



# An Analysis of Lefebvre's the Production of Space from the Perspective of Narratology

Mengdan Shi

School of Foreign Language, Gannan Normal University, Ganzhou, China

Email: skyrim0909@163.com

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## Abstract

Since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there has been a “spatial turn” in Western theorists, which is in line with this, and the spatial dimension of literary narrative has attracted more and more attention from the narratology community. How to understand space is the premise of spatial narrative research, and it is also a problem that needs to be further sorted out. This paper explores the “Trinitarian Theory of Space” proposed by Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*, and understands the basic connotation of the dialectical unity of spatial meaning composed of “space of representation”, “representation of space” and “space practice”. “space of representation” refers to the living space, which is the physical space where people live and act; “representation of space” belongs to the conceptual space, which is conceived and organized by the social space order-maker, and it stipulates the “spatial practice”; “Spatial practice” is the embodiment of daily life, and under the penetration and restriction of “representation of space”, “spatial practice” is often embodied as the spatial behavior of the protocol, but it does not exclude the transgression of the protocol. In the context of the innovation of interdisciplinary cognition of space in Western academic circles, grasping the meaning of space at the level of literary narrative is the foothold of understanding space. Literary narrative space is an imaginative and artistic space jointly constructed by authors, readers, and texts, which is not only a spatial form at the level of expression but also a concrete space at the level of content.

## Subject Areas

Literature

## Keywords

Henry Lefebvre, Spatial Theory, Space of Representation, The Production of Space

## 1. Introduction

While innovating literary theory criticism, Western academic circles have also begun meta-criticism of literary theory and then realized the integration of interdisciplinary and cross-field knowledge. With the transformation of the humanities and social sciences, the traditional space has been transformed from a static object to a multi-dimensional and dynamic subject. Among the many theories on space, the “Trinitarian Theory of Space [1]” proposed by the French philosopher Lefebvre directly focuses on the thinking process of space and incorporates the ideology of real life into it, opening up three-dimensional thinking, which is undoubtedly of groundbreaking significance. According to this theory, space contains three dimensions: physical, spiritual, and social. And any space produced by society is organically composed of “space of representation”, “representation of space”, and “spatial practices”. “space of representation” refers to living space, which is the physical space; “representation of space” belongs to the imaginary space, which is conceived and organized by the social space order-maker, and stipulates the “spatial practice”. “Spatial practice” is the embodiment of daily life, and under the penetration and restriction of “spatial representation”, “spatial practice” is often embodied as the spatial behavior of the protocol, but it does not exclude the transgression of the protocol.

Lefebvre looks at space in the context of time and time. The timeline represents the diachronic order of society and the historical process of social production, and space represents the simultaneity and synchronic order of social reality, where synchronicity refers more to a period of time, while simultaneity tends to refer to a point in time. Different people are doing different things at the same time or at the same point in time, for example, someone is at work at nine o'clock, someone is in class, and someone is sleeping. Of course, this simultaneity is just a simple way of understanding it in the form of a thought experiment. Expanding it to synchronicity has richer content, such as what Shanghai was like and what the Northeast was like during the War of Resistance Against Japan. But more importantly, what happened to the intersection between different regions and different timelines? Lefebvre emphasized the connection of space. In his view, space is “the interconnection between human beings through their activities and practices, with their bodies and feelings, perception and imagination, thinking and ideology” [2].

## 2. Literature Review

In Western countries, Lefebvre’s spatial theory has a huge influence. Three of the most representative scholars internationally studying Lefebvre’s theory of space are David Harvey, Michel Foucault, and Edward Soja. Harvey inherits Lefebvre’s critical approach to “the production of space.” Generally speaking, Harvey’s critique of “urban space” and Lefebvre’s critique of “the production of space” share a similar line of thought. Both point out that social production always adapts to the mode of “spatial production,” and that as social production is constantly changing, so too is spatial production. In addition to Lefebvre, Michel Foucault

also studied space from the perspective of power will, asserting that space “determines the production of all lifestyles and the exercise of all power wills”. In modern capitalist societies, the spatial configuration bears the imprint of power space, with individuals situated within a complex and constantly evolving social spatial system, subject to various levels and forms of surveillance and control. Foucault also cited prisons as a prime example to elucidate the concrete manifestations of space as a power symbol. Based on Lefebvre’s spatial theory, Michel Foucault also studied space from the perspective of power will, asserting that space “determines the production of all lifestyles and the exercise of all power wills” [3].

