same novel, which looks very dignified. In addition, Winston and Catherine's date in the countryside and the bookseller's cottage they rent stand in contrast to the high-pressure world of telescreen.

Wang Xiaobo's space setting in the novel also continues Orwell's opposite space setting. In *The Golden Age*, Wang Xiaobo constructs the two-person world of Wang Er and Chen Qingyang having an affair on the mountain, which is completely different from the line-jumping farm with strong political significance below: the former represents the harmony and beauty of nature and the wild, while the latter reflects the distortion and absurdity of human nature under the guidance of politics. In *Love in the Time of Revolution*, the tower where Wang Er, a tofu factory worker, works also seems incompatible with the surrounding space. Wang Er,

grinding tofu at the top of the tower, has to walk through a tall ladder to reach the tower, which shows that this kind of space is seriously divorced from reality. The same is true of "The Silver Age," in which there are counterpoints between the bedroom of a thermodynamics teacher and the real space of the editorial office of a writing company. The former one represents the short freedom and vitality, while the separated space indicates repression, power and unfreedom. The "freedom" he pursued is both historical and transcendent. As some theorists said, "it is not only related to the history of the Cultural Revolution, or Chinese history, but also related to history itself." [2] In *My Yin and Yang Worlds*, Wang Xiaobo also sets up two extremely opposite "Yin world" and "Yang world". In the novel, the author makes Wang Er walk in the "basement", that is, the Yin realm, and unfolds the narrative structure of the novel with the space of Yin and Yang. Throughout the whole story, Yin is the holy land where Wang Er runs to freedom, while Yang is the space where he is oppressed. Wang Er felt that the hospital was like an underground tomb that with a square yard and surrounded by a fence. Wang Er belongs to the "Yin realm" in his sexual role because of impotence. Later, Xiao Sun takes the initiative to help Wang Er cure impotence in the name of a doctor and dedicates herself. After recovering from illness, Wang Er came to live on the ground, and began to miss the life in the basement in the face of all kinds of oppression, tedious and not free. Mr. Li's definition of "us" and "them" in "My Yin and Yang World" divides the two types of people into a very different living space for these two people. In addition, in "Longevity Temple" Xue Song spent a lot of money to buy Xiangxi governor position, only to find that here is not the imagined paradise. He had to establish a full of fun meaning of Xanacanthus "Phoenix Village in the termite mound and green forest, which is the residence of the governor full of majesty and power, At the same time it is just a lonely stockade with thatched roofs and hornets' nests.

If we say that the "Animal Farm" and "Oceania" constructed by Orwell in "Animal Farm" and "1984" simultaneously possess the combination of freedom and repression, happiness and misery. So the space constructed by Wang Xiaobo in his novels is the same, with the juxtaposition and unification of two opposing attributes. Whether it's the cottage on the hill and the farm below the mountain in the Golden Age, the tower and the low and decadent surroundings in *Love in the Revolutionary Age*, the bedroom and the newsroom in the Silver Age, the Yin and Yang worlds in *My Yin and Yang Worlds*, the majestic and the ridiculous Phoenix village in *The Longevity Temple*, All of them reflect the author's obsession and persistence in shaping the opposite space in the process of writing. This not only reflects Wang Xiaobo's inheritance and continuation of Orwell's writing spirit, but also reflects the author's thinking on the juxtaposition of opposing Spaces. The juxtaposition of opposite Spaces is beneficial to the generation of different feelings of readers in the process of reading, so as to carry out comparative care and understanding of the two spatial forms and the story plots that can be developed from them. Moreover, the thoughts and feelings that the author wants to express and the more in-depth and subtle exploration of the world can also better complete the transition and integration with readers. It can be said that this is not only a resonance phenomenon between Orwell and Wang Xiaobo in the creation of novels, but also a deformed representation and understanding of space in the exploration of human existence

in modern novels.

3. The Creation of Panoramic Surveillance Space

In the novels of Orwell and Wang Xiaobo, in addition to the juxtaposition of opposing Spaces and the coexistence of freedom and repression, the writing of repressed space in Wang Xiaobo's novels is also quite similar to the panoramic view structure adopted in 1984. Foucault once talked about Bentham's panoramic architecture in his book *Discipline and Punishment*, that is, a circular building surrounded by a tower in the middle. "The watchtower has a big window facing the ring building. The ring is divided into a number of cells, each of which runs through a transverse section of the building. Each cell has two Windows, one facing inside, opposite the direction of the tower, and the other facing outside. It makes light go from one end of the cell to the other. Then all that is required is to place an overseer in the central watchtower and put in each cell a madman or a sick person, a criminal, a worker, a student." [3] The architecture is so sophisticated that its monitoring mechanism can operate effectively in the absence of a monitor. The prisoner could not see if the watchman was in the tower, so the prisoner had to follow the rules. If the prisoner is not sure that he is being watched, he becomes his own watcher. It can be said that Orwell's 1984 and some of Wang Xiaobo's novels adopt panoramic view structure in space to complete the construction of surveillance space. Behind the surveillance of people, it shows that the power intervention in the individual freedom and the discipline of human behavior.

