

Exploring the Image of Hometown in the Eyes of Exiles

-- Taking Pai Hsien-yung's Taipei People as an Example

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Abstract: Pai Hsien-yung wrote in "Taipei People" about a number of cities that are the so-called hometowns of the group of "Taipei People" who are actually "foreigners". They are in Taipei, but their hearts are always thinking of their hometown in mainland China. For them, their hometown is not only a space where they used to live, but also a carrier of their fond memories, a symbol of their hometown culture, and even a heterotopian space with fantasy. In the eyes of people living in Taipei, their hometown is actually a spiritual space representing their hometown culture. Whether it is nostalgia for their hometown or remembrance of the past, it is nothing but a manifestation of cultural identity. Taking Pai Hsien-yung's Taipei People as an example, this paper explores the image of the hometown in the eyes of exiles by combining textual analysis and cultural research. By analysing the characters and emotional expressions in the novel, it is found that the hometown is not only the space where these "Taipei people" used to live, but also the carrier of their beautiful memories and the symbol of their hometown culture. In their eyes, the hometown is characterised as a fantastical heterotopian space. Through their nostalgia for their hometowns and their memories of the past, these displaced persons express their identification with their hometown culture. Therefore, in the eyes of the exiles, the hometown is a kind of spiritual space, representing the intrinsic value of the hometown culture.

Keywords: Pai Hsien-yung; Taipei People; Exile; Hometown; Heterotopia.

1. Introduction

Pai Hsien-yung's "Taipei People" consists of fourteen short stories, depicting a wide variety of life in Taipei. "Taipei People" is a product of a specific historical period, referring to members of the Kuomintang and their families who followed Chiang Kai-shek's retreat in the past, and these remnants of the Republic of China include both military officers, aristocrats, and celebrities, as well as lower-class civilians such as clerks, servants, and dancers. Chen Mengfan's "Pai Hsien-yung and the Image of Marginal People in His Works--Taking <Taipei People> as an Example" and Yu Yang's "Study on Identity Problems in Pai Hsien-yung's Discrete Literature--Taking <Taipei People> as an Example" both mention the typical "marginal people" in Pai Hsien-yung's works. "marginal people", and the writing of the image of marginal people is an important theme in Pai Hsien-yung's works[1,2]. Chen Mengfan classifies the marginal people in Taipei People into the following four categories: the group of dancers, the group of people, the group of noblewomen, and the group of sergeants. He believes that although these people are not the same in terms of social status and personal experience, they all have a strong "hometown complex" and "sense of despair"[1].

These characters who are called "Taipei residents" but are actually "mainlanders" have had an unforgettable "past", and the burden of this "past" has a direct impact on their current real life. The burden of this "past" has a direct impact on their current reality. They spend the rest of their lives remembering their hometowns, which in the end are still "hometowns", but they can never go back to a place that only exists in their memories, and the "feeling of despair" is precisely generated by the unattainable hometown complex. "The main characters in Taipei People are undoubtedly all expatriates in Taipei. For

this group of "Taipei People", the mainland is their hometown, the place where they used to live. And this hometown is both temporal and spatial. Liu Yu mentioned in "Analysing Shanghai Writing in Pai Hsien-yung's Taipei People": "Shanghai writing in Pai Hsien-yung's Taipei People shows the unique symbolism of Shanghai. It breaks through the definition of geographical space and turns into a spiritual support for Shanghai people living in Taipei, becoming a carrier of nostalgia." [3]In previous studies of Pai Hsien-yung's Taipei People, there is no lack of research on the image of the hometown in the eyes of the "Taipei people", but most of them explore what kind of existence of the "hometown" is in their eyes in terms of the present and the past. However, the "old" of hometown is not only reflected in time, but also in the spatial level of the contrast between "old" and "present", for the "Taipei People" in the exile, hometown is not only a specific geographic space. For the exiles in Taipei People, the hometown is not only a specific geographical space, this paper will analyse the image of "hometown" in the eyes of the exiles in Taipei People from the spatial level, and explore the significance of the hometown for them.

