**The Function of Spatial Narrative as a Narrative Motivation and Metaphor: Take "The Crow and the Sparrow" as an Example**

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**Abstract:** Spatial narrative can not only serve as a narrative agent to promote the development of the film plot, but also can serve as a metaphor to convey the theme and significance of the film. The spatial narrative promotes the development of plot and characters through scenes, shots and angles, and as a metaphor conveys the theme and meaning through spatial layout and color. The spatial narrative in "The Crow and the Sparrow" plays an important role in film narrative and provides a new perspective and method for the study of film narrative.

**Keywords:** "The Crow and the Sparrow"; Spatial narrative; Narrative motivation; Metaphor

**1. Introduction**

Set in the winter of 1948, "The Crow and the Sparrow" is an allegorical film based in Shanghai. It reveals the corruption of the Kuomintang regime and the awakening of the people through the life and psychological changes of the people in the residential buildings. The film uses the metaphor of "The Crow and the Sparrow" to show the opposition between the Kuomintang and the people, as well as the expectation of the peoples liberation. It vividly reflects the chaos and darkness of the society at that time, has profound ideological significance and perfect artistic technique, and is an important work in the history of Chinese film.

# 2. The spatial narrative presentation of "The Crow and the Sparrow"

Spatial narrative can be understood as the activity place or existence space created or selected by the filmmaker and processed to carry the things in the story or event to be narrated. Spatial narrative plays an important role in film, which can influence the development and development of film plot through the construction of space. In the film "The Crow and the Sparrow", space is divided into public space and private space, and the connection and interaction between different Spaces form different story clues, but also present the human fate in the process of urbanization, implying the problem of social conflict and class solidification. The private space is the main stage of the characters life and a symbol of their character and fate. Public space is an important means for the film to show the urban space and social reality of Shanghai. Through the contrast and interweaving of private space and public space, the film constructs a vivid and profound social picture scroll.

Geographical space provides a fixed place for the story, which determines the overall content and plot direction of the film. The historical space should be developed in the specific spatial scope, and the Shanghai Shikumen, which carries the historical events, is given a special cultural meaning[1]. The film shows the space inside the city and the house, reflecting the background of The Times and social contradictions. The space contrast between the Shanghai civilian area and the concession area is sharp, and the switch between the internal and external space of the house and the coherence of the small internal space become the core of the story. The rapid spread of information in public space and the display of characters promote the plot. The film also reveals the influence of space on the story and characters through the position and action of the characters, such as the lens of Hou Yibo looking down from the balcony and looking up to others, which reflects his arrogance and fear of others. In addition, the films careful selection, modeling, performance and combination of Shanghais urban space and the semi-closed space of houses, the whole picture of the whole building is displayed in detail[2]. The audience understands the life and character of the characters through the spatial performance in the film. Space plays a key role in the narrative, which is used to metaphor the story theme and enhance the performance of emotional and mental activity.

# 3. The spatial narrative motivation of "The Crow and the Sparrow"

Narrative motivation refers to the factors that trigger events or drive the story in the story. In the film "The Crow and the Sparrow", spatial narrative as a narrative motivation is not only to promote the development of the story, but also to reflect the class contradictions and living conditions of the society at that time. The spatial narrative in the film presents the relationship between the people of different classes and the social reality most vividly. The audience can feel the oppression and injustice of the society at that time through the spatial narrative in the film, which is also one of the means for the film to successfully convey the theme and emotion.

Spatial narrative is not only the description of social reality, but also the promotion of characters behavior and psychology. In the film, the house is the core element of the spatial narrative, and also the focus of contention and struggle between the characters. By showing the different meanings of the house in the eyes of different characters, as well as the different attribution of the house in different periods, the film shows the contradictions and conflicts between the characters, as well as the influence of historical changes on the fate of the characters.

The house itself serves as a metaphor. It not only represents the epitome of the difficult life and resistance struggle of Shanghai citizens under the Kuomintang rule, but also symbolizes the opposition and transformation between the old and new society, the old and new order, and the old and new ideas. Small Spaces inside the house are also metaphors. They represent different classes and positions respectively, and also reflect the contradictions and conflicts of the society at that time.