There are relatively few articles that combine spatial theories with literary works, both domestically and internationally, which provides researchers with significant opportunities in the literary field. Even fewer studies apply Lefebvre’s theories to narratology. The author has found that the element of “space” plays a significant role in the narrative of the novels. The male and female protagonists constantly traverse different spaces in their quest for a final realm that can accommodate their existence. Therefore, space can serve as a crucial entry point for a deeper understanding of the meanings within literary works.

### 3. Material Properties and Spiritual Properties

Space is not only the existence of material, but also the existence of form, and the container of social relations [4]. Space has its material properties, but it is by no means a material existence that has nothing to do with human beings, human practices, and social relations. On the contrary, it is precisely because people are involved in it that space has meaning to us. Space also has its spiritual attributes, just like the concepts we are familiar with such as social space, national space, daily life space, urban space, etc., but this does not mean that the conceptual and social forms of space can erase or replace its objective existence as a regional space. Social spaces penetrate or superimpose each other. The production of space transcends the philosophical opposition of “object” and “subject”. The space of partial material attributes here refers to the space generated through the material space and boundaries, such as schools, factories, and companies, although companies and schools also have cultural spirits. But they are the material boundaries that are produced first, for example, the school first divides the boundary, and only on this basis can there be culture; Therefore, cyberspace is also a kind of physical space, although there is no substantial physical space, but the technology of network is precisely a very clear boundary for him. The space of partial spiritual attributes is constructed through imagination and ideology, the most typical of which is the nation-state. We first have the concept of the nation-state before there are obvious boundaries of the country. In ancient countries, there were no clear borders, for example, utopia, ideal country, and even the new village of China. Of course, the above examples are more obvious, and there are some in a transitional position, for example, when it comes to Shanghai and Northeast China, although there are clear boundaries and regions, the first thing that comes to our mind is

not that place, but the cultural things that come to mind in Shanghai and North-east China. In “The Spatiality of Memory and Its Influence on Fictional Narratives”, Long Diyong said: “When any writer creates narrative fictional works, he cannot do without the two most basic psychological activities, memory and imagination, and both of them have very obvious spatial characteristics” [5]. This spatial nature will inevitably have a profound impact on the creative activities of writers. “The Japanese scholar Keno Okuno proposed the concept of “original scenery”. He believes that this is the space that the writer has formed inherently himself, and this is also the original landscape of the literary motif. In fact, from the narrative texts created by many writers, we can indeed find the space in which they lived in childhood. This kind of space is the original landscape in the depths of their souls, such as Hardy’s Egdon Heath and William Faulkner’s Jefferson Town. The living space or original landscape of the writers constitutes the background color or unconscious of their creation.

#### 4. Spatial Practice

Spatial practice can be understood as looking at social practice from the perspective of space, that is, people’s social practice activities will change the original space, thus producing a new space, thereby changing people’s perception, that is, by cracking the old space production to construct a new space, such as the original wasteland into a school, the change of space will also make people’s perception of space change, and the feeling of barrenness will become the feeling of intellectual vitality. Therefore, spatial practice means that people should really be in that space, and intuitively perceive and understand the world through people’s practical actions. It includes production and reproduction, as well as a collection of special locations and spatial characteristics of each social form. Spatial practices ensure continuity and some degree of cohesion. In terms of social space and the relationship of each given member of society to space, this cohesiveness implies the ability to competency aptitude at the level of assurance and the discourse at the special level. The spatial practice of one society hides the space of that society. In a dialectically interactive way, the former proposes and presupposes the latter. The former, while controlling and taking the latter, produces it slowly and definitely. From an analytical standpoint, the spatial practice of a society is revealed by deciphering its space.