2. Discussion

2.1. Carrier of Fond Memories

In The Last Night of Gold Taipan, Gold Taipan, who is in the ballroom of Night Paris, recalls more than once the Paramount and the time he spent in the Paramount, "The toilet in the Paramount is only a bit more spacious than the ballroom of Night Paris, and Tong Dewai's face may not have his share in the Paramount's cesspit." Jin Taiban's slightly exaggerated comparison shows the wealth and prosperity of Paramount. "[4]Although Xiao Hongmei compared to her Jade Goddess of Mercy Jin Zhaoli in the Shanghai Paramount era of the kind of popularity, but Taipei, some of the dance halls in the

discussion, she Xiao Ruyi is also a top goods." [4]Although this remark is intended to praise Xiao Hongmei, but once again, Jin Daban can not help but compare the person in front of him with his own self in the past in Paramount. Now that she was in Night Paris, but was about to leave Night Paris, Jin Daban would often think back to her past days in Paramount, and she could not help but compare the two spaces of Paramount and Night Paris, and in the midst of the comparison, she infinitely missed Paramount, and she kept looking back at her past self. She keeps looking back to her past self. Compared to Shanghai, Paramount can be called her "hometown". The scenery that Jin Taipan can recall is all categorised in the concept of "the past", and Paramount carries the story of her youth, and her former innocence and beauty are all left there.

To Mr Lu of Huaqiao Rongji, his hometown also represents his nostalgia for his youth and the beginning of his life. Mr Lu's life in Taiwan is in shambles, but he doesn't complain about it, and continues to live his life honestly. His fiancée in Guilin is the support for his life and the driving force for his struggles, and so the city of Guilin carries his good old days. Mr Lu's attachment to his hometown is actually his nostalgia for the past, and the image of his hometown in Mr Lu's eyes becomes the carrier of his fond memories. Mr Lu always remembers that he was once married, and thus cleanses himself and finally waits for a letter from his fiancée. He then gives his fifteen years of savings to his cousin and tries to sneak off to Guangzhou to get married, only to be cheated out of the money by his cousin. But what was taken away was not only the ten gold bars, but also his hope to see his fiancée again, and even all the beautiful youth in the past. From then on, he began to degenerate, and finally died in a rented house with nothing.

2.2. The symbol of cultural space and spiritual space

Hometown not only points to a specific geographical space, but also can be people's spiritual hometown. Duan Huifang said in "The Identity of Displaced Residence and the Identity of Hometown - A Study of Pai Hsien-yung's Work <Taipei People>", "The 'Taipei people' who have been isolated from the mainland for a long time will always have the spatial anxiety of displacement." The author also classifies the way they vent this anxiety as "contrasting mentality", "reminiscent gesture" and "self-exile"[5]. In the author's opinion, both the "contrasting mentality" and the "reminiscent gesture" can reflect their attachment to their hometowns, as in the case of Yin Xueyan, who, even after her arrival in Taipei, dresses and lives in the same way as she did in Shanghai: she continues to live in the same way as Paramount, wearing the same cicada gossamer as she did in Shanghai. She still lives in the same way as she did in Shanghai: she wears the same cicada-wing gauze cheongsam as she did in Shanghai, watches Shaoxing operas, strolls along the pedestrian street, eats osmanthus dumplings, and enjoys all the things that she enjoyed as a Shanghai celebrity. Everything around her has changed drastically with the shift in geographic space, but only Yin Xueyan's way of life remains the same. The other characters in "Forever Yin Xueyan" obsessively flock around Yin Xueyan precisely because of her never-ending "big Shanghai flavour". As Duan Huifang puts it, "People's dreams of returning home are tied to the heterogeneous space of Yin's mansion, which is centred on her." [5]The Forever Yin Xueyan is full of depictions of Yin Xueyan's clothes and the

layout of Yin's mansion, which, behind the sophistication, contains the accumulation of hai-style culture. The sight of Yin Xueyan reminds one of the "eternal symbol of Shanghai's Paradise Era, the proof of the prosperity of Beijing and Shanghai", because Yin Xueyan is "permeated with the musk of the glory of Shanghai's great world"[4]. Yin Gongguan is the "Little Shanghai" of Taipei, where people get spiritual comfort, and at the same time, Shanghai also becomes the spiritual home of the people who used to live there.