The house is the cause and goal of the story. Hou Yiboqiang occupied Kong Yuwens house, triggering the dissatisfaction and resistance against him. Kong Youwen hopes to reclaim his house when his son came back to liberate Shanghai. The house is also the driving force of the story. Inside the house, the interactions and conflicts between the small spaces form the main line of the story. On the outside of the house, various events in the urban space also affect the characters and plots inside the house. For example, the workers injured by Hou Yibo on the tram, the students arrested on the street, and the secret agents assassinated in the cafe all reflected the background of the imminent collapse of the Kuomintang regime and the upcoming Peoples Liberation Army, and also provided information and motivation for the people inside the house.

## 3.1 Scenario selection and design

"The Crow and the Sparrow" shows the social reality and interpersonal relations of Shanghai through carefully designed scenes. Centering on a house, the film cleverly integrates the characters, plots and social backgrounds through the spatial layout, enhancing the realism. Private space reflects the character and fate, revealing the living conditions in Shanghai and the chaos of the rental market at that time. Public space highlights the contradiction between urban modernization and society. The film reveals the social contradictions and the awakening of the people through the comparison between private and public space. Director Zheng Junli shows social problems and relationships between characters through the competition for houses by different classes.

## **3.2 Use and performance of the lens**

The space and the urban environment in the film are the core and link of the film narrative, and the camera is the main means of creating, depicting and expanding this space. The scene of "The Crow and the Sparrow" is concentrated in a building, and the director is especially effective in scene scheduling and camera use[3]. Space can be given meaning and narrative, while in "The Crow and the Sparrow", the use of the camera reveals the relationships and dynamics between space and characters, constructing a more complete world view for the film. In addition, the camera directly affects the spatial depiction in the film. The diversity of lens language and composition techniques presents a more distinct spatial effect, bringing different visual experience to the audience. For example, the switch between wide-angle and close-up shots accurately depicts different scenes, triggering a strong aesthetic emotional resonance in the audience.

"The Crow and the Sparrow" introduces the story through the spatial narrative and the architecture, using the pushing lens and perspective techniques to show the characters lives and emotions, as well as the class oppression. The film begins with the logo outside the Hous gate, and the camera moves from outdoor to inside, creating a narrow sense of pressure. The film adopts a spatial "nested" structure, through the lens to make the narrative more fluent, and the spatial environment reflects social relations and aesthetic feeling. At the end, focusing on the alley space, strengthening the emotional expression, and analyzing the space can help to construct the ideology of the film, especially reflecting the mentality of Shanghai citizens during the war.

## 3.3 Selection and transformation of angles

In Zheng Junlis film "The Crow and the Sparrow", the selection and transformation of angles is not only for the purpose of spatial narrative, but also plays a profound implication and metaphor. Through , horizontal scheduling, and coherent editing, the film highlights the character and class differences, while also conveying deeper meanings and metaphors.

In the scene of Hou playing mahjong, the positions of different characters and furniture constitute the class characteristics, which makes the audience have a deeper understanding of the problems of class differences and living conditions in the film. In addition, in the camera changes at the door of the room in which Kong Yuwen lives, the film conveys the limitations and repression of Kong Yuwens poor life, which also triggers the audiences thinking and reflection on social fairness and justice. The final shot of the film is fixed in the alley space outside the house, which strengthens the connection between the family and the country in the film and guides a broader and broader meaning. This lens transformation conveys the profound thinking and discussion on the relationship between family and the country in the film, and also provides more space for the audience to think.

# **4. Metaphor function of spatial narrative in "The Crow and the Sparrow"**

Spatial narration enhances the depth and emotional color of the narration through the symbolic meaning and emotional value of the space in the film. It not only reflects the social reality and the fate of the characters, but also metaphors for historical themes and ideological implication. For example, the crows and sparrows in the film title and symbols represent the opposition and struggle of the Kuomintang and the people, as well as the justice of the peoples liberation.

