

# *The meaning construction of class metaphor from the perspective of space criticism—Take the film Parasite as an example*

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**Abstract:** The concept of "Spatial Criticism" was put forward by Philip Wegener, which deeply examines the spatial patterns presented in literary studies as the objects of criticism at the spatial level. The ingenious use of the concept of "Space" in film and television works enriches the deepening and expression of the theme. The construction of spatial structure in the film Parasite shows many intriguing metaphorical effects, so that space is no longer just a narrative "Accessory" to explain the environment, place and background, but rely on the environment to deepen the meaning and strengthen the symbolic narrative "Metaphorical body". Different changes in the perspective of space show the differentiation of different stages, and take "door" and "window" as the symbol of peeping desire to show the irreparable gap between the rich and the poor and the status gap that is difficult to cross through the interval of spy, thus showcasing the 'Parasitic illusion' within the attachment of the upper and lower classes.

## 1. Introduction

In his book Spatial criticism: geography, Space, place and textuality of criticism, Philip Wegener pointed out that "the emerging interdisciplinary pattern focuses on the problems of 'Space', 'Place' and 'Cultural geography'. Then it outlines a form of criticism centered on " Space ".<sup>[1]</sup> In film and television works, taking the *Parasite* directed by Bong Joon ho as an example, the case of deepening narrative meaning with the help of space can be regarded as a metaphorical classic. This film uses space to reveal the deep metaphorical connotation and dig deep into the life dilemma and desire of the people at the bottom of Korean society. How does *Parasite* take space as the construction dimension to construct the meaning of spatial metaphor? How to reflect the gap between different classes through the mutual transformation of space? And how to deepen the meaning and interpret the theme of the film from the perspective of space?

## 2. Class differentiation from the perspective of space

The film *Parasite* brings the Kim family to work collectively and "Move in" the Park family as a "Parasite" of poor families to rich families. When the film is filmed, by using the space construction of "Different space" and "The same space", it shows the current situation of different living

environments of the three families of the rich Park family, the poor Kim family and the former housekeeper couple, and uses different forms of space design to show the differential conditions and identity gap of the living space of different social strata, so as to achieve the dual effect of deepening the main meaning and obscure expression.

## 2.1 Metaphorical construction under different spatial conditions

Gaston Bashra believes in the historiography of furniture in the Poetics of Space: "Space is not only a container of objects in the material sense, but also a happy habitat of human consciousness."<sup>[2]</sup> Just as the "House" symbolizes the space of intimacy, enthusiasm and happiness; the closed furniture such as "cabinets and drawers" symbolizes the real organs of the secret life and soul; and the corner symbolizes the sanctuary of loneliness, the sprout of the house, innocence and loneliness. Director Bong Joon ho constructs the social existence form of different classes through the triple space of "above ground", "between ground and underground" and "underground". "On the ground" is the metaphor of a luxury house. *Parasite* is not only shown through the actor's lines such as "going uphill" and "so quiet that you can only hear birds". It also shows the excellent living conditions of the upper class through a series of luxury house settings, such as exquisite floor-to-ceiling windows, luxurious living room, visual doorbell, remote control and so on. At the same time, by putting Ki-woo, who was shocked by the mansion, submissive, who came to apply for a job, and Mrs. Park, who is simple in mind and accustomed to living in a high quality of life, in the same space, through the different character states of the two people, compare the bewilderment of Ki-woo with the leisurely complacency of Mrs. Park and her children, forming a strong contrast, making use of different space conditions to show the gap between the rich and the poor and the life gap that is difficult to cross. The semi-basement symbolizes "between the ground and the underground", while the basement symbolizes "underground". Bong Joon ho made a meticulous space display through the dull half of the basement, the crossflow of sewage, the flying of flies, and the narrow space. In order to "Rub" on the free eliminate virus potion, his father Ki-taek let the family endure the "Baptism" of pungent drugs. Through the top-down overlooking camera, the humble living environment and humble social status of a family of four are fully revealed. When the insecticide is sprayed on the house and the four people, the metaphorical images of "Parasite lair" and "Parasite" are revealed. Potions for the "Parasites" drive away, and they only often complain about "when to live a good life", but there is no practical action, only illusory characters, thus incisively and vividly depict. The basement is Wen Guang, the former housekeeper of the Park family, hiding her husband's sojourn. In the symbol of cultural meaning, "Step" has a very strong symbolic meaning. In *Parasite*, the "Step" symbol is used to imply class antagonism between the upper and lower levels. The lens language is captured and output through a long and slow overlooking lens, as well as the dim, simple "parasitic prison" exposed as the number of downward steps decreases gradually. And through the long and narrow steps and dark hallways connecting "above ground" and "underground", through the rapid but tortuous way of going down the steps of Wenguang and Zhong Shu, we follow the fast rhythm to trace the luxurious and noble mansions on the ground and the smelly and dark underground to compare the different spaces, and construct the huge differences between the social strata and the gap between the rich and the poor under different space conditions.