In Nineteen Eighty-four, the people of Oceania are monitored and controlled by telescreens and thought police. In the novel "telescreen can receive and transmit at the same time. Any sound made by Winston was received by him as long as it was louder than a very low whisper; Besides, as long as he stays within sight of that metal plate, in addition to hearing his voice. You can see him in action. Of course, there's no way to know if you're being watched at any given time. How often did the Thought police... You have lived so long that every sound you make is heard, and every movement you make is watched, except in the dark." [4] The space in which the hero Winston lives is a surveillance space under a typical panoramic view structure. The main character's home is installed with "telescreen", whose words and actions are under the watch and prying eyes of others. In the novel, the entire upper and middle classes, except the lower classes, are monitored and controlled by the telescreen system and the Thought Police. Even O'Brien, who is at the top, cannot turn off the telescreen for more than fifteen minutes. In addition, "telescreens" constantly broadcast the words of "Big Brother" and brainwashed the populace with carefully arranged messages. The Thought Police had full access to Winston's diary, which opposed Big Brother's control, complained about the Ministry of Truth's falsification of history, and Winston's appointment with Catherine.

Wang Xiaobo has a similar surveillance space in *Future World*, 2015, 2010 and *The Age of Black Iron*. In *Future World*, "I" makes explicit and insinuating mistakes in writing my uncle's biography, and the publishing company monitors "I". "I" was placed in room 407. I was not allowed to change my job. My property was at the company's disposal. The woman I lived with, F, was sent by the company's investigation department to spy on me. "2015" My uncle is in

the arts of tyranny and terror, the little uncle does not accept the "electric shock" discipline, then wait for a chance to escape, would rather be a free man to sell paintings without a license. The recurring "Big Brother" in 2010 is certainly a parody of Orwell's novel. Wang Xiaobo describes the external environment of his writing company as similar to that of 1984, in which the Ministry of Truth, where Winston is located, is "a huge pyramid of gleaming white cement, rising one storey after another to a height of 300 metres". Wang Xiaobo wrote in the Silver Age that "the company is a building with glass exterior wall. When viewed from a certain Angle, it seems that it does not exist; That's why the red sign on top of it seems to be floating in the air." [5] In the novel Future World, the writing section "It was a big White House, like a big workshop, with glass on the sunny side, so the sun shone brightly inside." [6] The camera monitors all, and the writing is patterned according to the rules. People in the writing department call each other by code names. The Black iron apartment depicted in Wang Xiaobo's unfinished Black Iron Age is also a depressing place. "It's a boxy concrete castle that looks light gray from the outside, but it lives up to its name because it's very dark inside. High on the ceiling, a distant mercury lamp shone down on the large room... Each passage led to a window just big enough to distinguish between day and night. On either side of the passage, behind carved black lacquered iron railings, are the rooms of the Black Iron apartment -- everything in them is visible." [7] Tenants in the unobstructed black iron apartments are watched like prisoners.

In a word, Wang Xiaobo intentionally constructs a surveillance space in many novels to explore the interference and guidance of space field under the restriction of power to human's living state through the damage of characters' free form. The emergence of surveillance space in Wang Xiaobo's novels is closely related to the influence of Orwell. Both of them turn political thought into literature and art, have unique suspicious spirit and introspection consciousness, and show criticism of totalitarianism and yearning for the ideal world. The surveillance space in Orwell's novel represents Orwell's anger and criticism of totalitarianism caused by the massacre of right-wing members of the Communist Party by leftists after he fled in a rush in the Spanish Civil War, while the surveillance space in Wang Xiaobo's novel represents Wang Xiaobo's failure of idealism and dissatisfaction with totalitarianism when he jumped the queue in Yunnan after the Cultural Revolution. However, Wang Xiaobo's surveillance space is slightly different from Orwell's. The surveillance space under Orwell's pen is grim, scary and makes people

restless. However, the surveillance space under Wang Xiaobo's pen is mostly used in a humorous way to complete the teasing and resolution of the difficult real world.

4. Conclusion

Wang Xiaobo was influenced and inspired by George Orwell in his novel creation. From the perspective of the spatial image presented in the novel, both of them used the opposite juxtaposition space in the novel, through the juxtaposition of freedom and repression space, to reflect on the human existence in it; In addition, both of them adopt the shaping of surveillance space to complete the reflection and criticism of people in the space field under the restriction of power on totalitarianism. The difference between the two lies in that Orwell's surveillance space is serious, scary and threatening, while Wang Xiaobo's surveillance space is humorous and devoted to the irony and resolution of ideology.

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