The configuration of the space in the film symbolizes the difference of social class and status, reflecting the class differentiation and injustice. The partition of space symbolizes the rupture of life and emotion, and reveals the estrangement between families. This metaphor deepens the understanding of the characters relationships and life conditions, and enhances the emotional expression of the film. The change of space symbolizes the change of history and society. By showing the living environment of a specific period, the audience can have a deeper understanding of the historical background. Through these ways, the spatial narrative enhances the emotion and meaning depth of the film, and creates space for others to think.

The interior space of residential buildings set in Shikumen in Shanghai reflects the social class differentiation. The various families living in the house have a comfortable living space of different sizes and levels. For example, Hou Yibo and his wife, Yu Xiaoying, live on the best balcony on the second floor, representing the upper class and the bureaucratic ruling class, while Mr.Hua and his family live in the pavilion, representing the middle class and the intellectual class.

The film continues the tradition of Chinese film realism and popular drama. It cleverly hides the social problems in the economic conflict, and flexibly integrates the spatial scheduling into the narrative of the film. The films creation is inspired by the real experience of the "small radio" in the play. Finally, the outdoor street shot further strengthens the emotional path from home to hometown and leads to a wider and more open meaning. The various artistic techniques used by the creators to maximize the role of space, accurately depict the evil deeds of "crow" and the difficult life of "sparrow", and effectively depict the rich subtext and implication for the film.

# 5. The relationship between the spatial narrative of "The Crow and the Sparrow" and character and fate

Spatial narrative is not only a metaphor for historical themes and thoughts, but also a shaping of characters character and fate. By showing the life state and psychological changes of different characters in different Spaces, the film shows their own personality characteristics and fate direction.

The film space is not only a material existence, but also reflects the social relations between the characters[4]. The houses and urban space in the film reveal the social status of the characters and influence their behavior. The house is the core of the narrative, while the competition for space symbolizes the social conflict. The characters from different social classes show their struggle in the house space. Hou yibo used his power to control the houses and the tenants, ignoring the interests of others. Yu Xiaoying, as Hou Yibos mistress, also represents a corrupt way of life.

Kong Yuwen is a traditional intellectual. He was rushed to the stairwell by Hou Yibo, although he has a clear understanding but unable to change the status quo,can only anticipate his son's return to dispel the "crow". He is a representative of the traditional Chinese intellectual image[5]. Mr. Hua is a petty bourgeois intellectual, gentle and elegant, very fond of his daughter, but also a timid but lofty person. He kept his distance from the small radio family living on the first floor and refused to come with them against Hou Yibo. He lived in the pavilion, implying his unattainable social status. Mr. Huas family has an ambiguous attitude towards politics and passively accepts outside influence.

Little sister is Hou Yibos girl. She is a hard-working, kind, honest, brave girl, dissatisfied with the Hou Yibo family, have sympathy and goodwill for a small radio family, have respect and care for Mrs. Hua. She did not have her own room, can only sleep in the second floor corridor, is a representative of the ground floor workers and revolutionaries. Small radio love to talk about the rivers lake loyalty, when he saw others in a critical and unfortunate situation, he can be urgent, willing to come out to help[6]. Small radio, a stall of citizens and announcer, witty humor and enthusiasm and justice. He hated the exploitation of the privileged class, and wanted to profit from the chaos, and had the same market loyalty. Spread the truth, hope, and power through the radio. In the face of threats and blows, he insisted on the pursuit of justice and democracy, and became a typical representative of the bottom urban citizens in the film.

The film "The Crow and the Sparrow" reveals the characters character and fate through spatial narrative, and uses static and dynamic spatial modeling to show the metaphor of political and economic life. It emphasizes the importance of space in the narrative, combining social problems with economic conflicts, and reflecting the complexity of the country's political and economic life.

# 6. Conclusion

The film is interwoven through the contrast of private and public space, showing the social reality and the fate of the characters. Spatial narrative not only depicts society and reflects characters, but also promotes plot and psychology, metaphor for historical themes and shapes characters. Space in "The Crow and the Sparrow" is physical and social, reflecting character class and stance, influencing behavior and choice. Space is the story place, motivation and metaphor, as well as the witness and interpretation of history. The film skillfully uses spatial narration to express historical themes and shape characters, truly depicting Shanghai society and praising the liberation of the people. It has historical and artistic value and is worth studying and appreciating.

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