## 2.2. Metaphorical construction in the same space

Michel Foucault believes that space is the basis of any form of public life and the operation of power, and emphasizes that there is a deep power relationship hidden in space.<sup>[3]</sup> What Henry Lefebvre emphasizes is the social attribute. He believes that "Spatial practice", "Spatial

reproduction" and "reappearing space" <sup>[4]</sup> focus on the perceptual space at the material level, the conceptual space at the spiritual level, and the living space that is accommodated but different from the former, and these three elements can satisfy the composition of any space. Taking the movie "Parasite" as an example, it uses the image representation of different class characters in the same space and the spatial construction under bright and dark light to connect the life difficulties between different classes. For example, after receiving the news that President Park's family was going home, the current housekeeper Zhong Shu urgently prepared steaming Wudong noodles for President Park's family, and then swept away the rubbish generated in the living room and took care of it in good order. However, when there seemed to be nothing unusual on the surface, the director turned his attention to the dark corner space. In a secret place in the corner, after people from all walks of life "completed" their respective tasks, Ki-woo hid under President Park's daughter's bed; he tried his best to rush out of the basement, but Zhongshu kicked down the steps leading to the "ground". While singing songs praising President Park, the husband of Wen Guang in the basement remotely turned on the headlight that President Park was about to pass by. This indirectly proves that the "intruder" is extremely familiar with the "invasion space" under the accurate judgment, thus setting off the "sojourn" for a long time. Then, all three skillfully curled up under the sofa. With the help of the alternating change of light and dark space and the transformation of luxury and dirty space, there is a "parasitic" scene in which "parasites" are running around and hiding in corners in the contrast of space. It shows that when they are "secretly invading" and enjoying the "superficial stability" life, they produce different ways of self-protection behavior when they suffer from the sudden "positive threat" of interests. Hiding in the narrow space is like confirming the deep meaning of the title of *Parasite*, compressing the limit of the survival "Space" and constructing the purpose with the theme of spatial metaphor. Then, the picture is followed by the picture of President Park and his wife lying on the sofa in the living room watching their son camping. At this time, although in the same space, the director put President Park and his family on the "bright side" of the house, the "dark side" of the family of three under the sofa of the house, and the couple in the "hidden place" of the house. Under the same space conditions, it constitutes different spatial positions of three families with different social status, as well as different living conditions, which symbolizes their worries about their respective careers, lives and survival dilemmas.

### 3. The metaphor of "door" and "window" under the desire of viewing and behavior.

When Dudley Andrew analyzed the complex relationship between the film and the audience, he put forward the following view: "A new metaphor has been put forward, and the screen is called the mirror." When the screen appears in front of the audience as a "mirror", the audience appears to be watching the characters and plots in the film, but in fact it is the mirror text that regards the film as a subject, watching themselves. <sup>[5]</sup> The film narrates with the image structure, and reveals the reality with the story. The image presented by the image has become a kind of mirror signifier symbol in the meaning structure of the film, reflecting personal life and even the whole human society. For example, after the four members of the Kim family joined the Park family, in the face of the drunkard's provocation again, Ki-woo confidently walked out of the house to teach the drunkard a lesson. From submissive in the narrow space to confident and high-spirited in the open space, Ki-woo gained the common "look up" of his family and the audience through his sister Ki-Jung's mobile phone screen, and realized his "highlight moment". Due to the change of visual space, Ki-woo walked from "viewing area" to "seen area", realized the transformation of identity from "loser" to "winner", and completed the "breaking ground" from "underground" to "ground". This change is the self-recognition of President Park after giving him a salary, and lives in the plump fantasy of "self-ideal". Taking the real space and fantasy space as the dividing line, the metaphorical