In "A Dream in the Garden", Mrs Dou's banquet in the garden stirs up a dream of Mrs Qian. "This Hangzhou silk or brought out from Nanjing it, these years have not been willing to wear, in order to go to this banquet only from the bottom of the box out of the cut. If I had known, it would have been better to buy a new one at Hongxiang Silk House. But she always felt that Taiwan's clothing materials rough, glossy eye, especially silk, where as on the mainland goods so detailed, so soft and familiar?" [4]In the end, because the present is not as good as the past, will be extraordinarily reminiscent of the past, and at the same time will be on the former decent life feelings transferred to the clothing. But for Mrs Qian, her hometown of Nanjing not only represents the good old days, but also symbolises the Qinhuai culture. "But Taiwan's flower carvings are not as mellow as those on the mainland, and drinking them is ultimately a bit of a throat-slitting experience." [4] No matter objectively speaking, Taiwan's flower carvings and the mainland's whether there is really a difference between good and bad, but always "the moon is the hometown bright".

The bright moonlight of her hometown has also long enveloped the boss's wife in Huaqiao Rongji. For her, her hometown is the green mountains and water of Guilin, the rice noodle shop owned by her grandfather, and her grandmother's smiling mouth. These mainlanders who have moved to Taiwan are unable to return to their homeland and have no support in a foreign land, and their nostalgia has coalesced in the symbols of their hometowns like the rice noodle shop, which has become a small community for Guangxi people in Taipei. The boss's nostalgia and remembrance of her hometown of Guilin is reflected in her attitude towards her customers, and she addresses all non-Guilinese people as "foreigners", even changing her casualness and humour when telling the story of Mr. Lu, with a lot more seriousness and paranoia. She tries her best to keep that one rice noodle shop, to keep that part of her heart that is attached to her hometown culture.

2.3. Heterotopian space

Michel Foucault formally introduced the concept of "heterotopia" when he gave a lecture on "alternative spaces" at an architectural symposium. According to Foucault, "We live in a space where we stretch ourselves. It is a space in which our lives pass away, in which time and history take place, a space that swallows and smooths us." Understood in terms of Foucault's philosophy of space, utopias are virtual spaces and heterotopias are real spaces that realise utopias, present-day as well as historical existences[6]. In response to the conceptual connotation of heterotopia, Professor Wang Dewei elaborates, "Apart from what we know as utopia as well as utopia of evil - projecting a so-called utopia - heterotopia is a possibility that exists all the time inside the space of your and my existence, and that we need to face, intuit, and reflect upon all the time. a possibility." Pai Hsien-yung constructs a series of cultural spaces in Taipei People,

and some of these cultural spaces, after adding layers of embellishment, become fantastical heterotopias, such as the air force culture involved in *A Handful of Green*. The relationship between Zhu Qing and his wife is both "inherited" and parallel: both of them married pilots and their husbands eventually died; they were separated on the mainland but met again in Taiwan. For Zhu Qing, Guo's death was a devastating blow, "Her face looked like the skin of a fish's belly that had been cut open, one white, one red, blood and sweat." "Zhu Qing became so thin that only a handful of bones remained, her face was dead grey, and her eyes were dented into two large holes." After arriving in Taipei, Zhu Qing seems to be "reborn" some, her image is very different from the previous image in Nanjing, "There is a woman dressed in a very enchanting up,..... smiling without a little shyness." [4] But in reality, Zhu Qing has always tried to live in the past, trying to maintain the consistency of her surroundings: in Nanjing, she lived in a place called Ren'ai East Village; after the change of heart, the place she frequented in Taipei "happened to be" also called Ren'ai East Village; her second lover was the same as Guo Jingxiang. Her second lover was also an air force pilot. Both "Ren'ai East Village" and "Air Force Pilot" have in fact become Zhu Qing's heterotopia.

Throughout the characters in "Taipei People", after moving to Taiwan, perhaps some of them have already lived a more stable and settled life, but their hearts are still wandering. They are burdened with different pasts, but with the same emotions. The past has become a cloud of memories, and the hometown is the spiritual support for this group of displaced people. Pai Hsien-yung himself, in a sense, is also a "Taipeier", and his personal experiences and observations of the people

and things around him have all become the material for his creation. While creating "Taipei People", the heterotopia in his mind is also gradually being established. The image of his hometown in the eyes of the novel's characters also reflects the author Pai Hsien-yung's heart, the unforgettable nostalgia for his hometown's culture.

3. Conclusion

Attachment to one's hometown is a universal human emotion, and compared to other cultures, the sense of homeland and hometown sentiment is more prominent in Chinese culture. Taking Pai Hsien-yung's "Taipei People" as an entry point, and exploring the significance of the hometown for "Taipei People" from the spatial level, we can have a deeper understanding of the migrants and their hometown cultural identity.

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