#### 5. Representation of Space

For example, scientists see the Northeast as a series of things that seem objective to us, such as latitude and longitude, topography, and temperature. The Northeast in Ban Yu’s eyes is the image in Winter Swimming; The Northeast in Zheng Zhi’s eyes is the appearance in works such as I Only Care About You; The Northeast in Mohe Dance Hall is a different look, these are different representations of space by different people and different angles, and these are the spatial representations. As a result, spatial representations are diverse. The space that is conceptualized as

a spatial representation, that is, scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic “sub-divisions” and “agents”, as well as artists with special scientific precedence—their space, all of whom equate the space of experience with perception and the space of imagination [6]. Similarly, in the book “Being, Space, and Architecture”, Norberg Schulz proposed the concept of “existential space”. Generally speaking, hometown and hometown can easily become our “existence space”, and no matter where we go in the future, we always use this “existence space” as a reference. For many people, home is the whole world, and other places are alien and alien. Whether in real life or literature, we can easily perceive this spatial awareness. Such as Hardy’s descriptions of Tess’s hometown before and after Tess got raped, there are two different descriptions of the Valley of Blakemore [7].

Before Tess was sexually assaulted, Blackmoor was in her mind “a secluded place surrounded by mountains.”

“In this valley surrounded by green hills, the faint sound of brass pipes is the only human voice that can be heard”.

How secluded and beautiful the Bray Valley was at this time.

However, after Tess got raped, “this valley, as seen from the top of this hill, will always be beautiful; Today, it seems to Tess that it is more beautiful and terrible; For she had known from the last time her eyes fell on it that wherever there was a sweet bird singing, there was also a poisonous snake hissing. Her outlook on life has completely changed because of that lesson. “

## 6. Space of Representation

Space of representation emphasizes the use of a symbol to symbolize the space [8]. For example, when you think of the Oriental Pearl, you will think of Shanghai, when you mention the Eiffel Tower, you will think of Paris, when you mention the magic city, you will think of Shanghai, and when you mention the Oriental Sun City, you will think of Rizhao. These symbols can represent a space, and when we mention this symbol, the first thing that comes to mind is this space, which is called encoding. Of course, these symbols have some other symbols besides symbolizing places, and in the symbolic space, there are always new possibilities that are injected to shape new symbolic works. They manifest themselves in a variety of symbolic systems, sometimes coded and sometimes uncoded, linked to hidden or secret aspects of social life, but also to art. The direct experience or living space, through the images and symbols associated with it, and thus through its “occupants” and “users”, and perhaps certain artists, a few writers and philosophers, who have nothing but to describe the space. It is a dominated space, a representational space, or a system that is more or less consistent with non-verbal symbols and symbols. In Balzac’s view, to imagine a person is to imagine a province, a city, a corner of that city, a building at a bend in the street, some furnished room, and finally to imagine the man or woman who inhabits it. In this view, space has become a powerful means of moving the narrative forward.

Taking Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights* as an example, the spaces of "Wuthering Heights" and "Thrushcross Grange" not only possess geographic and residential attributes but also represent two different social properties and ideological domains [9]. In the novel, *Wuthering Heights* and similar spaces are designated by the author as primary sites of power regulation, where the ruling class attempts to control characters like Catherine and Heathcliff through surveillance and other means. In contrast, characters such as Catherine, who cherishes freedom and fears no authority, resist the disciplinary actions of the patriarchal social system through their courageous and steadfast actions. In this process, the interplay of discipline and resistance creates an antagonistic force that illustrates the profound connection between space and humanity within the context of modernization [10].

Some scholars have pointed out that as a kind of narrative literature, among the elements that constitute its stylistic characteristics, the storyline and characters are the most important and active parts, but whether it is the occurrence and development of the storyline or the various activities of the characters, it is always carried out in a certain time and space, and time and space include two directions, time and space, and the impression of the space scene to the reader in terms of reading effect often exceeds the significance of time and space scenes. It's not just that it's essential as an element of the novel's plot structure. And it often has a special meaning in itself. After the art of fiction matured, the spatial scene of the novel has been far from the objective reality and is mostly the fiction of the writer in a certain sense. This virtual space scene is also a representation of the writer's artistic creativity.

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### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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