relationship of "symbiosis and co-prosperity" between "parasite" and "host" is completed through the expansion of space scope and the increase of visual field visibility. At the same time, "window" and "door", as two spatial images, represent different images. First, "window" means "watching". For example, at the beginning of the film, the environment of the bottom parasitic family of four and the basement is presented through the perspective of "space" from the indoor to the outdoor. And observe how they survive under the "upside-down world" by spraying insect repellent through the window. However, when the picture perspective is changed to the open world, the audience will feel a sudden and pleasant normal viewing experience. So as to have a deeper understanding of the difficult lives of the poor people at the bottom. The virtual door between the ground and the underground is a very powerful declaration of the distinction between the two worlds, becoming a symbol of non-entity but profound significance. Second, "door" means action. The symbol of "door" has become the exposure of the important role of the new and old parasites in the first confrontation. The fact that Wen Guang and her husband became old "parasites" was discovered by Zhong Shu, and at the same time, the things that Zhong Shu family became "parasites" were threatened by Wen Guang, so "door" was an important part of space construction. It symbolizes the dependents of the people at the bottom parasitic under politics, money and power, as well as the lower-class poor with less survival resources, to determine the final "parasitic right" by snatching. And Zhong Shu, for fear of "parasitic" things being exposed, kicked Wen Guang from the stairs, blocked behind the "door" to the outside world, protected her "parasitic" status, and took the door as the boundary separating the calm waves on the ground from the surging currents underground, and creating three intertwined behavioral states: chaos, order in chaos, and tranquility. And the delusion of Wen Guang completely strangled in the cradle by exposing the truth in order to achieve space and hierarchical status across the beautiful fantasy. Under the strong contrast between "ground and underground" and "rich and poor", doors and windows have become an important symbol of communication between the two worlds, pushing new parasites into the ranks of desire.

#### 4. Parasitic illusion in the space interval

The theory of "Power space" put forward by Michel Foucault holds that space is a field in which all kinds of right relations compete with each other. It also devotes itself to re-examining and deconstructing the concept of space, transforming the focus of the symptoms of the times from temporal anxiety to spatial anxiety, and then revealing the hidden relationship between knowledge power and space. Foucault also put forward a new expression in Lefebvre's theory of spatial power, that is, the concept of "Heterogeneous Space". "Heterogeneous Space" is also known as "Heterotopia". Foucault believes that "Utopia" is the opposite of "Utopia". "Utopia" represents the embodiment with beautiful and orderly meaning like "Peach Blossom Garden", which is clear and predictable. On the other hand, "Heterotopia" is mixed with a variety of symbols, multi-levels and unstable factors, which is full of the dark side of violent crime. *Parasite*, on the other hand, takes "Rainstorm" as the dividing point, showing that the Ki-woo family was originally full of garbage in the clean villa, with very obvious "Parasite" life characteristics, and then discovered the "Homestay" of Wen Guang's husband. A dark and chaotic world from hiding to discovery, seamless convergence opens the "Survival War" in the "Heterogeneous Space" of "Natural selection and survival of the fittest". With the advent of the rainstorm, the three members of the Kim family quickly fled back to their "Lair" like parasites. The camera takes quickly connect the "magnificent" of the Park family with the "destitute" life scene of the Kim family, which originates from the class contrast between the upper and lower levels, "enjoying the rain" and "hiding from the rain", serenity and panic. There is a sharp contrast in the character's behavior, language, manner, mentality and other aspects, showing the relatively large living scene between the upper-class rich and the

lower-class poor. It presents a very different scene of people from different walks of life in the face of natural disasters. Due to the influx of sewage, the underground space is connected as a whole, objects and people are floating on the surface of the water, and when the camera turns to Wen Guang to retch on the toilet, the follow-up camera connects to the scene where Ki-Jung is struggling to cover the malfunctioning toilet. The *Parasite* shows the suffering life of the people at the bottom in the rain disaster, and presents the dark society washed away by Rain Water and the panic scene in which the parasites flee when the double danger comes. As a member of the upper class, Mrs. Park did not see the danger of the undercurrent of life at the bottom, so that the reason for being deceived was the indifference under the "bright", while the "Space gap" deepened the crisis of trust between the two. It has become the inducement for Ki-woo to commit a crime. This proves that Foucault tries to dig deep into the dual interest relationship between knowledge and power hidden behind the space in the "Power space". Because the mobility of space is cut off, it has become a hotbed of crimes committed by the disadvantaged in the society.

## 5. Conclusion

*Parasite*, as a classic film case in the changing use of space, shows the class differentiation of wealth and poverty through class construction from different spatial perspectives, and through "door" and "window" as a symbol of action and peeping, contrasting the insurmountable gap between the rich and the poor and the parasitic space has become the place where the poor "parasites" compete. And using the technique of spatial spacing, the criminal abyss of "parasitic survival" in the dark is revealed due to indifference. Finally, the narrative is carried out through the construction of space to complete and enrich the deepening and metaphorical construction of the theme of the film.

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